

Psalm 51

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you.

Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem.

Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

It Is That Easy

2015 is a(nother) significant year in the life of Woodside Church. This year we are going through the Bible, together, using *The Story*. We started in January with Genesis, and concluded the Old Testament in June. In September we’ll begin the New Testament, which we’ll move through in the fall. Since *The Story* includes selections from the Bible, there are parts that were skipped over, including the Wisdom literature (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes). So this summer we’re hearing “The Rest of the Story.” We spent three weeks in Job, and now we’re on week three of four in the Psalms.

Did you ever ask yourself “Where does the word “psalm” come from?” It comes from the Greek *psalmoi* – to sing to the accompaniment of a harp or lyre. In the Hebrew tradition, the book is called *tehillim* – or “praises.” The root word *hll* is reflected in the word “Hallelujah” which in the Old Testament appears only in the Psalms.¹

The Psalms serve as both the “prayer book” and the “praise book” of the faithful. In faith it speaks *to* God in prayer, and *about* God in praise. Therefore, the Psalter (fancy way of saying “the Book of Psalms”) is theologically rich. The Psalter is a large collection of independent pieces of many kinds, serving different purposes. A brief summary of the theology will be selective and incomplete.²

Before I turn to the different types of Psalms, I have a suggestion. Please use the Woodside website³ and app as a reference. Both include a full manuscript of this sermon. Today I am going to cover a lot of Scriptural ground. At the end of the manuscript you’ll find the complete Scriptural texts, many of which I’ll just briefly summarize today. And you’ll also find “bonus content.” For example, those who read my manuscript on Job from July 2nd would find the following footnote 10:

Terence Fretheim, *The Suffering of God* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1984). One of my greater joys was a dinner with Terry and his wife Faith in March 2014 in Minneapolis, Minn. I was the “plus one” of my friend the Rev. Natalie Gessert at the house of Michael and Katherine Chan. Terry taught at Luther for many years, Michael is new to the faculty, and Natalie was friends with Michael when they were both in the MDiv program at Luther Seminary. What does this have to do with Job? Nothing. I had dinner with Terry and Faith Fretheim, and it was awesome.

Back to the Psalms, there are different types of Psalms, which Biblical scholars will classify differently. Rolf Jacobson⁴ proposes the following:

- Prayers for Help (Laments) – requesting divine rescue from various crises. Example is Psalm 13. There are more prayers for help than any type of Psalm. I do not understand why people say “I cannot pray, I’m angry at God” because my thought is there are a LOT of “angry” prayers – these prayers of lament. Others include Psalms 3, 4, 5, 11, 13, 16, 17, 22, 26, 27, 28, 31, 35, 41, 42, 43, 44, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69, 70, 71, 74, 77, 79, 80, 83, 84, 86, 88, 89, 94, 102, 109, 120, 123, 129, 137, 140, 143 (remember, check the Woodside App or website for the manuscript).
- Hymns of Praise – for the community to sing in worship. Example is Psalm 117. Others include 8, 19, 24, 29, 33, 47, 50, 65, 66, 76, 77, 93, 95, 96, 97, 99, 104, 111, 113, 114, 115, 134, 139, 147, 148, 150.
- Songs of Thanksgiving – songs to praise God following an experience of having been rescued from God from some crisis. Example is Psalm 30. Others include 8, 9, 18, 19, 21,

23, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 40, 41, 46, 48, 65, 66, 68, 75, 76, 81, 85, 91, 98, 100, 103-108, 111, 116, 117, 118, 121, 124, 126, 129, 135, 136, 138, 144, 145, 146, 149

- Instructional Psalms (Wisdom) – Psalms intended to teach. Example is Psalm 41. Others include 1, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34, 36, 37, 39, 49, 50, 52, 53, 58, 73, 75, 82, 84, 90, 91, 92, 94, 101, 112, 119, 121, 125, 127, 128, 131, 133.
- Royal Psalms – About Israel’s kings or composed for them to perform. Example is Psalm 2. Others include 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144.
- Penitential / Repentance Psalms – dealing with forgiveness. Example is Psalm 51. Others include 6, 25, 32, 38, 102, 130, 143.
- And there are other types, too.⁵

Two weeks ago Gloria preached on Psalm 1 (an instructional psalm) and a great place to start any discussion of the Psalter. Last week Martha preached magnificently on Psalm 22 (a (perhaps *the*) psalm of affliction) with her sermon “The “Y” Word”. And though I was out of town, I was able to hear her sermon by way of... you guessed it – the app. Today we look at the penitential psalms – that is, psalms of sin and repentance.

