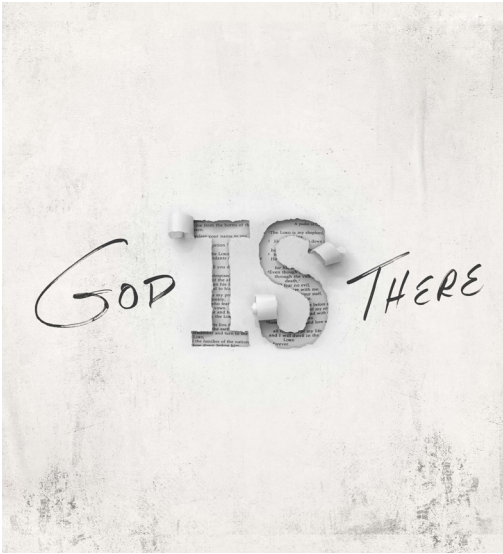




Sermon Growth Guide

July 23, 2023

When You've Made Mistakes



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God Is There - When You've Made Mistakes

Psalm 51

Key Verse: Psalm 46:1 "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Big Idea: God Is There when you make mistakes, and confession is the beginning of the restoration journey.

Foundations

This summer, we're going through the Psalms and remembering that **God Is There**, even when _____. This week we note that God is there when we make mistakes.

Sometimes, smart people do dumb things; wise people do foolish things; good people do bad things; godly people do sinful things. The older I get, the more tempted I am to think that God may just be done with me. Will God really forgive me AGAIN?

When you fail and fall into sin, it is time to turn toward God, not away from God. You need humility and forgiveness, not shame and guilt. God will forgive.

In 2 Samuel 11-12, we see David stumble and fall. He engages in adultery, then murder to cover up that affair. This is a devastating moment in his life. But he doesn't seem to recognize this as sin until the prophet Nathan brings the hard truth forward in a parable. It's from that place of brokenness that we receive Psalm 51.

It is truly amazing that David is called a man after God's own heart even with this shameful, murderous event as part of his story. It becomes clear as we engage Psalm 51 that God doesn't expect sinlessness and a mistake-free life; but God expects and responds to humble hearts that turn to Him. May we have our hearts softened over and over again.

Understanding God's Word

Together, read Psalm 51. What does this psalm teach us about God's character? How does David go about acknowledging his own sinfulness and the need for spiritual cleansing? How does this confession relate to the concept of repentance and confession in Christianity?

David desires a pure heart and a steadfast spirit. Can Christians cultivate these qualities in their own lives? What role does God play in the process of transformation and renewal?

Applying God's Word

Is there anything weighing on your heart that you need to bring to the Lord this week? Is there anything you need to acknowledge with your Life Group?

The psalmist expresses the desire to be restored to the joy of God's salvation. How can believers maintain a sense of joy in their relationship with God throughout the years?

Witnessing God's Word

David declares his intention to teach transgressors God's ways and lead sinners back to Him. As Christians, how can we effectively share our faith and be a positive influence on others?

How does our own personal transformation inform our actions as it pertains to the task of evangelism and discipleship?

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Good morning, I'm Greg, one of the pastors here. You may not know this about me... and I'm risking sounding a little bit arrogant here, but I had a real shot at playing professional basketball. Or, at least that's what I thought back in 6th grade. You see, one night my friends and I watched footage from the NBA slam-dunk contest and decided if we were going to make it big, we needed to work on our moves. I had a hoop on my driveway, so, the next day, we all assembled at my house, ready to go. There was one problem: My mom's minivan was on the driveway and she was down the street at a neighbor's house. That would have stopped many kids, but not me! I recognized that the minivan was actually at the perfect location on the driveway to function as a sort of slam-dunk-ramp...a launchpad to neighborhood glory!

So, we raised the height on the hoop to a dunk-able level and I had the honors of the maiden flight. I started running from the garage, jumped onto the hood of the minivan, ran up the windshield and across the roof, flew into the air, and performed a perfect between-the-legs "rider" dunk...the crowd went wild!!!! So awesome!!! However, I heard something odd while hitting the apex of my basketball career. So, I went back to the front of the van and, sure enough, I'd shattered the windshield. Right where my foot had stepped, there was a spider-web of glass!!!! I looked at my friends, and as fast as my legs could carry me, I ran to grab the broomstick to drop the hoop to where it normally was, put the basketball in the garage so there wasn't any evidence, sprinted right up to my bedroom, and **HID** under my bed. No joke. There I was, a terrified and guilt-ridden 12-year-old, waiting for my mom to come home.

