

SBC – June 23, 2024

Psalm 32 (NKJV)

“The Blessedness of Forgiveness”

Psalm 32 (NKJV)

A Psalm of David. A Contemplation.

Psalm 32 is another Psalm of David. It comes with title “A Contemplation” which is the Hebrew word maskil. Some argue it is better translated as “Instruction”. Twelve Psalms have this title (Ps. 32, 42, 44, 45, 52-55, 74, 78, 88, 89, 142).

It certainly has a reflective emphasis as the word “Selah” – probably emphasizing contemplation is found 3 times in 11 verses.

It is one of 7 penitential Psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). Psalm 32 presents David celebrating the Lord’s forgiveness upon his repentance. Many think it is probably a sister Psalm to Psalm 51 which clearly has David’s confession in view in regard to his great sins of adultery and murder concerning his sordid affair with Bathsheba. Psalm 51 is more confessional while Psalm 32 is more restorative. But of course, they go together.

There is much in this Psalm that is instructive to God’s people who still wrestle with sin and often fall.

“This was Saint Augustine’s favorite psalm. Augustine had it inscribed on the wall next to his bed before he died in order to meditate on it better.” (James Montgomery Boice)

Slide # 1

Psalm 32

Theme: The Blessedness of Forgiveness

vv. 1-2 The Great Blessing of Forgiven Sin

vv. 3-4 The misery of Unconfessed Sin

v. 5 – Confession and Forgiveness

vv. 6-7 Blessings of Restored Fellowship

vv. 8-9 Exhortation to be Understanding

vv. 10-11 The Blessings of Mercy and Joy

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

2 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Blessed means happy. It is the idea of being spiritually blessed resulting in God's joy. The word "beatitude" is used of Jesus pronouncements of "blessed" in Matthew 5. It means to be supremely blessed.

The very first Psalm is the first "beatitude" (so to speak) in the book of Psalms declaring the man blessed who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful. That is all proactive to not get yourself into sin. Thus, the obedient person is blessed!

However, Psalm 32 is the second beatitude (so to speak) and it pronounces a blessing on the disobedient who have come to repentance. Thus, it is restorative. Yes, we are blessed if we don't fall into sin, but we are also blessed in repentance if we do.

In the first two verses David uses three words to describe sin.

Slide # 2

Transgression: Disobedience that crosses a line, defying authority, rebellion.

Sin: To miss the mark – not live up to God's standards.

Iniquity: crookedness or morally twisted.

How wonderful to be forgiven of all sin – whatever kind it may be. In these same two verses David uses three terms to describe God's forgiveness.

Slide # 3

Forgiven: Removal of a heavy burden.

Covered: No longer exposed.

Not Impute: Not put to one's account (bookkeeping term)

Paul quoted Ps. 32:1-2 in Romans 4:7-8 to show justification is apart from works and that David knew the reality of this truth. How do we get right with God – it is on the basis of repentant faith. Notice that David makes no mention of works in describing the blessedness of the forgiven person.

However, he does describe the essence of repentance as noted at the end of verse 2.

Observe the ONE qualifier in verse 2 concerning being “blessed”. It applies to the one ***“in whose spirit there is no deceit”***.

People who fall into sin as long as they are covering it up and refuse to repent are actually living a lie. They are living a double life which is deceptively hypocritical. They cannot know the blessedness of forgiveness described in verses 1-2. Blessedness belongs to the one who has no deceit in his spirit. That is, he has come clean before God. He is now honest to God! That is an honest transparency in his heart!

This defines the spirit of true repentance! No longer is this person playing games. He has come clean before God and can now enter into the blessedness of God’s forgiveness and the blessedness of restoration. This defines the spirit of true repentance.

In contrast to being honest to God transparent in repentance is the silence David described in verses 3-4 before he came to repentance.

3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long.

This was a disciplinary experience as God dealt with David in his sin. David was not just silent – he “kept silent”. He maintained this silence for about a year if indeed he is talking about his sin with Bathsheba. He held out on repentance for quite a while! This was a deceitful silence in an attempt to cover up his sin. His hope was that he could just sweep it under the rug and that eventually he could just go on.

