

Week 20: Saul and David - The Difference Between Pride and Repentance

A Sabbath Family Bible Study

Introduction:

Few contrasts in Scripture are as sharp as that between Saul and David. Both were chosen, both anointed, and both sinned. Yet their responses to correction revealed two very different hearts. Saul excused and justified his disobedience, clinging to pride and the approval of men. David, though guilty of grievous sin, humbled himself, confessed, and sought God's mercy. This study reminds us that the difference between ruin and restoration is not the absence of failure, but whether pride or repentance rules the heart.

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 15:10–30; 2 Samuel 12:1–13; Psalm 51 (KJV)

With Commentary Throughout

1 Samuel 15:10–19

10 Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying,

11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

14 And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15 *And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.*

16 *Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.*

17 *And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?*

18 *And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.*

19 *Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?*

Commentary:

Saul's story is a sobering reminder of how quickly humility can be swallowed up by pride. Though he began "little in his own sight," success and power soon turned his heart toward self-preservation and compromise. When commanded to utterly destroy Amalek, Saul chose partial obedience, sparing what seemed valuable, and then cloaked his disobedience in religious language. Pride often wears the mask of spirituality while directly defying God's Word. True obedience requires complete surrender, not selective compliance dressed up in pious excuses

1 Samuel 15:20-30

20 *And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.*

21 *But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.*

22 *And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*

23 *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*

24 *And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.*

25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.

26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

28 And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou.

29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.

30 Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.

Commentary:

Saul's words to Samuel reveal the emptiness of shallow confession. Though he admitted fault, he quickly shifted blame to the people and pleaded for Samuel to honor him before the elders. His concern was not for God's glory but for preserving his own image. True repentance does not bargain, justify, or manage appearances, it bows in full surrender to the Lord. Saul's pride, even in the face of rebuke, kept him from restoration and serves as a warning against worldly sorrow without godly repentance.

2 Samuel 12:1–13

1 And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:

3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:

6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

11 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

12 For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

Commentary:

David's sin with Bathsheba and the arranged death of her husband was grievous, yet his response to Nathan's confrontation sets him apart from Saul. When the prophet declared, "Thou art the man," David did not argue, excuse, or shift blame. He immediately confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord." True repentance begins with full ownership, not self-defense. The contrast with Saul is striking, David's humility opened the way for mercy and restoration, reminding us that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Psalm 51:1–4

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

Commentary:

This psalm is David's prayer of repentance. It reveals the heart of one who understands that sin is first and foremost against God. Unlike Saul, David did not make excuses or seek public honor. He sought God's mercy, cleansing, and a renewed spirit.

Psalm 51:10–12

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 thy free spirit.

Commentary:

True repentance leads to transformation. David didn't ask for mere consequences to be removed, he wanted a new heart. This is the cry of every genuine believer: not to escape discipline, but to be made holy.



Discussion Questions for All Ages

Young Children:

- What did Saul do wrong when God told him what to do?
- How did David respond when he knew he had sinned?
- Why does God want us to say sorry when we do wrong?

Older Children & Teens:

- What's the difference between being caught and truly being sorry?
- Why do you think God forgave David but not Saul?
- How can you show true repentance when you sin?

Adults:

- How can you guard against the pride that ruined Saul?
 - What are signs of godly sorrow versus worldly regret?
 - How can your family cultivate a culture of humility and repentance?
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Psalm Reading

Psalm 32:1–5 (KJV)

1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

5 I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

Commentary:

Concealed sin brings spiritual decay; confessed sin brings healing and joy. This psalm, also by David, pairs with Psalm 51 to show the full journey of repentance, from guilt to grace.

Hymn: “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken”

By Henry F. Lyte (1824)

1.
Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shalt be.
Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought or hoped or known;

Yet how rich is my condition,
God and heaven are still my own.

2.

Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Savior too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me—
Thou art not, like man, untrue.
And while Thou shalt smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate and friends disown me;
Show Thy face and all is bright.

3.

Man may trouble and distress me,
'Twill but drive me to Thy breast;
Life with trials hard may press me,
Heaven will bring me sweeter rest.
Oh, 'tis not in grief to harm me
While Thy love is left to me;
Oh, 'twere not in joy to charm me,
Were that joy unmixed with Thee.

4.

Haste then on from grace to glory,
Armed by faith and winged by prayer;
Heaven's eternal day's before me,
God's own hand shall guide me there.
Soon shall close my earthly mission,
Swift shall pass my pilgrim days;
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.



Family Application Points

1. Teach the Heart of Repentance:

Make clear that saying “sorry” is not the same as repenting. Use Saul and David as contrasting case studies to show that God looks at the heart.

2. Foster a Repentant Environment:

Allow time in family worship for confession. Let children and adults alike confess faults

without fear of shame, but with hope for mercy and restoration.

3. Guard Against Self-Justification:

Discuss how pride leads to blame-shifting and excuses. Encourage your family to accept correction quickly and thank God for the chance to grow.

4. Practice Psalm 51 Together:

Read or pray Psalm 51 aloud regularly. Memorize verses 10–12 as a family. Let David's prayer shape your own language of repentance.

5. Honor the God Who Forgives:

Celebrate God's mercy. After repentance, move forward in joy, not shame. Teach your family that grace doesn't excuse sin, but it does restore the soul.

A Sabbath Feast Prayer: (Used later when the Sabbath Meal is Ready)

“Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Sabbath - a holy day of rest, joy, and renewal. As we partake in this meal, may our hearts be lifted in gratitude for Your provision and peace. Let this table reflect the peace of Your Kingdom and the love that binds our household together in Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.”



Closing Prayer

Merciful Father, we come before You with humble hearts. Teach us to walk in repentance, not pride. May we never be like Saul, making excuses or seeking to justify our sin. Instead, give us the broken and contrite heart of David, who knew how to confess and be cleansed. Let our home be a place where sin is not hidden, but brought into the light of Your mercy. Renew our spirits, restore our joy, and make us faithful in Your sight. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.