



Topic: My Perfect Sacrifice to the Lord (A Broken and Contrite Heart)

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.
~ Psalm 51:17 (NKJV) ~

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Introduction to the Lesson

The 51st division of the Psalm written by King David has often been labeled as “The Penitent’s Prayer. This is because this psalm provides an excellent example of the prayer of repentance in the heart of one who has been brought to the realization that his committed act of sin was directly against God and God alone. This psalm was written by David after the prophet Nathan had come to him after he had committed the act of adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah (*cf. 2 Sam 11:1-12:15*). It is here that David confesses his sin and prays for forgiveness. It is also here that David represents for you and I the model to follow in learning the “art” of confessing our sins when we sin against God. David begins his prayer of repentance by asking God for mercy appealing to God’s lovingkindness and His tender mercies. Nowhere in this psalm do we find David asking God’s forgiveness based on his past good behavior and worship of the Lord. The lesson we should all take from this is that all the good we have done in the past will not erase the sin we commit in the present. Nor are our past good deeds worthy of God’s forgiveness for the sins we commit afterward.

David does what is expected of all who name the name of Christ and are adopted into the family of God who fall into act(s) of sin; David acknowledges his sin against God and how it is contrary to God’s desire for him. He not only prays for God to cleanse him, but he also prays for God to restore the joyful fellowship of salvation he experienced with God prior to his fall into sin. When we consider the aftermath of our sin in how we lose our joy in serving the Lord, it ought to bring to our realization that no level of sin, no matter how enjoyable the act itself may be, is worth losing our joy in serving the Lord. David realizes within him there reside weaknesses that led him into the act of sin against God. He also realizes that it takes God to deliver him from this guilt of the sin committed. David is fully aware of the Old Testament sacrifices given unto God and comes to the knowledge that God desires more than these sacrifices. Sacrifices of burnt offering God delights not in. The sacrifices God does desire are a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart. In these God will not despise.

Our Study

In our study, we will explore what it means to bring a broken and contrite heart before the Lord. What do we mean when we speak of a broken and contrite heart? We understand the heart houses man’s intellect, will, and emotions. So when we speak of God desiring a broken heart we are, in essence, saying “our” will, intellect, and emotions must be broken. The results of a broken heart will be a contrite heart and thus a broken or humble spirit.

For a better understanding, let's define what the words "broken" and "contrite" mean:

Broken (*as defined by merriam-webster.com*):

- Disrupted by change
- Subdued completely
- Not kept or honored

When we consider the meaning of the word "broken" in the context of the heart, we come to understand this to mean that our will, intellect, and emotions must be disrupted or changed from the way our unregenerate man handled life's situations. We come to realize that we can't serve God in our own will. Our will must be completely subdued by our love for God and our willingness to obey God. We mustn't regard ourselves by pleasing ourselves more than we regard ourselves by pleasing God. This is what Jesus made reference to in the synoptic gospels:

Matthew 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24.

- *For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (NKJV)*

To sum this up, a broken heart is a heart that is in full denial of self and totally submitted unto the Lord. It is a heart that is open to the chastening of the Lord while embracing a willingness to become self-empty so as to become godly-full.

Contrite (*as defined by thefreedictionary.com*)

- Remorseful
- Chastened
- Deeply sorry for something one has done

When we consider the meaning of the word "contrite", we understand that it is only when we are deeply sorry and remorseful for the sin we have committed against God will his work of forgiveness become a reality in our lives. When we reach the point where we are filled with a sense of guilt and the desire for atonement, we are at the right place for God's forgiveness to be poured out.

Now, let's look more in-depth at the meaning of the word "contrite". When we are contrite, it means:

- To be bowed down with the awareness of our spiritual bankruptcy.
- That our inner spirit is crushed with a sense of its guilt.
- That we have a genuine and deep sorrow for our rebellion against God and a determined desire to do differently.