“Kept silent” denotes stubborn deceit! He was not ready to come clean. But living this double life caused him to be a mess spiritually. It made him feel old as he groaned all the day long. Living in sin ages a person.

Have you seen these people who look much older than they really are.

Now it might just be a physical thing but hard living takes a toll on one. David was a physical wreck because of unconfessed sin! The unrelieved anguish of guilt ages one and involves groaning. It's wearing!

You simply can't outrun the long arm of God's discipline. It won't just go away if you keep quiet. It has to be dealt with.

4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah

The oppressive heavy hand of God was felt day and night. It was constant. There was no let up – no relief. There was no “freshness” in his life. His vitality was turned into the drought of summer. His miserable condition was all because of his unconfessed sin and his refusal to repent.

God's hand is very helpful when it uplifts, but it is awful when it presses down: - **Charles Spurgeon**

God's hand is mighty big and heavy and if He presses down upon you in discipline it is an exceedingly miserable experience.

David's dryness and misery were actually a *good* thing. They demonstrated that he was in fact a son of God, and that the covenant God would not allow him to remain comfortable in habitual or unconfessed sin. One who feels no misery or dryness in such a state has far greater concerns for time and eternity. - **David Guzik**

That is so true! I have great concern for those who claim to be Christian but live in a constant pattern of sin with seemingly no serious discipline. And they seem happy in that pattern. That is the very opposite of David's experience and opposite of what I see the Scripture teaching.

Slide # 4

Hebrews 12:7–8 (NKJV)

7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

8 But if you are **without chastening**, of which all have become partakers, then you are **illegitimate and not sons**.

There is no way a true believer can get away with sin. God disciplines all His children to build holiness into their lives.

And there is no way a true believer can long enjoy sin because we have the Holy Spirit living in us and He is grieved when we sin (Eph. 4:30). Grieving the Holy Spirit in you is a miserable experience.

David was one of the few people in the OT who actually had the indwelling of the Spirit and here was his experience when he fell into sin. It was miserable!

David at this point says, “Selah” – stop and soak this in. Sin in the life of a true believer brings about the discipline of God. You can’t just wait it out in deceptive silence. The heavy hand of God upon one is aging, causes constant groaning, and turns the person’s life into a desert where nothing is vibrant! Selah!

But then something happened!

5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

David broke his silence. He acknowledged his sin to God! Previously, he had kept silent. He wouldn’t admit it. He wanted to act like all was okay. In his spirit there was the rot of deceit that gnawed at him day and night as he quietly wasted away in misery!

Do you see what David says...

Slide # 5

“my sin”

“my iniquity”

“my transgressions”

David owned his sin! He was no longer hiding it. To confess means to agree with God concerning our sin. It acknowledges it. It names it. It calls it for what it is.

If indeed this was written with background of his sin with Bathsheba (which very probably it was) then the occasion for his repentance is recounted in 2 Sam. 12.

On that occasion he was confronted with his sin by Nathan the prophet. And upon being directly called out David immediately said, “I have sinned against the LORD” (2 Sam. 12:13). And immediately the prophet said, “The LORD also has put away your sin” (2 Sam. 12:14).

IMMEDIATELY upon confession he was forgiven. There was no probation, no working his way back, no making himself right. It was all grace as he was immediately forgiven on the basis of true repentance.

At this point David offered no excuses. He simply admitted his guilt! No longer was there deceit in his spirit. He was honest to God in his confession. Again, this is the stuff of true God-honoring repentance.

David’s experience corresponds to 1 John 1:9 for the believer today.

Slide # 6

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

6 For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You In a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters They shall not come near him.

Knowing the truth of our forgiving God causes the godly to run to him in the midst of great distress caused by our sin. And in coming to Him in repentant prayer we find relief.

David knew what it was to be overwhelmed and mired in the guilt and misery of sin – and that God could deliver in that crisis and others.

-David Guzik

Slide # 7

Psalm 130:4 (NKJV)

4 But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.

7 You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah

When we get right with God we return to the place of safety. We step outside of God's will into sin and it is a perilous place! But being right with God is to be in the safe zone. It is there we are surrounded with songs of deliverance. It is there that David could once again sing of God being his hiding place, his preserver, his deliverer.

