

A PROPER REACTION TO PERSONAL SIN

From *When God Shows Up*

by Dave Butts



CRY OUT TO THE LORD

Lord, I want to be honest with You about my sin. I want to turn away from sinfulness, ask for Your forgiveness, and because of that forgiveness revel in the closeness of the relationship I have with You. I want the times of refreshing that You have promised: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord"

(Acts 3:19, NIV)

PREFACE

As followers of Jesus pray for revival, most of us understand, at least at some level, that our own sin indicates the need for revival and that our sin may also be blocking the coming of that revival. Looking to past revivals for guidance, it seems that without repentance there is no expectation of revival. Therefore, it becomes imperative that we demonstrate a proper response to personal sin. As we get serious about dealing with our own sin, then God begins to respond to our prayers and pleas for His presence, demonstrating His power by awakening our hearts and the hearts of others.

Dealing with personal sin is something that should be taught at an early stage in our Christian life. The apostle John tells us, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:8 NIV). How do Christians deal with personal sin in an intentional way so that we are not deceived? There appear to be two extremes that many believers struggle with. One extreme that seems prevalent in the church today is to ignore sin, or to distort its seriousness. We lose sight of the call to holiness and what it means to follow Jesus. The other extreme is to be afraid that every time you sin you've lost your salvation. There are those who live in such a state of fear that they can hardly function as Christians.

The biblical way to deal with personal sin is perhaps best found in Psalm 51. David wrote and prayed this psalm right after he had been exposed as an adulterer and murderer. We can learn the proper reaction to personal sin from David.

First, there must be an acknowledgement of sin. Until we accept the fact that there is sin in our lives, there can be no confession, forgiveness, or restoration. Confession is basically agreeing with God that what we have done is sin. In Psalm 51:4, David makes the important step of realizing that sin is an affront to God Himself: "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." When we understand this fact, sorrow for our sin becomes real and leads to further steps.

As David begins to understand the depths of his sin, he expresses his desire for cleansing and forgiveness. In his eagerness to receive forgiveness, he uses a variety of terms: "have mercy," "blot out," "wash away," "cleanse." It all comes down to asking God for forgiveness. The promise of Scripture is that God will forgive. It is important for Christians to memorize and believe with all their hearts the truth of 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins,

he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”



PRAY and Experience Scripture

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. (Psalm 51:1–2)

Be still before the Lord and offer the same type of prayers that David prayed as he repented of his sin.

*Search me, O Lord, for **sins that hinder me** from hearing You. Free me from all moral filth, evil, malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. Free me to have a cleansed heart and mind. Speak now, Lord, for I am listening.*

*Search me, O Lord, for **unresolved emotions** that keep me from hearing You. Free me from any guilt or condemnation, any anger or bitterness, any fear or anxiety. Free me to live each moment in the present with You.*

*Search me, O Lord, for **childish things** that distract me from hearing You. Free me from rationalizing my behavior and blaming others. Free me to practice personal responsibility before You and others.*

*Search me, O Lord, for areas of **self-focus** that prevent me from hearing You. Free me from my thoughts, my ways, my ideas, and my goals. May I instead embrace Your thoughts, Your ways, Your ideas, and Your goals. Speak now, Lord, for I am listening.*

Wait before the Lord. Listen as He reveals what needs to be put away from your life.

 Lord, I sense the need to put away _____
from my life. I ask Your forgiveness for holding onto this. Remove it from
my life so that I can draw closer to You.

True repentance never stays merely at the stage of confessing sin and desiring forgiveness. It moves us beyond that to a desire for a pure heart. There comes a longing to stay out of sin and to walk in victory. It means crying out, "O God, don't let me do this again!" David prayed this way: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). In asking for a new heart, we realize the need for sanctification, the power not to sin.

In our Christian walk, we will sin. But our desires, because of Christ, have changed. In fact, we have come to hate sin, especially in ourselves. Our desire is now for purity and holiness. If that desire is not in you, then you've never fully dealt with sin in your life. All too many Christians short-circuit the process of repentance and stop before they get to this point. If you are actively engaged in sin, please ask the Lord for strength to confess it, repent of it, and renounce it once and for all!

What happens in us after we have gone through this process of confession and repentance? David's response to forgiveness was to experience a restoration of joy and praise. "Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (Psalm 51:12 NIV). God's people are a forgiven people who have something to shout about, and who have a reason for joy. Peter writes, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9 NIV). Praise is what forgiven people do!



LEARN to Encounter Jesus

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV)

Reflect on the reason Christ became sin—or, more personally, for *whom* did He suffer and give His life on Calvary? Listen as Jesus whispers these words to your soul, “I did it for you. I did it for you!” The One who knew no sin became sin for you and for me (2 Corinthians 5:21). Allow yourself to respond to this glorious truth. Is your heart moved with wonder, humility, and joy? Do gratitude and praise fill your soul? Share these feelings with God.

Lord, I am so grateful that _____.

David even goes beyond worship in his response to the forgiveness of God. He did not keep what God had done bottled up inside him. He had been forgiven, and he wanted the world to know it. He declared, “Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you” (Psalm 51:13 NIV). If we are going to be effective in sharing the gospel, it’s going to be because we really believe that God has done something tremendous in our lives and we want that to happen in others’ lives, too.

How do you deal with sin in your life? God has provided the answer to your sins in the person of Jesus. He doesn’t want a single one of us to walk around burdened by sin. Perhaps right now is the time to bring your sins to the only One who can deal with them. Church attendance won’t cleanse you from sin. Ministry and acts of service won’t take care of your sin. Only Jesus can do

that. God is calling the church to repentance! Turn from sin! Agree with God about the sinfulness of your sin. Ask for forgiveness. Trust in the cleansing blood of Jesus to provide not only forgiveness, but also the power to avoid sin in the future. Begin today to sing the praises of the One who has washed you and made you clean forever.



LOVE Others in Community

Look back over your journey with Jesus. How have you experienced His forgiveness? How did He cleanse you, and how have you experienced His great love?

Tell another person your story of gratitude for God's forgiveness. Celebrate the changes God has made in you and give Him praise. Your words might begin something like this: "I am incredibly grateful for God's forgiveness. I can't imagine what my life would have been without His mercy."



SHARE with Others in Community

Ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to tell your story of forgiveness to a person who doesn't yet have a relationship with Jesus. Listen to their story. Ask permission to tell your story with words such as these: "I still have a long way to go, but I am grateful for the changes God has made in my life so far. His forgiveness has made all the difference in the world. Do you mind if I share my story with you?"