

God's Conviction  
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Psalm 38:1-8,18-22

As the old song by Chicago declared: *"It's Hard for me to Say I'm Sorry."* Who enjoys confessing that you messed up? If you do perhaps you need counseling. Why is it hard to ask for forgiveness when we've messed up? [Nine magic words]

Today's text, written by King David, is a lament about confessing and repenting from sin. It includes very graphic imagery like searing pain and festering sores. Now before you tune me out, hear me out: This tough topic has a happy ending thanks to God's grace!

The point: We've heard the old saying, *"confession is good for the soul."* It is not found in scripture, but it is consistent with what the Bible teaches about how confessing and turning from sins (repentance) brings forgiveness and restoration of fellowship with God.

**Psalm 38:1–8 (NIV)** — **1** Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. **2** Your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down on me. **3** Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin. **4** My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. **5** My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. **6** I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. **7** My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. **8** I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart.

- For the next several verses David transparently lays before God his physical weakness, emotional suffering, and social isolation. His heart is heavy, strength is fading, and even his sight seems dimmed. Friends and close family distance themselves in his time of trouble, while enemies plot harm against him.

**18** I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin. **19** Many have become my enemies without cause; those who hate me without reason are numerous. **20** Those who repay my good with evil lodge accusations against me, though I seek only to do what is good. **21** Lord, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God. **22** Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior.

- Let's unpack some key points before we apply this to our lives today.
- Verse 1: David acknowledged he deserved discipline but asked for leniency.
- Paraphrasing Spurgeon: *"I deserve your rod but please, not a sword!"* If we've trusted Christ, God will discipline but He doesn't give us everything we deserve!
- We don't know what sins David was confessing but they sure messed him up!
- David said sickness was a result of his sin but that isn't always the case.

- Sickness isn't always the result of a personal sin. John 9:1-3 tells how Jesus encountered a man born blind. *"Was this because of sin?"* the disciples asked. Jesus said no, God allowed for His own glory when Jesus healed the man.
- Sometimes, though (as in David's case), sickness can be due to personal sin (1 Cor. 11:29-30), but sickness is not always because of unconfessed sin.
- Let's apply David's situation to our own lives today.
- Question: If Christ paid for all my sins past, present, and future and I've received His free gift of salvation, why is it necessary for me to confess any sins?
- How can our experience with human relationships (marriage, parenting, friendships) help us understand how to spot a disrupted relationship?
- In our relationship with our Holy God sin is more than a simple misunderstanding.
- Illustration: *"I love you but don't come near until you get cleaned up!"*
- **Isaiah 59:2 (ESV) — 2** ...your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face...so that he does not hear.
- So, what IS sin? Sin means "missing the mark" compared to God's perfect standard. Romans 3:23 tells us *"...everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard."*<sup>ii</sup>
- Let's get more specific about three biblical terms: sin, transgression, and iniquity.
  - Sin – Missing the mark; failing God's standard. Unintentional or intentional.
  - Transgression – Willfully and intentionally crossing God's boundaries.
  - Iniquity – Twistedness or moral corruption with lasting consequences.
  - In Psalm 51 David used all three in his confession.
- Let's explore how I can know if I have committed a sin against God.
  - **Have I violated what the Bible specifically calls sin?** Examples: murder, adultery, lying, stealing (Proverbs 6:16-19; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).
  - This includes "Respectable Sins" like Jerry Bridges points out in his book by that title. (i.e. Pride, Jealousy, Envy, Selfishness, Lack of self-control, Impatience and irritability, Judgmentalism, Gossip and Unkind speech.)<sup>iii</sup>
  - **What if the Bible doesn't specifically address it?** Consider:
    - Is it good and beneficial, building others up? (Colossians 4:5; Ephesians 4:29).
    - Can I ask God to bless my actions? Do they glorify Him? (1 Corinthians 10:31) (Colossians 3:17).
    - Remember your body is God's temple and honor God with it. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
    - Even if it is permitted, will it cause others to stumble or fall spiritually? (Romans 14:21; 15:1)
    - No habit, ambition, or recreation should control you more than Christ. Be free but not mastered by anything (1 Corinthians 6:12).
  - **Sins of Omission: James 4:17 (ESV) — 17** So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.
  - A couple of caveats as we wonder what is or isn't sinful.
  - **Human emotions are not necessarily sin.** Ephesians 4:26 indicates we can be angry but not sin. Jesus Himself experienced righteous anger (Mark 3:5, John 2:13-17, Mark 11:15-18).