And once again he said "Selah" – let us stop and think about this.

As a footnote: David wrote no songs during the year when he was in sin. There was no song in his life – only misery! Songs of deliverance belong to those who are right with God by way of repentance.

"Observe that the same man who in the fourth verse was oppressed by the presence of God, here finds a shelter in Him. See what honest confession and full forgiveness will do!" – **Charles Spurgeon**

To the repentant man, God now speaks words of restoration and extortion.

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.

What a wonderful promise from the LORD. Those right with the LORD can count on His instructing us and teaching us the way we should go. James promises that if we ask in faith God will give us wisdom – which relates to godly Christian living and how we should wisely handle the challenges of life in a godly way (cf. James 1:1-8).

Thus, God promises to guide with His eye those who are in fellowship with Him. This is an image of intimacy with God that brings about His close guidance.

The idea is of one who waits upon another so attentively that a mere look at the eye indicates the will. A butler waiting upon his master at dinner can illustrate this; the master need only *look* at the salt shaker and the butler understands that he wants it. God promised that for those who diligently seek and focus on God, He will also guide.

– **David Guzik**

Those living in sin don't have this kind of guidance – only discipline! And so God says...

9 Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding, Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you.

In his time of rebellion David was in effect acting like an animal that lacks understanding and therefore must be guided by force with harsh measures. Such a person is not easily guided but turned only with difficulty. And discipline has a way of turning the person – but that is the HARD way!

A man in Texas visited his friend who owned a little donkey. They hitched it to the wagon intending to take a ride and visit some mutual friends. Before they got in the wagon, the owner reached into the wagon, took out a two-by-four, and hit the donkey over the head. The man asked his friend, “Why in the world did you do that?” His friend replied, “I do that to get his attention.” – **J. Vernon McGee**

Don't be like the donkey who has no understanding and must be hit over the head to get his attention.

The believer should be so sensitive to the Lord's leading that he does not need the harsher disciplines of life to bring him into line.

-William MacDonald

Note the word “understanding”. Let us be people of understanding and realize that if we won't listen we will have to learn the hard way as David did in his experience.

Slide # 8

1 Corinthians 11:30–32 (NKJV)

30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

31 For **if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.**

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

Let us be people of understanding! That is the idea of “contemplation”. David wrote this to instruct us to the end that we might be people of understanding and not go the way HARD way of sin.

Like a stubborn animal those who are caught in the web of sin don't come near the Lord. In their rebellion they are led astray – and that is the place of harsh discipline until one gets right with God.

God speaks to us through David's experience and says, "**Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding.**"

-David Guzik

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him.

David was not as a lifestyle pattern in the category of the wicked, but when he stepped out on God he put himself in that realm temporarily. That is the category of many sorrows.

Slide # 9

Proverbs 13:15 (NKJV)

15 Good understanding gains favor, **But the way of the unfaithful is hard.**

In contrast to the way of the wicked is the one who trusts in the LORD (YHWH). Mercy shall surround this person.

Mercy here is the rich Hebrew word "hesed" which refers to God's loyal unending covenant love. God is always faithful even when we are not.

Slide # 10

Proverbs 24:16 (NKJV)

16 For a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again, But the wicked shall fall by calamity.

It's not that the righteous never fall. They do at times, but God is ever faithful even when we are not! Even in discipline God shows Himself faithful to work in our lives to get us where we need to be.

11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

David ends up on a happy note even as he began this Psalm. David is still basking in the joy of forgiveness.

Indeed, how wonderful is the truth that our God is a forgiving God. Even when we fall terribly, in repentance there is forgiveness and restoration. This David knew very well and proclaimed the blessedness of this forgiveness. And then called on God's people to celebrate this truth with him.

In sin we are down and groaning. It is miserable. But for the repentant upright in heart in whose spirit there is no deceit there is gladness and rejoicing in the LORD.

Slide # 11

Proverbs 28:13 (NKJV)

13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

As those who are right with the Lord let us be glad in the LORD and rejoice!

Forgiveness is certainly that which is to be celebrated!

Indeed, blessed are the forgiven!