

S T U D Y G U I D E



Psalm 51

by R.C. Sproul



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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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A Psalm of Repentance

INTRODUCTION

What is the biblical definition of repentance? What is the relationship between repentance, faith, and forgiveness? In this lesson, Dr. Sproul helps us understand true biblical repentance and confession.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To recognize the characteristics of true biblical repentance and how it inseparably involves faith
2. To show the importance, meaning, and behaviors of repentance
3. To consider how the New Testament call to repentance requires submission to Christ's lordship and resolve to live a life of obedience

SCRIPTURE READING

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

—Matthew 3:1-2

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

—Matthew 4:17

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

—Mark 1:14

LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The idea of repentance is at the center of the New Testament message.
 - 1. Both John the Baptist and Jesus began their public ministries with the call to repentance.
 - 2. The Apostolic church summoned people to respond to the gospel with faith and repentance.
- B. The concept of repentance
 - 1. This idea is often missing from contemporary forms of evangelism.
 - 2. We tell people the benefits of Christianity, persuade them to embrace Jesus by making it as easy as possible, but underplay the biblical mandate to repent.
- C. The distinction between faith and repentance
 - 1. By distinguishing these concepts, we are in danger of divorcing them by making such a wide separation between them.
 - 2. These are closely connected in an inseparable relationship that true faith always involves repentance, and true repentance always involves faith.
- D. The idea of a carnal Christian is foreign to the New Testament.
 - 1. A carnal Christian is someone who claims to be truly converted but has never really brought forth the fruit of repentance.
 - 2. We are so concerned with winning souls that we use methods and techniques that give a false assurance in place of an authentic faith that has repented of sin.
 - 3. There is a difference between making a profession of faith and possessing that faith that you profess.
 - 4. The most frightening thing ever taught in the New Testament is when Jesus speaks of those who thought they were in relationship with Him but were not (Matt. 7:21–23).
- E. Repentance according to the New Testament
 - 1. *Metanoia* is the Greek word for repentance; it means “to change one’s mind.”
 - 2. Some theologians wrongly believe that repentance means simply to change one’s mind and viewpoint about Jesus in recognizing that He is truly the Son of God.
 - 3. We must be careful about the usage of words because they change in meaning and nuance over time.
 - 4. Repentance in the biblical sense is something that happens in the very core of one’s personality, where the Spirit of God pierces one’s heart.
- F. The New Testament calls for a completely different realm of behavior.
 - 1. God calls His people not to allow their hearts to be hardened by the ethics of this world, but rather to have their hearts softened and made tender by the Holy Ghost.

2. When someone repents, that means he turns away from the whole way of living that marks paganism and now flies to Christ.
3. Repentance is submitting oneself to His lordship and resolving to live a life of obedience.
4. At the very core of the truly repentant person's being, there is a resolution to leave a sinful lifestyle behind and seek forgiveness of sin.

G. Forgiveness is the only essential thing that can cure guilt.

1. We live in a day where the Christian community is overwhelmed by a sense of guilt.
2. Before there can be forgiveness, there must be repentance.
3. Just as forgiveness is essential to get rid of guilt, so repentance is essential to gain forgiveness.
4. If there is any concept in the New Testament we need to master, it is this concept of repentance because so much hangs upon it.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Both John the Baptist and Jesus began their public ministries with a call to repentance.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Faith and repentance are closely connected and inseparable in which of the following ways?
 - a. True faith always determines repentance and true repentance always determines faith.
 - b. True faith always involves repentance and true repentance always involves faith.
 - c. True faith always justifies repentance and true repentance always justifies faith.
 - d. True faith always produces repentance and true repentance always produces faith.
3. Which of the following concepts is foreign to the New Testament?
 - a. Carnal Christianity
 - b. False assurance
 - c. Forgiveness that cures guilt
 - d. Fruit of repentance

4. In the New Testament, *metanoia* is the Greek word for repentance in which of the following senses?
 - a. To change one's behavior
 - b. To change one's heart
 - c. To change one's mind
 - d. To change one's soul
5. Repentance is submitting oneself to Christ's lordship through a life of which of the following?
 - a. *Agapē* love
 - b. Forgiveness
 - c. Obedience
 - d. Prayer
6. According to Dr. Sproul, forgiveness is the only thing that can do which of the following?
 - a. Convert sinners
 - b. Cure guilt
 - c. Ease pain
 - d. Erase past sins

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When it comes to the concept of repentance, what are some things that are often missing from contemporary forms of evangelism? What are the consequences of minimizing the biblical mandate to repent?
2. Is biblical repentance changing one's mind and viewpoint about Jesus in recognizing that He is truly the Son of God? Why or why not?
3. How would you respond to someone who professes to be a Christian but is living in open sin? What is the difference between making a profession of faith and possessing the faith you profess?
4. Why is the New Testament model of repentance something that needs to be mastered? What are the consequences of a proper understanding of repentance?