Attributes of a contrite heart (what a contrite heart looks like):

- A contrite heart does not seek to rationalize or explain or excuse or defend or justify sin.
- A contrite heart does not try to fool God or others or self. It recognizes that God demands truth and honesty.

- A contrite heart does not mean merely feeling bad or remorseful about sin. Instead a contrite heart feels such a sense of remorse that it desires not to continue in the behavior that brought about the sin.
- A contrite heart does not seek to blame circumstances or other people or God for our own failure.
 - Remember Adam saying, “The woman YOU gave me handed me the fruit and I ate it. Eve pointed to the SERPENT and said, “He deceived me and I ate.” Adam blamed God and Eve; Eve blamed the serpent.
- A contrite heart recognizes that sin is a spiritual crime since it is a violation of God’s law.
- A contrite heart recognizes that sin is an offense against all that is decent, moral and right.
- A contrite heart recognizes rebellion, disobedience, and stubbornness of heart.

When we become aware of our sins, iniquities and transgressions, and are contrite, we need to know that:

- God isn’t interested in empty apologies (having no real substance of remorsefulness).
- God doesn’t want cheap promises or resolutions (given with little to no real effort; or without true respect for God).
- God cares nothing for our efforts to do more good in an effort to balance off the evil we committed.

God desires a broken and contrite heart which is the true sacrifice of one who determines to turn from sin, to forsake sin, and to abandon sin. This act of turning from sin begins with confession. David’s first act of repentance was to confess his sins before God.

Psalm 51:3-4 (NKJV).

For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight. That you may be found just when you speak, and blameless when you judge.

There are two sides to his confession:

1. He confessed to himself: I know, I am acquainted with, I recognize my sin. I cannot deny it or escape it or forget it. The memory haunts me, the devil accuses me, the sin taunts me, and it is always before me.
2. He confesses to God: “Against you only have I sinned.” David realizes that although his act involved another human being, it was ultimately against God. This is the same with us. When we commit acts against others it is not unto them that we do such things, it is against God. While they may be the object in our direct path, the act we commit against them is as if we have committed it against God. Jesus gives an example in Matthew 25:34-40 when he judges the nations and makes reference to those who fed the hungry, took the stranger in and clothed the naked. Jesus tells them they have done these acts unto him. The people questioned how this was so and Jesus responded with “inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to me”.

Along with David’s admission of guilt is a confession of God’s correctness and justice in judging him for his sin. David makes no plea for indulgent lenience or permissiveness, no claim that God is being too hard on him, no appeal for a light sentence. Simply put, it is, “I am wrong, you are right!” This genuine confession demands:

- A right estimate of sin. It is not a mistake, or a slip, or mischief.
- A right attitude to sin. A loathing, a disgust, a disapproval.
- A right conduct with regard to sin. A forsaking of and a determined renunciation of sin.

Offering God the perfect sacrifice:

David knew in his soul, and was convicted in his heart, that mere external forms of religious sacrificial worship in and of themselves do not bring God's forgiveness without a humble and penitent faith behind them. The sacrificial system of ancient Israel mandated that every sacrifice was assumed to be vitally connected with the spirit of worship. Unless the heart accompanied the sacrifice God rejected the gift. David knew that his sense of sin and guilt required more than burnt offerings for his sins; hence he offers his broken spirit and contrite heart. He offers himself unto God that God may forgive him of his iniquity, purge him in the inward parts, allow him to remain in his presence, and restore him the joy of God's salvation. True repentance begins in the spirit and heart. True repentance comes along with the broken heart.

Conclusion

When we are broken and undone by God, it brings us to our knees only because we see the righteousness of who God is. God's kindness then brings us to repentance so that we can reconcile our relationship with Him. When God restores us it is so that we too can then teach others who have sinned against God to turn back to Him (verse 13). When we reach this pinnacle, we have come to the place of offering a sacrifice unto God that will not be despised. May you be ever blessed my brother and my sister as you seek to live submitted unto God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable which is your reasonable service.

God's peace and blessing be upon you....

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