- Emotions become sinful when they are inappropriate to the situation, arise from wrong motives like pride, envy, or hatred, or lead to harmful actions such as revenge or malice.
- **Don't allow legalists to confuse you about what is or is not sin!**
- Jesus himself condemned the legalistic religious leaders (Pharisees) in passages like Luke 11:37-54, because they focused on outward rules but neglected the heart's condition. Legalism was rooted in pride and self-righteousness, not true grace before God.
- **The Holy Spirit will convict people of sin** (John 16:8).
  - The unsaved are convicted of their need to follow Christ.
  - The saved are convicted so we can become more like Christ. (Galatians 5:16-17; Philippians 2:12-13) [Other good news below<sup>iv</sup>]
- **Truly saved (regenerate) people WILL be convicted at some point.**
  - **1 John 3:6–9 (ESV) — 6** No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. **8** Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning...**9** No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.
    - [Illustration: The Holy Spirit is like a "stone in my shoe."]
- Verse 4: "My guilt has overwhelmed me." Based on modern psychology, aren't feelings of guilt to be avoided? How can guilt be good?
- **2 Corinthians 7:10 (ESV) — 10** For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.
- Verse 18 is a key verse, the turning point if you will, as David says to God: "I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin."
- We live in the age of the non-apology apology. Can you describe what a non-apology apology sounds like? David OWNED his "foolish sins" (v.5) we must too.
- 1 John 1:9 promises if we confess our sins God will forgive them and clean us up, but confession requires taking responsibility for what we did wrong.
- Confession should be accompanied by repentance "heartfelt turning away from sin, demonstrated by changed behavior."
- **Revelation 3:19 (ESV) — 19** Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.
- One commentator stated: *"A person is better able to repent by regularly feeding on God's truth through reading and studying the Bible, listening to biblical teaching, filling their mind with God's thoughts, and surrounding themselves with like-minded Christians for accountability. Sometimes a believer may recognize a need to change but feel unwilling; in such cases, it is appropriate to pray, "Father, I know I should change, but I am unwilling—please make me willing."*<sup>v</sup>
- The BEST NEWS: If we are saved there is no condemnation. (Romans 8:1)

#### What's the Takeaway?

- The writer of Hebrews tells us: **Hebrews 12:7 (NLT) — 7** As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? **11** No discipline is

enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

- Picture yourself after a long hot day of working in your yard. You're not just sweaty, you are caked with topsoil. Oh, and you were rushing and forgot to floss and brush this morning. YUK! Now, imagine that long hot shower and the taste of the toothpaste and mouthwash. AAAAH! CLEAN again!
- It can be hard to admit where we have fallen short of God's standard, but oh how great it feels to get "clean" and know our relationship with Him is restored.
- I said there was a happy ending to this text about confessing sin, it is in verse 15 where David declared: "*Lord, I wait for you; you will answer...*" (*emphasis mine*).
- David had confidence in God's mercy if he sincerely confessed his sin. We too can have that confidence that comes from **1 John 1:9 (ESV) — 9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- This week if we feel that "stone in our shoe" from the Holy Spirit we know we can be clean and right with God if we will just confess and repent!

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/treasury/ps038.htm#expo>

<sup>ii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 3:23). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> [https://www.amazon.com/Respectable-Sins-Jerry-Bridges/dp/1600061400?adgrpid=185328955904&hvpon=&hvptwo=&hvadid=748008426930&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=9328688826902048980&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9010792&hvtargid=dsa-1595363597442&hydadcr=&mcid=&hvocijid=9328688826902048980--&hvexpln=67&tag=googhydr-20&hvsb=Media\\_d&hvcampaign=dsadesk](https://www.amazon.com/Respectable-Sins-Jerry-Bridges/dp/1600061400?adgrpid=185328955904&hvpon=&hvptwo=&hvadid=748008426930&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=9328688826902048980&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9010792&hvtargid=dsa-1595363597442&hydadcr=&mcid=&hvocijid=9328688826902048980--&hvexpln=67&tag=googhydr-20&hvsb=Media_d&hvcampaign=dsadesk)

<sup>iv</sup> The Holy Spirit also assures Christ-followers of salvation. (Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:16; 1 John 5:13; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9; John 14:16-17; Galatians 5:22-23)

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/how-to-repent.html>