You might be wondering why I picked the psalms about repentance. I’m glad you asked.

Repentance is the mission that Jesus gives himself in Mark’s Gospel.

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. **Repent** and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15).

Same in Matthew’s Gospel:

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matthew 4:17).

Luke makes the same claim:

“I have not come to call the righteous, but **sinner to repentance**” (Luke 5:32).

And John gets in on the action, too. In his first letter, John writes:

“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

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.** If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us (1 John 1:5-9).

In the words of John Calvin, “the sum of the Gospel is held to consist in repentance and forgiveness of sins.”⁶

And why is it that we hear so little about sin, and the need for repentance? The great Pat Miller⁷ (the Emeritus Charles T. Haley Professor of Old Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary) observes:

It is still very difficult for anyone to say, at least in the moral sphere, "I'm not OK," and even less likely that one will risk saying to another, "You're not OK."

There is a large inclination within us not to take responsibility for our misdeeds and thus not to confess them as sins. That is nothing new. It is as old as the Garden of Eden and that first human response to the first question of moral accountability: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (Gen. 3:12). It is somebody else's fault, or even God's.

But this unwillingness to accept responsibility, to discern and accept moral accountability seems especially acute in our time. There seems to be an increasing tendency to assume or claim that someone else has really brought about the trouble that seems to have our fingerprints on it.

Social analysis has taught us to analyze and look for a pattern of causation that reduces blame, that distances personal accountability from the act as the various "contributing factors" of environment, heredity, temporary insanity, provocation, and the like are uncovered that account for the act in a way that leaves little room for one to say "I have sinned."

Even Pharaoh confessed his sin!

- Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. “**This time I have sinned,**” he said to them. “The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong (Exodus 9:27).
- Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “**I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you** (Exodus 10:16).

There is a Scriptural Mandate to confess our sin – “when anyone becomes aware that they are guilty in any of these matters, **they must confess in what way they have sinned**” (Leviticus 5:5).

And so, the people of Israel confess their sins [Follow the endnotes for the full Scripture texts.⁸]

- Numbers 14:40
- Deuteronomy 1:41
- Judges 10:10
- Judges 10:15
- 1 Samuel 7:6
- 1 Samuel 12:10

And individuals confess their sin, too.

- Balaam (Numbers 22:34),
- Achan (Joshua 7:20),
- Saul (1 Samuel 15:24; 1 Samuel 15:30; 1 Samuel 26:21), and
- David (2 Samuel 12:13; 2 Samuel 19:20; 2 Samuel 24:10; 2 Samuel 24:17).

Now, before we turn to David and Psalm 51 – this classic psalm of repentance – I’d like to talk about where Psalm 51 fits into the life of communities of faith.

- Its poetry has contributed to the daily Jewish prayer liturgy as well as the Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur services (the highest holy days). Two verses have been set to music; one verse, 17, is repeated three times a day as a prelude to silent prayer, and verse 20 is sung in unison four times each week as the Torah is removed from the ark.⁹

- For Christians, Psalm 51 is in a text read at the start of Lent (the season of repentance, leading to Easter) on Ash Wednesday – every year.
- Psalm 51 has found extensive use in the liturgies of the church, from its required daily use in the Rule of St. Francis ‘for the failings and negligence of the brothers”
- to its every Sunday use as an offertory response in English Lutheran liturgies since the Common Service of 1888, where the focus on “Create in me a clean heart, O God” properly understands the total offering of self implied in the liturgical offering.¹⁰

I have very few criticisms of Woodside. And I enjoy the services here in the Vineyard (both the morning and evening services). And there is ONE thing that is not as frequent as it should be, and this ONE thing is present in the 10:30 a.m. Classic Service. And that is an intentional congregational confession of sin (and the assurance of pardon). If Calvin is right, and I believe he is, that “the sum of the Gospel is held to consist in repentance and forgiveness of sin”, then we need to repent and confess our sin.

And Psalm 51 shows us how to do that.

The “introduction” of Psalm 51 gives us the particular occasion in the life of David, one of twelve such occasions.¹¹ It has to do with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, in 2 Samuel 11-12. David is an adulterer, encountering another man’s wife. And David gets Bathsheba pregnant. And the cover-up is worse than the crime – David brings Uriah (the husband of Bathsheba) home from the frontlines of war and gets Uriah drunk, thinking Uriah will return home and lie with Bathsheba. Then Bathsheba’s pregnancy could be attributed to her husband, Uriah. When Uriah does not want the comforts of home while his troops lie on the ground in battle, David realizes he needs to take extreme measures. David gives sealed orders for Uriah to deliver to Joab, which instruct Joab to put Uriah in the line of fire. And David’s orders are followed, and Uriah is killed. And now David “covers up” his adultery by marrying Bathsheba. And it is this “cover up” that infuriates God.

“Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites” (2 Sam 12:9).

When we think of David, we don’t say: “There goes David, the adulterer, the home-breaker, the husband-killer.”¹² No – instead we quote Paul “God testified concerning David: ‘I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart’” (Acts 13:22b; quoting 1 Sam 13:14). And God describes David to Solomon (David’s son) as “As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did” (1 Kings 9:4a).

How can this be?

It is because David confesses his sin (2 Sam 12), and repents (Psalm 51).

Listen to what happens when Nathan, a prophet of God, confronts David:

Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.’”

Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

Nathan replied, “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.

As quickly as David confessed his sin, Nathan proclaims the Lord has taken it away. Clearly this confession is important. And now we can turn to his penitential Psalm 51, this Psalm of repentance.

The Old Testament scholar Gurdon Oxtoby¹³ points out the wrong for which this sinner seeks forgiveness is not a simple fault, but a complex one. It is, in fact, a series of sins, following one upon another with inevitable consequences, piling up as it were until the psalmist can no longer maintain his self-respect. Unable to bear their weight, and in desperate submission, he throws himself upon the mercy of God, imploring that God’s lovingkindness, revealed to the prophets, may effectively bring relief to the troubled conscience. It is because God is merciful and full of lovingkindness that the sinner dares plead forgiveness. A righteous God demands righteousness in humanity, and this man has fallen short. Note the three words for sin used by him in these opening verses :

1. *My transgressions - pesba*. The Hebrew word used here means the willful breaking of a known law, the deliberate overstepping of a well-marked boundary. This is rebellion against authority, unwillingness to stay within the limits laid down by God for men. Such deliberate disobedience is blameworthy, for no irresponsibility is implied. The rebellious spirit is deserving of punishment.
2. *Mine iniquity - avon*. This word indicates that which is not in conformity with a standard. It is the opposite of righteousness. Instead of being true, or correct, the deed is warped, awry, askew. The parallel English word *wrong* is related to the word *wring*, indicating that which is twisted out of shape. Iniquity is therefore that which is perverted, disregarding the norms and standards of right living.
3. *My sin - chattab*. Here is the word which means to miss the mark, or miss the path. It is error, though not accidental. It is failure to arrive at the goal, failure to achieve, failure to live in ways that God requires. Commonest of all the kinds of sin, it is nevertheless equally devastating in its result, for the sinner just does not arrive where he is supposed to be.

In parallel fashion, the desired forgiveness is described by three different terms:

1. *Blot out - machab*. This means to wipe away, to clear by removal from one's sight. Isaiah 44:22 speaks of blotting out transgressions "as a thick cloud.”
2. *Wash me - kabac*. This word is used of washing clothes, which may be cleansed by treading them in water, so that the stain and soil may be rinsed away.
3. *Cleanse me - taber*. This is a ceremonial word, indicating that the cleansing is in the nature of purification. It is the phrase used in declaring one clean of leprosy. The inner nature is to be purified as well as the outward appearance.

The threefold cleansing is indicative of the poet's comprehension of sin in his appeal to God. The sin, and recovery, is complete – both external *and* internal.

People have been wronged, surely, and important as this may be, it is engulfed in the greater implication that all sin is ultimately against God (an example: “Let us lie down in our shame, and **let our disgrace cover us. We have sinned against the Lord our God**, both we and our ancestors; from our youth till this day we have not obeyed the Lord our God” (Jeremiah 3:25). The endnote has sixteen other proof-texts.¹⁴ God would therefore be perfectly justified in pronouncing a well-deserved judgment of condemnation, and only because this is freely admitted can any claim of divine mercy be recognized.

And yet God’s mercy and lovingkindness continues.

Beth Tanner¹⁵, an Old Testament scholar at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, wisely observes the second part of the psalm is also dominated by pleas, but here the focus is on restoration of the sinner and the relationship between God and the human. This section begins with pleas of restoration (w. 10-12), opening with a request for a "clean" heart

Finally, we learn from this prayer that restoration requires a response. The "cleansing" of the one will produce visible results. The redeemed and restored will "teach," "sing aloud," and "praise" God (w. 13-15). The one praying knows that this great God is more than a celestial vending machine where sins are submitted and a bill of pardon is issued. Real redemption requires real response.

