

Selah: Confession

Psalms 6:1-6, 8:1-4, 32:1-7, 38:4 & 18, 51:3-12, 102:18-20, 130:5-6, 143:5-10; Isaiah 6:1-5; John 3:19-21; 1 John 1:5-10

The symbol on the 'Selah' graphic is the musical symbol for a rest or pause in the music. 'Selah' in the Psalms functions the same way. Selah is not a transition, background silence, or dead space but intentional stillness.

Our lives are often filled with noise, distractions, constant talking, immediate reactions, etc. but Biblical spirituality regularly requires pauses. Psalm writers often: declare truth, pause, reflect, and listen.

When was the last time you sat in silence long enough to let God speak? What if the reason we avoid silence is because we are uncomfortable with our own thoughts or maybe afraid of what God may reveal?

Confession:

Confession and repentance begins where noise ends. *Confession* is the verbal admission of fault or sin while *repentance* is the internal transformation of mind and heart that leads to a change in your behavior.

Confession requires Selah: intentional stillness and listening. You cannot confess honestly if you never stop long enough to listen. I was talking to someone a while back about how much we love the 'do not disturb' feature on our phones. It helps so much to be able to shut out the extra distractions to be able to rest or focus. Wouldn't it be nice if there was a 'do not disturb' option for your brain?

Confession begins with seeing God correctly. This is where adoration comes in. Let's reread a scripture from last week. Read Psalms 8:1-4. This is a prayer that helps you to see God correctly: as creator of the universe, protector of the innocent, being so completely superior and magnificent to the point that it is astonishing that He even regards humans at all.

It is so easy to get caught up in our own little world that we tend to try to fit God into our story. That is why prayers of adoration like this one helps us to remember that we are only one very tiny part of God's story. When we truly recognize who God is in relation to who we are... How can we not be humbled to the point of confession? Confession is not shame. It's a humble recognition that we, by nature, are weak, rebellious, and imperfect.

We have two lights in our bathroom. One is a vent light above the shower and the other is a vanity light above the mirror. The vanity light is significantly brighter than the vent light. I like the vent light but Matt likes the vanity light. In the dim light, I can still see good enough to fix my hair and stuff. However, when the vanity light is turned on, it reveals the dark circles under my eyes and every speck of dust and splatter of toothpaste. It shows me more than I want to face first thing in the morning.

Read what Jesus says in John 3:19-21. When we look at ourselves in light of God's glory, it reveals how broken and messy we are which leads us to confession.

We see this in the story of the commissioning of the prophet Isaiah. Read Isaiah 6:1-5. When Isaiah saw the purity of God, His immediate response was to recognize his own uncleanness. The purpose here is not to shame us for our shortcomings. God reveals what is broken inside of us so that he can heal it. Confession is about aligning ourselves with God and us yielding our will to His.

Read 1 John 1:5-10. When we try to hide our sin from God by minimizing or trying to justify it, we experience spiritual and emotional heaviness.

Penitential Psalms:

Let's get deeper into the pattern of confession, repentance, and forgiveness in the Psalms. The Penitential Psalms are a traditional grouping of 7 psalms that have historically been used by Jews and Christians as prayers of repentance, confession, sorrow for sin, and renewed dependence on God's mercy.

- Psalm 6 – A cry for mercy amid suffering and divine discipline.
- Psalm 32 – The joy of confession and forgiveness.
- Psalm 38 – The burden of guilt and the consequences of sin.
- Psalm 51 – David's great confession after his sin with Bathsheba.
- Psalm 102 – A prayer of affliction and hope in God's compassion.
- Psalm 130 – "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord."
- Psalm 143 – A plea for mercy, guidance, and renewal.

These 7 psalms show us a pattern we should all follow.

1) Conviction:

Read Psalm 6:1-6. Conviction is the awakening moment. Before sin can be confessed, it must first be recognized. David feels the weight of his own brokenness: weakness, grief, distance, spiritual exhaustion. Sin has consequences that affect the whole person. The journey begins in desperation. Sometimes God allows us to feel the weight of our condition so we will turn to Him.

2) Honest Confession:

Read Psalm 38:4. The weight of sin becomes unmanageable when it is revealed through conviction. This leads to confession.

Read Psalm 38:18. Conviction leads to honest confession. No excuses. No blame. No hiding. David moves from "I feel bad" to "I have sinned." This is also seen in another Penitential Psalm.

Read Psalm 32:3-4. I think we can all relate to what he is talking about here with the heat of summer. We're talking Peach Festival heat exhaustion. The burden becomes heavier when it remains hidden. We tend to fear confession because it is embarrassing or we fear that it leads to rejection, but the Gospel says exposing sin leads to healing.

3) Repentance:

Read Psalm 51:3-12. In my opinion, this is one of the most powerful Psalms. It shows that repentance is more than admitting wrong; it comes with a desire for transformation. David did not ask "Remove my consequences." He asks, "Change me." True repentance always moves toward obedience

4) Receiving Grace:

In Psalm 32, David walks through the process that we have covered so far. Read Psalm 32:1-7. Confession creates space to receive grace. David discovers that forgiveness is not earned. It is received.

There is an important shift here. In Psalm 38, David wrote that his guilt overwhelms him. In this Psalm (32), he writes that his guilt has been removed. The purpose of conviction was never shame. It is restoration. It's not enough though to just confess your sins. You have to also embrace God's grace.

5) Waiting in Hope:

Read Psalm 130:5-6. Repentance often includes waiting. We confess. We receive forgiveness. Yet we still wait for healing, consequences to unfold, for restoration, for God to complete His work.

This is a Selah Moment where silence becomes important. Repentance is not only speaking. It is learning to wait. It's a movement from desperation to trust. The watchman cannot make the morning come any faster. He can only wait in confidence that the light will, in its time, break over the horizon. Likewise, we need to trust in and wait for God's faithfulness.

6) Renewal/Transformation:

Read Psalm 143:5-10. Repentance is not complete until it results in transformed living. Forgiveness leads to formation.

There is a natural progression here: Psalm 51 says 'Create in me' then Psalm 143 says 'Lead me.' The renewed and transformed heart desires to be obedient. Grace is not merely a pardon for sin. It is empowerment for faithful living.

7) Future Hope:

Read Psalm 102:18-20. Repentance always impacts more than just the individual. God's restoration extends to communities, generations, and creation itself. It moves from being about my sin to the restoration of all of humanity.

God's ultimate goal is not simply to forgive individuals. He wants to restore humanity so we can all participate in the renewal of the world.

Wrap-up:

The Penitential Psalms take us on a journey from sin to restoration.

- Conviction - the Spirit reveals our need
- Confession - we agree with God about our sin
- Repentance - we turn toward Him
- Grace - we receive forgiveness
- Trust - we wait in faith
- Renewal - we are transformed
- Hope - we participate in His redemptive work

Reflection Questions:

- What is the difference between *confession* and *repentance*?
- According to Psalm 32, what happens when we avoid confessing our sins to God? What happens to those who confess and are forgiven?
- Read Psalm 130:5. How do these words encourage you, especially when you struggle to break a sin pattern in your life?