2

The Sin of David

INTRODUCTION

What can we learn from a man who committed adultery, conspiracy, and murder? It is not what we learn from his sin that has any value, but what David did after his sin that is so essential for us today. In this lesson, Dr. Sproul explains what we can learn from the prophet Nathan's confrontation with King David.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To show why David is one of the most important people in the entire Old Testament
2. To consider the painful consequences of David's sins and how he responded in repentance
3. To recognize that God does not convict people of sin in order to destroy them, but to heal them, restore them, and bring them to Himself

SCRIPTURE READING

Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'" David said

to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die."

—2 Samuel 12:7–14

LECTURE OUTLINE

A. Psalm 51 and David

1. David is one of the most important people in the entire Old Testament in that he was the greatest and most prosperous of all Jewish kings.
2. Davidic prophecies were later fulfilled when another greater King would come in the person of Christ.
3. Not only was he a warrior king who presided over the golden age of Israel, but David was also a poet, musician, and statesman.
4. He was a man who really loved God and was known as a man after God's own heart.
5. David also egregiously broke the law of God by committing adultery with Bathsheba and then conspiring to have her husband, Uriah, killed.
6. God promised that the sword would not depart from David's house; David's son Absalom later rose up against him.

B. How David sinned

1. Instead of immediately turning and running from temptation as Joseph did (Gen. 39:7–12), David allowed lust to burn in his heart and embraced his sin and acted upon it (2 Sam. 11:1–5).
2. Our nature as fallen people is to likewise justify our sin to our conscience by allowing small things as our hearts become hardened by repetitious sin.
3. Instead of stopping such sinful behaviors, we repress our conscience, quiet it, and seek others who will comfort us as say it is all right.
4. Callouses then form on our conscience and eventually it becomes seared.
5. David began to look back upon all he had done for God and Israel.
6. Through Nathan, God came with the Word accompanied by the Spirit to convince David of His standard of righteousness and David's sin.

C. The pain of repentance

1. There is an exquisite pleasure to the pain when one realizes that repentance is born of the saving action of God the Holy Spirit.
2. God does not convict people of sin in order to destroy them, but to heal them, restore them, and bring them to Himself.
3. David admitted that he had sinned against the Lord after a godly confrontation from the prophet Nathan.
4. God had David on two capital crimes: adultery and murder by proxy.
5. God would have been perfectly just to simply slay David at that very moment but He instead tempered His justice with mercy.

6. David fasted, cried, and begged, but there were still consequences to his sin in that God would strike the child of the union dead.

D. David's response

1. David responds like a godly man to the confrontation of the prophet and accepts the consequences from God.
2. After the child's death, David changes his clothes, anoints himself with oil, and worships God in repentance.
3. David would later use this experience as a backdrop to write Psalm 51.