In case the message of genuine redemption is not yet understood, the poem adds one last thought. Outside appearances of religious piety will not fool God (w. 16-17); the cleansing must be from the inside out.¹⁶ What God "delights in" is a person who is not "broken" in the way we may understand it in the modern world, but is "broken" of the pretense that outward acts can atone for sin without a change in the inward ways of thinking and being.

Oxtoby echoes this point. The emphasis is clearly upon the inner quality of life which results in outer action.

It is most significant that the psalm does not end with the assurance of forgiveness. The sensitive soul rightly perceives that this is only the beginning. Now must start a reconstruction of the mind and heart, bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence ; And take not thy holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; And uphold me with a willing spirit.

God's creation is indeed the bringing into being of something new, but the Hebrew word is commonly used in the sense of "transform." Transformation must begin within. The heart, by which the Hebrew meant will and mind and purpose, must be reconstructed before one can truly be changed. This the psalmist has grasped. "Create in me a clean heart, O God," is the high-water mark of the Old Testament redemptive process, indicating a true understanding of what the prophets taught as they sought to bring their fellows into line with the purposes of the God of Israel. When one is governed by a steadfast spirit within, lapses of character will be less frequent, and transformation of personality is well under way.

The salvation asked for and received in Psalm 51 is not so much a saving *from* as a saving *for*. And this saving *for* is to be a witness to others of the transformative love of God.

Claire Brooks¹⁷ observes the greatest joy, like the greatest love, cannot be contained. It overflows like the overflowing cup of the Twenty-third Psalm. The magnitude of God's grace in Psalm 51 is shown in the response: "Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you" (v. 13). Today, our desire for evangelism too often devolves into simply enticing members to leave one congregation in order to join another. This psalm reminds us that the good news expresses itself through us as the uncontainable and joyful announcement that God has restored the relations that we have broken. Lamentably, we are often more comfortable sharing our good news about a newly found restaurant or competent mechanic than we are talking with others about our experiences of God's love. Psalm 51 reminds us of how great a treasure we have to share.

Psalm 51 emphasizes that the moment in which we know ourselves to be forgiven is not so much an end as a beginning. As important as the cessation of guilt may seem, it pales beside a new beginning in which praise pours out of us, not just once, because we owe it to God, but always, because our joy overflows.

Lamar Williamson¹⁸ points out **the road to repentance leads from recognition through remorse to confession and turning.** Of these four stages on the way of repentance the last two are most difficult. For both Judaism and Christianity, they are essential to a right relationship with God. Without them recognition of sin leads to a sense of guilt and remorse, but ends in self-hatred and despair rather than repentance and redemption.

This turning (*epistrepssis, teshuvah*) is essentially a change of heart, but when it is genuine it includes several outward elements. Among these are renunciation of the sin for which one feels sorry, restitution if the sin has harmed others or brought ill-gotten gain, and substitution of a new way of living.

Let's get practical. Woodside's website proclaims we are to “Love God” – “Grow in Grace” – “Share with Others.” What might we share? How might we better recognize our sins, to prepare to confess them? I'd like to suggest we follow an example from “God's Marines” or as they are formally called “The Society of Jesus” – that is, the part of the Catholic Church called the Jesuits, of whom Pope Francis is a member. The Jesuits have process called *examen*, which is Spanish for “examine.” This is a process of examining ones thoughts, words and actions that Jesuits engage at noon and at the close of the day.

"A Method of Making the General Examen" from The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola¹⁹ (founder of the Jesuits):

- "The first point is to give thanks to God our Lord for the gifts received."
- "The second point is to ask for the grace to know my sins and to root them out."
- "The third point is to demand an account of my soul from the moment of rising to that of the present examination, hour by hour or period by period. The thoughts should be examined first, then the words, and finally the actions."
- "The fourth point is to ask pardon of God our Lord for my faults."
- "The fifth point is to resolve to amend with the help of God's grace. Close with the Lord's Prayer."

This process of *examen* is another tool we have to be faithful. For we are called to repent (here are three examples, and there are another 50 in the endnotes)²⁰

- Old Testament: Jeremiah 15:19 The Lord Encourages Jeremiah to Repent - Therefore this is what the Lord says: **“If you repent, I will restore you** that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them.
- Gospels: Luke 24:46-48 Jesus's Final Charge to the Disciples - He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and **repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached** in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.
- Epistles: Peter's Preaching (he follows Christ's command)

- Peter replied, “**Repent and be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
- **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).
- God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to **repentance and forgive their sins** (Acts 5:31).
- **Repent of this wickedness** and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart (Acts 8:22).
- When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted **repentance that leads to life**.” (Acts 11:18).