I'd made a pretty big mistake, but rather than owning up to it, I tried to hide it and hide myself. As I've gotten older, there have been plenty of other moments like this. I've lied to people and then tried to cover my tracks. I created cheat sheets for tests and then swallowed them or flushed them down the toilet so I wouldn't get caught. I've judged and spoken badly of people and then tried to deny it. Really, I've spent far too much time in my life doing things I'm ashamed of and then attempting to hide the evidence. What about you? I mean, we look like a pretty decent bunch of people, but the truth is, even in a room full of Christians:

- Many of us are ruled by selfishness and pride.
- Many treat our families worse than acquaintances.
- Many of us struggle with sexual immorality.
- We steal, we lie, we are overwhelmed by jealousy.
- We're consumed by sin, infected with "sin-disease."

And when our "sin-disease" leads us to sinful actions, what's our first instinct? Like me with the minivan, it's to hide. We learned this from our great-great-grandparents. In Genesis, Adam and Eve were in the garden, walking and talking with God. But they gave into the deception of the serpent, and after consuming forbidden fruit, they hid from God. Ashamed. But hiding isn't a great plan, at least not in the long run. It's certainly the natural thing to do, but we know that unresolved sin is like a disease that eats away at you from the inside. The psalmist writes about unconfessed sin: "When I kept silent, my bones

wasted away through my groaning all day long" (Psalm 32:3).

I spent a summer working for a tiling company. I tore out old bathrooms and kitchens in high-rise apartments and homes around Chicago. Often, I'd start tearing apart a shower or countertop and would discover mold everywhere! Now, if you've got mold growing behind tile, you might not actually "see" it and might think everything is fine, but it's really not. It's a problem. When my wife and I moved into our house here in the Springs, I noticed that familiar "give" in the side of our shower, indicating a rotted wall. And I bet you have an idea of what I did; I ripped it all out and threw up new insulation/backerboard/tile ASAP, right!?

ACTUALLY, I didn't do it AS SOON as possible. I just told my wife that we couldn't use that bathroom...for like six MONTHS! So, there it sat, an unused shower until I finally dealt with the problem. That's what happens to our souls when we sit with hidden sin.

So, is there any hope? Is God still there when we make mistakes? There's a shocking story in 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12. David, the king of Israel, is at home in his palace while his army is engaged in a battle with their enemies. This is already a problem...David should be out with his forces. One evening, while walking his palace, he notices a woman bathing. Consumed by lust, David has the woman brought to him, despite learning she's married to one of his soldiers. Her name is Bathsheba, and through that encounter she becomes pregnant. To cover his tracks, David summons Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, from the front lines, gets him drunk, and tries to convince him to spend the night with his wife. But Uriah is an honorable man and refuses to indulge in the comforts of home while his brothers-in-arms are fighting for their lives.

So, David sends Uriah back with a sealed note instructing his commanding officer to place Uriah in a situation where he is guaranteed to be killed. Uriah dies and David takes Bathsheba as his wife. And chapter 11 ends with an ominous note saying, "the thing David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Sam 11:27b). Chapter 12 then opens with the Lord sending the Prophet Nathan to confront David. Nathan tells David a story about a wealthy man who steals and butchers the only sheep of a very very poor man to feed a visitor. David is enraged at the wealthy man's deed, until Nathan explains to David that HE is the wealthy man in the story, stealing Bathsheba from Uriah. At that moment, David's eyes are opened to the horrors of what he has done.

It is out of that situation that we receive Psalm 51. We read:

(1-3) RECOGNIZE

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
 - 2 Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
 - 3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me. *Psalm 51:1-3*
- David begins this prayer by **RECOGNIZING** his sin. Remember that David didn't initially run to

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confession. The Lord sends the Prophet Nathan and has to take a back door to get into David's heart.

