

## 9. Psalm 32

August 22, 2010

I heard a story about a man who wasn't a good swimmer, so he went down to a dock and asked a fisherman, "Excuse me sir, if I were to fall into this water, would I drown?" The fisherman said, "No. Falling into the water doesn't drown anybody. It's staying under the water that drowns them." No duh, right?

As long as we don't repent from our sins and don't ask God for His forgiveness, it is the same thing as staying under the water of self-righteousness, sinfulness and ignorance.

Here is a million dollar word that you don't use often: "penitential". According to dictionary.com, it means "of, pertaining to, proceeding from, or expressive of penitence or repentance."

There are seven penitential psalms in the Book of Psalms. They are Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143. However, Psalm 32 is more than a penitential psalm. It includes elements of thanksgiving for God's forgiveness and mercy in v3-8 and wisdom in v1-2 and v9-11.

This psalm 32 is thought to have been written at the time of David's sin with Bathsheba. After the prophet of God, Nathan, had come to him and spoken to him of that sin. It is common for people to think that Psalm 51 is the only psalm that was written by king David after his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah. I, too, believe that psalm 32 was one of David's penitential psalms.

### A. TRANSGRESSION, SIN AND INIQUITY ARE GONE

*Psalm 32:1-2 A Psalm of David. A Contemplation. 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.*

Did you notice that David used three different words to describe what he had done against the Lord? So what are the differences among transgression, sin and iniquity? Are they same but just different in expressions? Or are they completely different? We are going to look into these words in more theological and technical way.

A sin is not always a willful act. The word 'sin' comes from a root word which means, "to miss the mark." In Hebrew, it is 'chata'ah'. Whether it is carelessness or just due to spiritual weakness, it is still missing the mark that God has set. That is why the Bible says, "All have sinned." The Bible calls us a sinner. Some of you may get uptight about that, but God said that we all have missed the mark.

*Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

There is not one person in this room or anyone in human history for that matter, who can claim that he or she never missed the mark spiritually and never sinned against the Lord. When the Lord tells us what to do in our lives through His Word, the Bible, do we do everything He tells us to do? I think not, I know not.

A transgression is much different than sin. Because a transgression is a totally willful and a deliberate action of disobedience on our part.

Let me make an illustration for these two:

God says, "Here is the line. Now, Joonho, I don't want you to go over that line." But I get busy with my activities, I become careless, and all of a sudden I am over here on the other side of the line. And God says, "Son, there is the line I told you not to go over." "Oh Lord, I'm sorry. I forgot all about it. I didn't mean to." But I still went over it. It was a sin; it was a missing of the mark. It wasn't really a deliberate, willful kind of a transgression.

But how about this? After the Lord told me not to cross the line, I intentionally take a big step across the line and look up to God with that devilish expression "Now-what-are-you-going-to-do-about-this?" on my face. That would be a deliberate and willful transgression.

The Hebrew word for 'transgression' is 'pesha'. If you are thinking, "I know it is a sin. But I am going to do it anyway. After I do it, I will ask God to forgive me," you are treading into a very dangerous territory and you will regret it for sure.

Many times sins compound into transgressions. A person may start off innocently enough. But then rather than repenting and turning, he seeks to try to cover it and hide it all, and it compounds until it becomes a transgression. Generally, we do not distinguish transgression and sin and just call all of them 'sin'.

Then, what is 'iniquity'? The Hebrew word for 'iniquity' is 'avon'. Now I can just imagine all the ladies are going to think about the word 'iniquity' when an Avon lady comes to your door.

The definition of 'iniquity' is 'depravity or perversity'. It covers sin and transgression together. The Hebrew word 'avon' requires punishment for depravity. Isn't it interesting? Let's go back to v2.

*Psalm 32:2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

The Hebrew word for 'impute' is 'chashab' which means putting into one's account. Does it ring a bell? In the Gospel of John, you will find the same meaning in Greek.

*John 19:30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.*

The Greek word for 'It is finished' is 'tetelestai'. Yes, it has a general meaning 'accomplished'. But in this case, it is "paid in full" or "imputed".

In v1 and 2 we find king David is giving us a piece of wisdom that comes from asking God to forgive our iniquities. The word 'blessed' can also be translated to 'happy'. It makes a perfect sense.

## **B. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE UNFORGIVEN**

*Psalm 32:3-4 When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah*

There is absolutely no doubt that sin makes us feel good about ourselves and what we are doing for a limited time. For that short amount of carnal pleasure, the consequences of sin are too enormous.