STUDY QUESTIONS

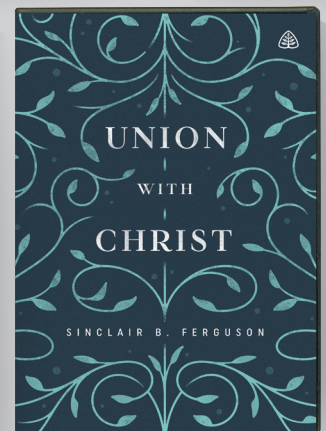
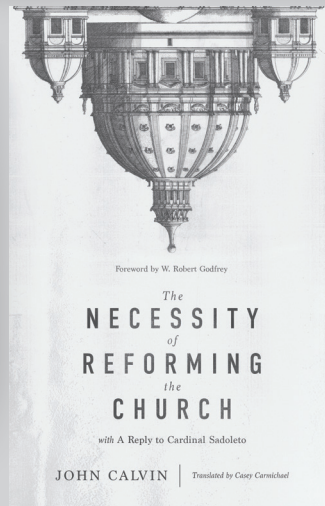
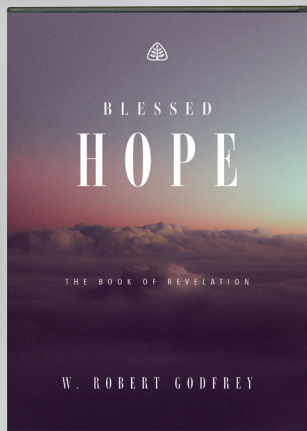
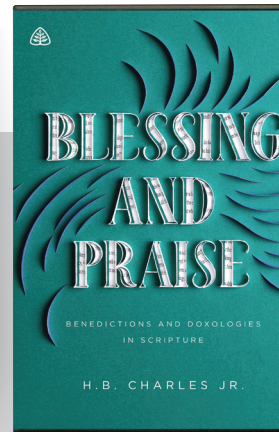
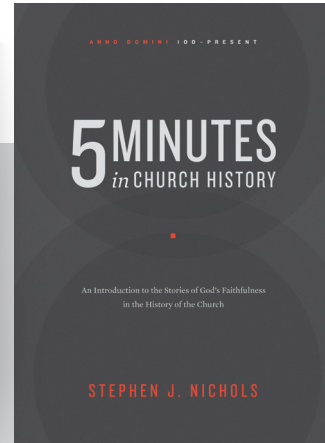
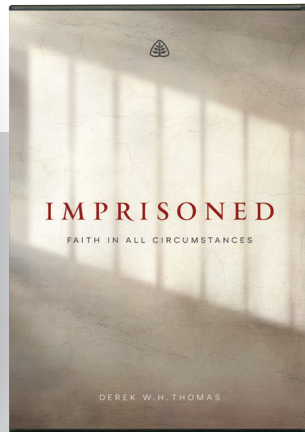
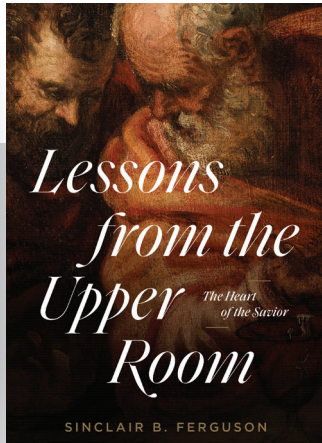
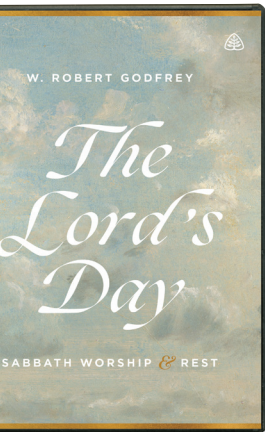
1. It is not known for certain if David was the author of Psalm 51.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Who rose up against David in fulfillment of God's promise that, because of his sin, the sword would not depart from David's house?
 - a. Absalom
 - b. Nathan
 - c. Saul
 - d. Uriah
3. God had David on which two capital crimes?
 - a. Adultery and blasphemy
 - b. Adultery and idolatry
 - c. Adultery and murder by proxy
 - d. Adultery and theft
4. Which of the following methods did Nathan use to communicate to David about God's standard of righteousness and David's sin?
 - a. Law
 - b. Parable
 - c. Sermon
 - d. Ten Commandments
5. If sin is not dealt with immediately, callouses form on our conscience and eventually the conscience becomes which of the following?
 - a. Hardened
 - b. Nonexistent
 - c. Seared
 - d. Weakened

6. Upon the death of his baby, how did David respond to the consequences of his sin?
 - a. He anointed his son Absalom as king
 - b. He apologized to Bathsheba
 - c. He justified his actions
 - d. He responded like a godly man

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is David considered one of the most important people in the entire Old Testament? What aspects of David's reign as king were fulfilled in the person of Christ?
2. In light of the heinous sins that David committed, why is he still called "a man after God's own heart"?
3. How is it that our hearts can become hardened by repetitious sin?
4. What is the exquisite pleasure to the pain of repentance that Dr. Sproul speaks about with reference to David? What is God's ultimate purpose in convicting people of their sin?

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