

I've always been interested in the Messiah's first words when He began his ministry, which are found in the first two gospels. Matthew records: *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matt. 4: 17) and in Mark, Jesus says, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."* (Mark 1: 15).

The word I want to focus on here is 'REPENT'. The Greek word that both Matthew and Mark use here is '*metanoeo*' which means to 'change one's mind' or 'to change one's mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sin\*'.  
(<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3340/nasb20/mgnt/0-1/>).

\*(And just quickly, according to 1 John 3: 4, 'sin' is described as disobedience against God's law).

Now if Jesus' first words as He began His ministry here on earth was to tell His hearers to "repent", that is to 'change their mind regarding sin', you could argue, by inference, that those hearers were behaving or committing actions that were sinful, and possibly believed, that they were still right with God.

I'd like to argue that Jesus' first words for His ministry, are still very much applicable today. The Lord still calls people to repentance; He is still calling people to 'change their minds regarding sin'. But what does a repentance look like?

King David was known as a 'man after God's own heart' (Acts 13: 22). But how could he still be known as a man after God's own heart after committing some very terrible sins? i.e., Adultery and murder. The prophet Nathan confronts David about this, but starts by telling a story:

***"There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.***

***Now a traveller came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveller who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."*** (2 Sam. 12: 1-4)

Now when David hears this, he was furious: ***"As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."*** (2 Sam. 12: 5-6)

Then the moment Nathan does the mic drop: ***"You are the man!"*** (2 Sam. 12: 7a)

Nathan used this story to convict the king of his horrific sins. He had committed adultery with a married woman, which eventually lead him to murdering the woman's husband, and to top it off, he tried to cover it up in a lie!

Now, how does David respond? Being king, he could execute the prophet Nathan to continue covering up his sin; maybe he could be indifferent and say, "Ah well, it's in the past, let's move on"; or he could be sorry, but continue in his sin.

Thank God King David's response wasn't any of these. Instead, what the bible records is a picture of someone with a repentant heart. My best mate and ministry brother, Tevita Fonokalafi, takes us through a look at Psalm 51: 1-17 to see what this looks like:

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

- David asks God to show mercy to him not because he deserves it but because it is God's character to show mercy.

**Vs. 2: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity ('avon' - punishment of the consequence of my sin) and cleanse me from my sin ('hatta't' – missing the mark)."**

- He asks God himself to wash and cleanse him of his sin. It's a humble response as to say that no one else but God can do this action.

**Vs. 3: "For I acknowledge (i.e., 'I know how badly I have rebelled') my transgressions ('pesa' - rebelled): and my sin ('hatta't') is ever before me."**

- He acknowledges that he has rebelled against God and that he is continuously missing the mark. This is his confession before God of his sin (1 John 1;9)

**Vs. 4: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned (hatta't), and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."**

- David's sin had affected many people. He's committed adultery, had a man murdered and tried to cover it all up; now he's been confronted of his sin and it is weighing heavy on him. His mind comes back to God as the first Person he's offended. He realises because of the severity of his sin, whatever judgment God gives, it is right and fair.

**Vs. 5: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."**

- David recognises that it's human nature to sin.

**Vs. 6: "Behold, thou desirest truth (emet – real / reliable / true) in the inward parts (tuwchat): and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom."**

- He knows God is not concerned about the outward appearance as man is. God is concerned about the heart (1 Sam. 16: 7). God is teaching David truth concerning Man's nature - that it is sinful.

**Vs. 7: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Clean me with the sprinkling of blood and I shall be clean,"**

- God Himself needs to do the cleaning – only by God doing this, can David be made clean. If David tries to clean himself, he will only make it worse. (Can you see why God Himself had to come in the form of Man through Jesus to rescue us from our sins?)

**Vs. 8: "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."**

- When God reveals our sin, it is painful to us because sometimes we live in our own self-righteousness. David was this sin-broken man living in his self-righteousness, believing that he had covered up his sin. He didn't realise his sin, until he was confronted by Nathan. Because of the brokenness of his sin, he cannot have joy again until he is made right by God.

**Vs. 9 "Hide thy face from my sins and blot out all mine iniquities."**

- He asks God to close His eyes or look away from his sins so that He no longer sees it and to erase all record of any sin so that no one else can see them.

**Vs. 10 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."**

- The realisation of how wretched his heart is, David realises he needs God to not just blot out his iniquities, but he needs God to give him a clean heart and a right spirit, otherwise according to his sinful nature he will go back to his sinful ways.

**Vs. 11 “Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.”**

- The psalmist is asking God not to leave him (like a man divorcing his wife) and he remembered how God took his spirit away from King Saul and an evil spirit from God troubled him instead. He might be referring to this situation and is scared the same will happen to him.

**Vs. 12 “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.”**

- Realising deep down the sorrow of his sin, he cannot have that joy of salvation until he is made right by God.”

**Vs. 13 “Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”**

- Knowing God’s goodness, that He is rich in mercy and full of grace, knowing God desires that none should perish but everybody knows the goodness of God, will lead people to repentance.

**Vs. 14 “Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.”**

**Vs. 15 “O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.”**

- David’s guilt over the murder of an innocent man (Uriah) because of the sin he committed with his wife. He cannot sing praises unto the Lord with this burden of guilt for murder on his mind. He needs God’s forgiveness

**Vs. 16 “For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.”**

**Vs. 17 “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”**

- The outward acts of worship (e.g., burnt offerings offered unto the Lord) will not be right unless David gets his heart right before the Lord. He knows that the sacrificial offerings will only be accepted from the person offering to God if it’s offered with the right spirit.

So, what lessons can we draw about repentance through King David’s experience:

1. Look at your current behaviours and actions – are they in disobedience against the Lord? Do they transgress God’s Law? Here’s a quick test: Have you ever lied? Or stolen anything? Small or big? Then you’ve broken God’s law. You break one, you’ve broken them all. (James 2: 10)
2. Once you’ve identified your sinful nature, humble yourself and seek God’s forgiveness for your sins – don’t try and excuse it!
3. Recognise God’s amazing character: He is Holy and Just, meaning that any unholiness or sin, needs to be punished; however, He is also merciful and gracious, so if you confess your sin’s and take on His ‘cleansing’ (through Jesus Christ), “He is faithful and just to forgive...” (1 John 1: 9).
4. “Go and sin no more” (John 8: 11) – true repentance shows a change in the mind regarding sin, which should ideally result in a change of behaviour. It won’t be easy, but it is absolutely needed.

Thanks for making it this far. I know there’s a lot to process so I’ll end this writing with our Saviour’s first words of ministry: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”*. If you want to be a part of His kingdom, you know what to do.