Sin affects everyone. Romans 3:23 reminds us “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” And Calvin reminds us this fight against sin is a daily struggle. “Far removed from perfection, we must move steadily forward, and though entangled in vices, we must fight daily against them.”²¹

And so Calvin defines repentance. “Repentance can thus well be defined: it is the true turning of our life to God.”²²

Jesus tells us to “repent, and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15). So who else in the New Testament confesses their sin?

Luke tells us about the Prodigal Son.

“I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you” (Luke 15:18). Notice how it owns the sin against God, and against people. And this is a parable, so it’s a story and not a “real” person.

In all of the New Testament, there is one confession of sin.

“I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”

Paul? No.

Peter? Nope.

It’s Matthew 27:4a.

And it is spoken by... Judas Iscariot.

The great Pat Miller²³ will have the last observation - the sense of sin articulated by the psalmist is a real and terrible experience. It has shaken the very ground of his or her being. It has taken all joy out of life.

As much as any lament, this psalm is a cry for help. This person is undone as much as any speaker in the psalms. The destruction of this soul, however, is not by any external forces. It is by the terrible weight of the committed sin and the way it stares him in the face constantly. This is trauma, desperation, a terrible burden that must be lifted.

The focus of this psalm is on the plea for God's grace and compassion. It is Israel's oldest confession of faith that the God it worships is merciful, compassionate, and full of steadfast love (Exod. 34:7).

And if words escape you, and you're looking for words on how to repent, you can faithfully turn to the prayer book of the church, and read Psalm 51. And read it like you mean it.

Repent, and believe the good news.

Truly turn your life toward God.

It is the hardest thing you'll ever do.

It is that easy.

¹ John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 461.

² John Stek, “Commentary on Psalms” in *NIV Study Bible* (Kenneth L. Barker, ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2011), 847.

³ <http://www.woodside-church.org/sermon-downloads.rhtml>; accessed August 8, 2015.

⁴ Rolf A. Jacobson, “Psalms” in *The New Interpreter's Bible One-Volume Commentary* (Beverly Gaventa, ed.; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2006), 308.

⁵ Additional resources include “Psalm” from the netbible (<http://classic.net.bible.org/dictionary.php?word=PSALMS>; accessed August 8, 2015), and “Psalm Types” from quietshout.com (Psalms, Christian Commentary and Bible Study; http://quietshout.com/introduction-to-psalms/psalm-types/#.VcYv9_IViko, accessed June 22, 2015). The table from “Psalm Types” is reprinted below:

Afflictions (Lament) - Prayers for God's deliverance and for comfort when everything seems to be going wrong. Psalms 3-5, 7, 11, 13, 16, 17, 22, 26-28, 31, 35, 41-44, 54-57, 59-64, 69-71, 74, 77, 79, 80, 83, 84, 86, 88, 89, 94, 102, 109, 120, 123, 129, 137, 140-143.

Didactic - Psalms intended to teach. Psalms 1, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 24, 25, 32, 34, 36, 37, 39, 49, 50, 52, 53, 58, 73, 75, 82, 84, 90, 91, 92, 94, 101, 112, 119, 121, 125, 127, 128, 131, 133.

Enthronement - Describes God's sovereign rule and affirms His position as a powerful Creator and sovereign Lord. Psalms 47, 93, 96, 99

Historical - Deals with a portion of Jewish history — commonly with the flight from Egypt. Psalms 78, 105, 106.

Imprecatory - Prayers of a man for vengeance on his enemies. Psalms 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 25, 28, 31, 35, 40, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 68, 69, 70, 71, 79, 83, 94, 109, 119, 129, 137, 139, 140, 143, 144.

Intercessional - Prayers requesting favor for another. Psalms 20, 67, 112, 122, 132, 134, 144.

Penitential - Psalms that deal with sin and forgiveness. Psalms 6, 25, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.

Praise — Psalms 8, 19, 24, 29, 33, 47, 50, 65, 66, 76, 77, 93, 95, 96, 97, 99, 104, 111, 113, 114, 115, 134, 139, 147, 148, 150.

Prophetic - Psalms regarding the coming Messiah. Psalms 2, 16, 22, 40, 45, 68, 69, 72, 87, 97, 110, 118

Pilgrimage — Psalms of Ascent; Songs of worship for pilgrims. They express celebration and reverence. Psalms 43, 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 120, 134.

