

Christmas Day has come and gone again. And now, we are here on the last Sunday of the year, just about to pull off the last calendar page of the year 2021. How was your life in 2021? Many ups and downs, trials and tribulations! Today, I would like us to assess our lives in 2021 as we look at the lives of King Saul and King David, who went through many trials in life like us.

Two of the most prominent Kings of Israel in the Scripture are Saul and David. These two men are given the most attention in the Books of First and Second Samuel. David and Saul are foils of one another. Saul was rejected by God, while David was called "a man after God's own heart." However, both of them had some incredible failures in their lives. Saul failed to obey the Lord, and David committed adultery. Both of them had grievous sin in their lives, but one was rejected and the other blessed at the end. Why? It's because they responded differently when confronted with their sins. Attitude matters here. Attitude is more important than the fact that they sinned against God.

When Saul disobeyed the Lord's direct command, the prophet Samuel confronted Saul in his sin. Rather than owning up to his sin, Saul tries to justify his actions (1 Samuel 15:15). He makes excuses for his disobedience. Rather than owning his sin and asking for forgiveness, in pride, he follows the footsteps of Adam and argues that his sin is not that big of a deal. Going further, he blames others for his sinning without taking any responsibility (1 Samuel 15:16-21).

Like King Saul, David too committed some terrible sins. But his response is very different from Saul's. Just as the prophet Samuel confronted Saul in his sin, the prophet Nathan confronted David. When the prophet called David out for his adultery and conspiracy of murder, David immediately responded by saying, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13). David took ownership of his sin rather than making excuses or blaming others for it.

David describes the thoughts and emotions he was experiencing during this time in a beautiful song, Psalm 51. David calls out to God for mercy. He owns his sin by singing, in Psalm 51:3, "For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me." David owns his sin and is truly broken. He lays himself bare before the Lord, asking for forgiveness and restoration.

David serves us as a model of true repentance that accompanies saving. David sings, "For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Psalm 51:16-17).

What God desires from us is true brokenness, not self-justification and not even penance. He requires a broken and contrite heart toward our sins. In Matthew 5:3, Jesus starts the Sermon on the Mount by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Those who enter into the kingdom of heaven are the Davids, not the Sauls.

In our sin, we must most own up to our spiritual poverty. We must confess our unworthiness, not the unworthiness of others. Brokenness is the only proper response to our sin. Yet, brokenness is not only the proper response to proper. It is the only saving response. If we are not broken over our sin, then what need do we have of a savior?

Jesus' birth on Christmas Day would have no meaning without acknowledging our own sins. Jesus' birth we just celebrated last week had no meaning if there were no Ash Wednesday, no Maundy Thursday, and no Easter. Only those who embrace the shame of their transgression can share in the glory of the cross. Those who cry out "Woe is Me!" will find that God is more than gracious to blot out our transgression. By God's grace, He sends Jesus the Savior to spiritually destitute sinners. He sends a savior to die in our place.

The question is not, "Am I a sinner or not." You are a sinner. I am a sinner. We all are sinners. Both Saul and David were great sinners. Yet one was broken over his sin, and the other was apathetic. One was a man after God's own heart, the other a failed and tragic king. As we reflect on our lives in 2021, let's ask: Are we responding like Saul or David? Are we having the attitude of Saul or David?

Let us not attempt to justify our sinful actions. Own up to them and fall on our face before our God. Plead for mercy and grace. Confess our spiritual poverty. It is when we are broken that God will heal. He will forgive our sin and clothe us in the righteousness of Christ. The bitter tears of brokenness are quickly covered by the sweet blood of Jesus Christ, our Savior, if we come before the Lord with our brokenness honestly.

Be confident in God's grace. Let us confess our sin before God. Let us pray.
Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole hearts, soul, mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. In Your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your holy name. In silence, we confess our sin that we are not able to verbalize at this moment. Lord, have mercy on us. [silence]

Hear the good news! Christ died for us. Christ rose for us. Christ reigns in power for us. Christ prays for us. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun. Believe the Good News of Jesus Christ: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God! Amen.