

Weekly Newsletter: 17th September 2024

Reflection: True repentance

By Lorna Ferguson

"My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise." (Psalm 51:17)

Have you ever found yourself more concerned about being found out than about the thing you did wrong in the first place? This happened to me recently. I did something I shouldn't have, then realised that others might find out, so decided to confess in advance. For a few days I felt awful about it. However, on reflection, I realised that I was feeling bad about others knowing, rather than about what I had actually done. My perspective needed to change! So I turned to Psalm 51, one of the main psalms of repentance.

It is believed that David wrote this psalm after the prophet Nathan confronted him about his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. The original story can be found in 2 Samuel 11-12. From the roof of his palace, David saw Bathsheba bathing and sent messengers to bring her to him. When she announced that she was pregnant, David's initial response was not to repent, but rather to try to cover up his sin by arranging for Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to come home and spend time with his wife. When that didn't work, he arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle. Despite the gravity of his actions, David didn't repent of these sins at the time. In fact, he justified the killing of Uriah by telling the military commander not to be upset because "the sword devours one as well as another" (2 Samuel 11:29). It was only about a year later, when Nathan confronted him with all the sordid details, that David realised the depths of his sin and truly repented.

What changed in David that led him to repentance? I think it is because through Nathan's words and the allegory he told of the poor man's little lamb, David began to see his sin as God saw it. Let's look at some of what he writes in Psalm 51.

David starts by reminding himself of God's mercy, compassion and unfailing or steadfast love. Surely this was what he had forgotten when he had Bathsheba brought to him, and when he had Uriah placed in the front line of battle. But now he calls to mind who God is and his heart is broken, not because of the fear of punishment or others finding out, but because he understands that he has sinned against his compassionate and loving God. "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (verse 4).

Rather than minimise what he did, David has a broad understanding of his sin. In verses 1-2, he uses three different words to describe it. 'Pasha' in verse 1 is translated as transgressions. This contains the idea of rebellion, of betraying trust in a relationship. In verse 2, David uses the word 'avon', translated as iniquity. This has the sense of something which is crooked, bent or distorted. Finally, David uses the word 'khata',

which means missing the mark, failing to do what you know is right. What David had done was not just one of these, it was all three: a crooked thing, missing the mark of the behaviour God required, and a betrayal of his relationship with God.

David no longer seeks to justify his sin. He knows it comes from his very nature (verse 5). There is no blame-shifting anymore either. Now he realises, as Nathan had challenged him, that he was the one who had killed Uriah and taken Bathsheba as his own (2 Samuel 12:9). His sin is against God and God only, and the responsibility is David's and David's only.

In order to truly repent, we need to be able to see our sin in the same way. That however much we may have hurt someone else, at its core our sin is an act of rebellion against our loving and merciful God. We sin because we want or choose to, no excuses, no blame-shifting. Only when we start to see our sin as God sees it will we genuinely have "a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart" (verse 17). It is then that we can ask God to create a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within us (verse 10) and to restore the joy of our salvation (verse 12). In fact, the more we understand what our sin really is, the more we understand the depths of God's amazing love and mercy towards us.

As Tim Keller wrote: "The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."

New Members Classes

In September there will be membership classes for people interested in committing themselves more formally to the mission and communal life of HEC. These classes will be run on Wednesday evenings before the prayer meeting, **meeting this Wednesday**. This time will be used for a particular reason: the prayer meeting is one of the most important elements of our shared life as a church. On Wednesday nights, prospective members will be able not just to learn more about HEC, but also experience the prayer meeting itself. If anyone has questions about the new members class, please contact Joe.

Home Group Training

As part of the launch of our new home groups, Jon Gemmell is going to lead some training on small groups on three Wednesday evenings (**25th September, 2nd October and 30th October**). The training is for everyone and will take place at our normal prayer meeting of time of 7pm. The plan is for Jon to teach for about 30 minutes and then we'll have 30 minutes of prayer. The topics are listed below and it's a wonderful opportunity as our new home groups begin -

- Word Ministry in the local church and the unique contribution of small groups... **AIMS**
- Writing Better Bible Studies and Making Bible Studies Better... **MATERIAL**
- The Messy Draw of Bible Study Tips and Tricks... **HOW TO STUFF**

HEC's 10th Birthday

Holyrood Evangelical Church is 10 years old this year! To mark the occasion we're going to have a congregational lunch after the morning service on **Sunday 27th October**. Please save the date!

Women's Discipleship at HEC



We're looking forward to the **Ladies' Bible Studies** starting back again this **Thursday (19th September)** at 10.30am in the church. Come along as we look at some of the conversations Jesus had with people in the gospels and what we can learn from them, it promises to be a great study!

We'll run for six weeks until Thursday 31st October (taking Thursday 17th October off).

In November, we are thinking about running **online Bible studies** on Tuesday evenings from 7-8pm. Please let me know if this would be something that you would be keen to take part in by completing this quick [google form](#). We're just trying to gauge interest at this stage.

Final thing, let's talk about **Ladies' Breakfasts!** We're hoping to have two over the coming months on –

- Saturday 16th November – Getting together around God's word
- Saturday 15th February – Lorna Ferguson will be our speaker

Save the dates and more details will follow nearer the time! If you have any questions, please contact Liz@holyroodevangelical.org

Book Group – Change of Date

The book group will now meet on **12th October** (and not 28th September) at 3.30pm and we will be reading Max Lucado's *Anxious for Nothing*, as recommended by David Nixon. For further details please speak to Anncris (anncris@gmail.com)

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday:
 - New Members Class at 6pm in person in the church
 - Prayer Meeting in person at 7pm (and on Zoom), refreshments served from 6.45pm
- Thursday: Women's Bible Studies at 10.30am in the church
- Sunday:
 - Morning service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
 - Evening service at 6pm – Jon Gemmell preaching on Lamentations 2 (live streamed)
- Monday: Baby and Toddler Group at 10am



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