Royal - Proclaims the reign of the earthly king and the heavenly King. Illustrates the need to make the Lord the master in our daily lives. Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144

Thanksgiving - Praise God for His graciousness and show gratitude for the blessings He gives. Psalms 8, 9, 18, 19, 21, 23, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 40, 41, 46, 48, 65, 66, 68, 75, 76, 81, 85, 91, 98, 100, 103-108, 111, 116, 117, 118, 121, 124, 126, 129, 135, 136, 138, 144, 145, 146, 149.

Wisdom - Guides us to the path of righteousness. Shows us to seek God’s will and direction. Psalms 1, 37, 119.

⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. John T. McNeill; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 3.3.1.

⁷ Patrick D. Miller, “Preaching Repentance in a Narcissistic Age”, *Journal for Preachers*, 21 no 2 Lent 1998, p 3-8.

⁸ Confessions of Sin

The Israelites

- Numbers 14:40 Early the next morning they set out for the highest point in the hill country, saying, “Now we are ready to go up to the land the Lord promised. Surely we have sinned!”
- Deuteronomy 1:41 Then you replied, “We have sinned against the Lord. We will go up and fight, as the Lord our God commanded us.” So every one of you put on his weapons, thinking it easy to go up into the hill country
- Judges 10:10 Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord, “We have sinned against you, forsaking our God and serving the Baals.”
- Judges 10:15 But the Israelites said to the Lord, “We have sinned. Do with us whatever you think best, but please rescue us now.”
- 1 Samuel 7:6 When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the Lord. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, “We have sinned against the Lord.” Now Samuel was serving as leader of Israel at Mizpah.
- 1 Samuel 12:10 They cried out to the Lord and said, ‘We have sinned; we have forsaken the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve you.’

Balaam Numbers 22:34 Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, “I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back.”

Achan Joshua 7:20 Achan replied, “It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done:

Saul

- 1 Samuel 15:24 Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I violated the Lord’s command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them.
- 1 Samuel 15:30 Saul replied, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord your God.”
- 1 Samuel 26:21 Then Saul said, “I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have been terribly wrong.”

David

- 2 Samuel 12:13 Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan replied, “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.
- 2 Samuel 19:20 For I your servant know that I have sinned, but today I have come here as the first from the tribes of Joseph to come down and meet my lord the king.”
- 2 Samuel 24:10 David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the Lord, “I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, Lord, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing.”
- 2 Samuel 24:17 When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the Lord, “I have sinned; I, the shepherd, have done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall on me and my family.”

⁹ Barbara Ellison Rosenblit, “David, Bat Sheva, and the Fifty-First Psalm,” *Cross Currents*, 45 no 3 Fall 1995, p 326-340.

¹⁰ Frederick J. Gaiser, “The David of Psalm 51: Reading Psalm 51 in Light of Psalm 50”, *Word & World*, 23 no 4 Fall 2003, p 382-394.

¹¹The superscripts of Psalms 3,7,34,51,52,54,56,57,59,60,63, and 142 identify a particular occasion in the life of David. Gaiser, “The David of Psalm 51: Reading Psalm 51 in Light of Psalm 50.”

¹² George Stob, “Repentance or Penance,” *Reformed Journal*, 2 no 2 Feb 1952, p 5-7.

¹³ Gurdon C. Oxtoby, “Conscience and Confession: a Study of the Fifty-First Psalm”, *Interpretation*, 3 no 4 Oct 1949, p 415-426.

¹⁴ Sins are sins against God.

- Psalm 41:4 I said, “Have mercy on me, Lord; heal me, for I have sinned against you.”
- Psalm 106:6 We have sinned, even as our ancestors did; we have done wrong and acted wickedly.
- Isaiah 42:24 Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned? For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law.
- Jeremiah 3:25 Let us lie down in our shame, and let our disgrace cover us. We have sinned against the Lord our God, both we and our ancestors; from our youth till this day we have not obeyed the Lord our God.”
- Jeremiah 8:14 Why are we sitting here? Gather together! Let us flee to the fortified cities and perish there! For the Lord our God has doomed us to perish and given us poisoned water to drink, because we have sinned against him.
- Jeremiah 14:7 Although our sins testify against us, do something, Lord, for the sake of your name. For we have often rebelled; we have sinned against you.
- Jeremiah 44:23 Because you have burned incense and have sinned against the Lord and have not obeyed him or followed his law or his decrees or his stipulations, this disaster has come upon you, as you now see.”
- Lamentations 3:42 “We have sinned and rebelled and you have not forgiven.
- Lamentations 5:16 The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned!
- Daniel 9:5 we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws.
- Daniel 9:8 We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, Lord, because we have sinned against you.