The same is true for us. We're often not good at recognizing our own sin. The prophet Jeremiah reminds us that "The heart is deceitful above all things..." (Jer 17:9). Sometimes our own hearts don't allow us to see the sin in our lives! In our spiritual journeys, there are two ditches we can sometimes find ourselves in, ditches that our hearts tend to steer us into. One is jumping to forgiveness too quickly. The other is never really getting there.

1) The first ditch alongside the road has been called "Presumption." It's the sense that "God is going to forgive me no matter what, so the things I do wrong aren't a big deal." It is spiritual arrogance. Cheap Grace. We can imagine King David swerving into this ditch as he contemplated his actions with Bathsheba and Uriah. Do you ever veer toward this side of the road? Are there decisions you're intentionally making, presuming that God will forgive you? Maybe there's something hiding in your heart this morning, something you haven't sincerely taken to God. Don't live like that any longer! **RECOGNIZE** your sin. Bring it to the Lord!

2) The ditch on the other side of the road is called "Despair."

It's the thought that, "I am too far gone! Too broken, too sinful, too disgusting, too unlovable, too vile to ever be forgiven." This creeps up when we're aware of sin in our life, but we just try to bury it and move on. We try to continue along even though we feel out of control and can't curb our anger, even though words of criticism and gossip keep flying out of our mouths, even though we can no longer get to sleep without our substance of choice. But the Lord doesn't leave co-existing with our sin as an option for us. That's not the "life in all its fullness" that Jesus has come to give us! That's like living with mold rotting out the wall of your shower. Like driving a mini-van with a shattered windshield.

So, the first hurdle to jump when moving from a place of having our "bones waste away through groaning all day long" (Psalm 32:3) to a place of restoration is **RECOGNIZING** the sin in our lives. This isn't easy and often can't happen alone. Do you have a Nathan in your life who can help you recognize when things are out of alignment? Who knows you at this level and has permission to speak to you about hard things?

• We are launching new Life Groups in August. Maybe that's a step toward letting people in. Letting people get to know you at that level. If you don't have these people yet, keep an eye out for that.

When we finally get to a place of **RECOGNIZING** our sin, we can begin moving forward. So, David continues...

(4-6) REFLECT

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;

so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

5 Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place. *Psalm*

51:4-6

David has recognized his sin, and now starts to **REFLECT** on the nature of sin. In verse 4, he says to the Lord, "Against you, you only, have I sinned..." Now, that can't be right, can it? What about Uriah? What about Bathsheba? For David, none of that compares to sinning against God. Furthermore, it's not only this particular situation that weighs on David; it's the state of sinfulness in which he and we live. David knows he has been consumed by sin before he was even born. There has never been a time in which he was "good."

Our world disagrees. It says that we ARE inherently good. That we should follow our desires. That we should do what feels good. There's a classic Luther Ingram song from the '70s (ironically, a song about committing adultery) that declares, "If loving you is wrong then I don't want to be right!" That's the attitude of our culture. But David knows there is something outside of himself that measures goodness, something outside of himself which should inform his actions. David knows that wisdom and justice come from the Lord, not from inside himself.

Continuing on, David pleads with God:

(7-12) RESTORATION

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

9 Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. *Psalm 51:7-12*

David longs for **RESTORATION**. He longs for things to be made right, for a clean slate, a fresh start. Real damage has been done. A man is dead, a woman has been treated like a pawn, and David has likely lost the trust of at least one military leader. But David knows that he must return to a right relationship with the Lord before he can move forward. He must be purified before he can even think about addressing those other things.

The Hyssop plant mentioned in verse 7 had several ceremonial uses in ancient Israel. It was used when a leper was going through a ritual cleansing, to purify someone made unclean by touching a corpse, and it was also part of the Passover. You may remember that to extract the Israelites from Egyptian captivity, God instructed Moses to have every Israelite family sacrifice a lamb. They then took blood from the lamb and put it on the door frames of their homes using hyssop branches. The blood of the Passover Lamb marked the people as belonging to the Lord. That night, those whose homes were marked with the blood of the Lamb were "passed over" while those who didn't were visited by death in their households.