- Daniel 9:11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. “Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you.
- Daniel 9:15 “Now, Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong.
- Hosea 10:9 “Since the days of Gibeah, you have sinned, Israel, and there you have remained. Will not war again overtake the evildoers in Gibeah?
- Micah 7:9 Because I have sinned against him, I will bear the Lord’s wrath, until he pleads my case and upholds my cause. He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness.
- Zephaniah 1:17 “I will bring such distress on all people that they will grope about like those who are blind, because they have sinned against the Lord. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like dung.

¹⁵ Beth LaNeel Tanner, “Preaching the Penitential Psalms”, *Word & World*, 27 no 1 Wint 2007, p 88-98.

¹⁶ This idea is well represented in Scripture in both testaments. See, for example, Isa 1:12-20; Mic 6:6-8; Amos 5:18-27; Matt 6:1-6; Mark 12:38-40; and Luke 11:37-54.

¹⁷ Claire Vonk Brooks, “Psalm 51”, *Interpretation*, 49 no 1 Jan 1995, p 62-66.

¹⁸ Lamar Williamson, “Repentance”, *Journal for Preachers*, 8 no 2 Lent 1985, p 7-12.

¹⁹ http://www.manresa-canada.ca/articlesonprayer/articlesonprayer_method_examen.shtml; accessed August 8, 2015.

²⁰ Here are examples of the words “repent”

- 1 Kings 8:22-23, 46-51 Solomon Dedicates the Temple
Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven and said: “Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep **your covenant of love** with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.
“When they sin against you—for **there is no one who does not sin**—and you become angry with them and give them over to their enemies, who take them captive to their own lands, far away or near; and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors and say, ‘**We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly**’; and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their ancestors, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name; then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you, and cause their captors to show them mercy; for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that iron-smelting furnace.
- Job 34:31-33; 36:9-12 Elihu Addresses Job
“Suppose someone says to God, ‘I am guilty but will offend no more. Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again.’
Should God then reward you on your terms, **when you refuse to repent**?
You must decide, not I; so tell me what you know.
But if people are bound in chains, held fast by cords of affliction, God tells them what they have done—that **they have sinned arrogantly**.

God makes them listen to correction and **God commands them to repent of their evil.** If they obey and serve God, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment.

But if they do not listen, they will perish by the sword and die without knowledge.

- Job 42:5-6 The Final Words of Job
My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.
Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.
- Isaiah 30:12-13,15 The Warning of the Lord
Therefore this is what the Holy One of Israel says: “Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, **this sin** will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant.
This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: “**In repentance and rest is your salvation**, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.
- Isaiah 59:2, 12a, 20 Isaiah’s Word of the Lord
But your iniquities have separated you from your God; **your sins have hidden God's face from you, so that God will not hear.** For our offenses are many in your sight, and **our sins testify against us. “The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the Lord.**
- Jeremiah 5:3 Jeremiah Observes No One Is Upright
Lord, do not your eyes look for truth? You struck them, but they felt no pain; you crushed them, but they refused correction. They made their faces harder than stone and **refused to repent.**
- Jeremiah 8:6,12 Jeremiah’s Commentary on the Inevitability of Divine Judgment Against Sinners
I have listened attentively, but they do not say what is right. **None of them repent of their wickedness**, saying, “What have I done?” Each pursues their own course like a horse charging into battle.
Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct?
No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when they are punished, says the Lord.
- Jeremiah 15:19 The Lord Encourages Jeremiah to Repent
Therefore this is what the Lord says: “**If you repent, I will restore you** that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them.
- Jeremiah 18:8-10 The Lord Is Sovereign
And if that nation I warned **repents of its evil, then I will relent** and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.
- Jeremiah 31:19 God’s People Respond
After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.’
- Jeremiah 34:15 God Speaks

Recently you repented and did what is right in my sight: Each of you proclaimed freedom to your own people. You even made a covenant before me in the house that bears my Name.

- Ezekiel’s Three Calls for Repentance (who elsewhere proclaims inescapable judgment)
 - Ezekiel 14:6 “Therefore say to the people of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: **Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!**”
 - Ezekiel 18:30 “Therefore, you Israelites, I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. **Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall.**
 - Ezekiel 18:32 **For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!**
- Ezekiel 33:12 Ezekiel’s Warnings of Judgment
 “Therefore, son of man, say to your people, ‘If someone who is righteous disobeys, that person’s former righteousness will count for nothing. **And if someone who is wicked repents, that person’s former wickedness will not bring condemnation.** The righteous person who sins will not be allowed to live even though they were formerly righteous.’
- Hosea 11:5 The Lord May Return Those Rescued Due to Disloyalty
 “Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because **they refuse to repent?**
- Hosea 14:1-b2 Repentance to Bring Blessing
 Return, Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to him: “Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously.”
- Zechariah 1:6 The Lord’s Call to Return
 But did not my words and my decrees, which I commanded my servants the prophets, overtake your ancestors? **“Then they repented** and said, “The Lord Almighty has done to us what our ways and practices deserve, just as he determined to do.”
- Matthew 3:2,8, 11 John the Baptist Preaching
 Saying, **“Repent,** for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”
 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.
 “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.
- Matthew 4:17 Jesus Preaches
 From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”
- Matthew 11:20-21 AND Luke 10:13 Jesus Calls for Repentance
 Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because **they did not repent.**
 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes.
- Matthew 12:41 AND Luke 11:32 Jesus’ Preaching
 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for **they repented at the preaching of Jonah,** and now something greater than Jonah is here.

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- Matthew 21:32 Jesus’ Preaching
For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, **you did not repent** and believe him.
 - Mark 1:4 Mark Explains the Mission of John the Baptist
And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, **preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**
 - Mark 1:15 Jesus’ First Words
“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. **Repent** and believe the good news!”
 - Mark 6:12 Jesus Sends Out the Twelve (To Do What?)
They went out and **preached that people should repent.**
 - Luke 3:3,8 Luke Explains the Mission of John the Baptist
He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a **baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**
Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.
 - Luke 5:32 Jesus Explains His Mission
I have not come to call the righteous, but **sinners to repentance.**”

 - Luke 13:1-5 Jesus’ Preaching
Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! **But unless you repent, you too will all perish.** Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! **But unless you repent, you too will all perish.**”
 - Luke 15:4-7a, 10 Jesus’ Parable of the Lost Sheep
“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way **there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents.** In the same way, I tell you, **there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.**”
 - Luke 17:3-4 Jesus Connects Repentance to Forgiveness
So watch yourselves. “If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and **if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.**”
 - Luke 24:46-48 Jesus’s Final Charge to the Disciples
He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and **repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached** in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.
 - Peter’s Preaching

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- Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “**Repent and be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - Acts 3:19 **Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out**, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,
 - Acts 5:31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to **repentance and forgive their sins**.
 - Acts 8:22 **Repent of this wickedness** and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.
 - Acts 11:18 When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted **repentance that leads to life**.”
 - Peter Writes
2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. **Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**
 - Paul’s Preaching
 - Acts 13:24 Before the coming of Jesus, **John preached repentance** and baptism to all the people of Israel.
 - Acts 17:30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now **God commands all people everywhere to repent**.
 - Acts 19:4 Paul said, “John’s baptism was **a baptism of repentance**. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.”
 - Acts 20:21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must **turn to God in repentance** and have faith in our Lord Jesus.
 - Acts 26:20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should **repent and turn to God** and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.
 - Paul Writes
 - Romans 2:4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that **God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?**
 - 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. **Godly sorrow brings repentance** that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.
 - 2 Corinthians 12:21 I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and **have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged**.
 - 2 Timothy 2:25 Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope **that God will grant them repentance** leading them to a knowledge of the truth,
 - Hebrews 6:1 Repentance Is Elementary
Therefore let us move beyond the **elementary teachings** about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again **the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death**, and of faith in God,

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- The Warnings to the Churches in Revelation Include a Charge to...
 - Revelation 2:5 Consider how far you have fallen! **Repent** and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.
 - Revelation 2:16 **Repent** therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
 - Revelation 2:21 I have given her time to **repent of her immorality**, but she is unwilling.
 - Revelation 2:22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and **I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.**
 - Revelation 3:3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; **hold it fast, and repent.** But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.
 - Revelation 3:19 **Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.**
 - Revelation Speaks of Consequences of NOT Repenting
 - Revelation 9:20-21 The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues **still did not repent** of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. **Nor did they repent** of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.
 - Revelation 16:9,11 They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but **they refused to repent** and glorify him. And cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but **they refused to repent of what they had done.**

²¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.3.14.

²² Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.3.5.

²³ Miller, “Preaching Repentance in a Narcissistic Age.”