More than a thousand years later, John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Not long after that, Jesus is sacrificed on a cross and once again, there is blood on a frame. When we sincerely acknowledge our brokenness and sinfulness to the Lord and ask for forgiveness, when we surrender our lives to God

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and acknowledge Jesus as Lord, we are united with Christ. Through this, we know the “joy of salvation.” We’re made new, restored, cleansed through the life, death, and resurrection, of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Remember my mom’s windshield? Listen, there’s no amount of “chip-filler” that would have covered that up; the glass had to be completely replaced. That’s what we have in Christ, and that’s what David is asking for. He’s asking the Lord to create a new thing in him. A pure heart! He knows he can’t forgive himself, can’t make himself clean, can’t renew his own spirit. The Lord must intervene.

David goes on:

(13-19) RESPONSE/RESPONSIBILITY/God’s Response...

- 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.
14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
15 Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.
18 May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
19 Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the
righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then
bulls will be offered on your altar. *Psalm 51:13-19*

Once David has been set right with God, he’s going to be ready to **RESPOND**. He’s going to teach others God’s ways and work toward conversion. He’s going to be vocal about God’s righteousness, declaring the praises of the Lord. This isn’t “bargaining” with God. It’s not making a deal—saying, “forgive me and then...” David knows that God will not be manipulated, that God requires genuine repentance. It’s not enough for David to pay lip service to God, to commit to donating a large sum to the poor, to bring a big sacrifice to the altar. God knows the heart. God sees our motives and our true desires. God knows what is in our spirit and will not settle for anything less than true repentance. David knows he will be ready to teach others because he will have learned what it is to be far from God and then to be brought back into the fold. David is ready to become a “Nathan” for someone else, helping others see where their lives are out of alignment with the Lord.

David messed things up so horribly here with Uriah and Bathsheba, but it gets turned around. He certainly wasn’t perfect from that point on, (keep reading 2 Samuel and you’ll see), but he turned his life over to the Lord and the Lord worked in him. So, it seems that God doesn’t expect a mistake-free life; but God expects and responds to humble hearts that turn to Him. That’s the sacrifice that “delights” the Lord. So, what would it look like if you allowed the Lord to really work in your heart? To get to work restoring your most broken pieces?

There’s an old story that preachers tell (maybe you’ve heard it before)... In the middle ages, two brothers

were caught stealing sheep. And according to the punishment of those days, their foreheads were branded with the letters “S.T.” which stood for “Sheep Thief.” One of the brothers was so filled with shame, so embarrassed, that he ran off to another region, and eventually died full of bitterness. The other brother decided to stay in the town and make the best of it. Over time, he almost became a servant of the community. He was known for bringing food to the sick, caring for the elderly, assisting his neighbors however he could. Throughout the years, he grew in integrity and respectability. He became a different person. Many years later, a stranger came to the village and happened to notice this old man with the letters “S.T.” branded on his forehead. He asked one of the locals what it meant. After giving it some thought, the villager said, “You know, it happened so long ago that I can’t remember the particulars. But I think the letters are an abbreviation for the word ‘Saint.’”

What would it take for you to allow God to restore you like he did the sheep thief? Like I did with my shower? Like we had to do with my mom’s windshield? What would it take for you let God reignite hope in you that there will be a day when you won’t be overcome by anger, jealousy, lust, complaining or bitterness? Are you willing to let Him do that work in your life? Do you believe He can?

Just like David, we will continue to sin and make mistakes in life. That’s the old Adam continually rising up and marring the image of God in us. But rather than running and hiding, rather than drowning in shame, rather than being dismissive of our sin, we are invited to confession as the beginning of restoration. We’ll need to come back to confession again and again, but, we can rest assured that **God Is There** when we’ve made mistakes.

So, to close, I invite you to bring your broken spirit, your broken and contrite heart as a sacrifice to the Lord in confession. First, in silence, consider what the Holy Spirit is stirring up in you this morning. What do you need to ask forgiveness for? And then we’ll continue together in prayer.

Silent Prayer, à Sanctuary Prayer of Confession
Almighty and merciful God, we have erred and strayed from Your ways. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended Your holy laws. We have run from you, attempting to hide our sin. O Lord, have mercy upon us. Spare those who confess their faults. We bring broken spirits and contrite hearts as a sacrifice asking that you would restore us. Grant, O merciful God, that we may live a holy, just, and humble life to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

Assurance

1 John 1:8-9 – “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” You belong to the Lord, and are forgiven, so be at peace.