Our relationship with the Lord suffers heavily as a part of sinful consequence. That is what v3 and 4 are talking about. During the time David committed the sins and kept them in secret for about a year. You don't find any recorded psalm or prayer in the Bible. In other words, he avoided the Lord as much as he could.

Isn't it true when a believer sins against the Lord and has backslidden, he would come up with just about any excuse not to go to church, not to read the Bible and not to pray to the Lord and not to associate with other believers in Christ? Even if that person goes to church and smiles while he shakes hands with other people, he is far away from the Lord in his heart. To tell you the truth, the Lord has not moved away from him, rather he walked away from the Lord. But where can he go? Wherever he goes, the Holy Spirit who lives in him, convicts him day and night.

The most miserable person in the world is not an unbeliever, but a backslidden believer. He is miserable in the world because he knows enough of the truth of God; he is miserable in Christian setting because he has too much world in his heart. Are you in that situation? Why would you stay like that one second longer? Turn your heart to Him right now. Ask Him for His forgiveness for your sins right now that His hand would lift you up.

### **C. I ACKNOWLEDGE MY SIN**

*Psalm 32:5 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*

Did you notice the first phrase here? *"I acknowledge my sin to You."* So very important. An absolutely vital aspect of the Christian life is to know what it means to confess our sin. This is important because our very forgiveness hinges on our understanding of the term. The Hebrew word for 'confess' means 'to acknowledge'. In the NT, 'confess' could be translated as "to agree with someone or to say the same thing as another."

*1 John 1:9-10 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

The Apostle John used this word here. That word 'confess' is essentially saying that if you will agree with God about your sin, if you will acknowledge it for what it is, not make excuses for it, and turn from it, God will forgive you.

The problem is that there are people today who think they have confessed their sin when they haven't. Far too many people think that to confess their sin is merely to acknowledge their sin. Therefore, they will sin, they will get caught, and they will say, "I acknowledge what I did. I confess that sin. That was a bad thing." Then they go out and do it again and say, "Oh shucks, I did it again. I confess." That's NOT a true confession. They are simply recognizing what is obviously sin. It should be called 'remorse', not repentance.

Confession means to see sin for what it is and the way God sees it, to be sorry for it, and to turn from it. You have to take your sin to the cross and recognize it is offensive and stench to the one and only true God. Are you willing to do that? If so, then God will forgive you and cleanse you from all your unrighteousness.

*2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

Asking forgiveness to the Lord and others requires complete humility and honesty without an ounce of pretense, nor pride.

*Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart-- These, O God, You will not despise.*

Once you ask the Lord to forgive you, His forgiveness is complete and immediate. There is no probational period for you to go through. However, the consequences from your own sins will still follow. But the Lord will be with you through those consequences and strengthen you.

Please remember this very important point: Jesus' blood is powerful enough to cleanse any sin, but is powerless to forgive an excuse.

#### **D. THE LORD IS OUR HIDING PLACE**

*Psalm 32:6-7 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. 7 You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah*

Please don't think that when you ask the Lord to forgive you for your sins, the devil and his cohorts and the carnal world are going to give you a standing ovation and cheer you. Once they were your allies, but now they will turn against you and come after you harder than before.

You may wonder and say, "I thought when I come back to the Lord, everything would go well from that moment." But you still can find peace in Christ. Let me explain.

When you were a child, did you have a hiding place you would run to when you were afraid or wanted to be alone?

God wants to be our Hiding Place. And the good news is that we can retreat to this Hiding Place wherever we are. When we have a conflict at work and don't know what to say or how to deal with it, we can retreat into the secret place of the Most High as we are living in fellowship and communion with God. When we are tied up in bumper-to-bumper traffic, we can abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Have you ever tried to walk in someone's shadow when you were a kid? It can be done, but you really have to stay close. That is the picture given in Psalm 91:1,

*Psalm 91:1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

God says, "I want you to dwell in Me. I want to be your hiding place. I want you to be so close that you are actually in My very shadow."

This gives you courage to face life. The Old Testament tells the story of Elijah, who boldly stormed into the court of Ahab, the most wicked king that Israel had ever known. With incredible courage and boldness, he delivered bad news to Ahab and turned and walked out. Though he was in the court of a powerful king, Elijah recognized he was also in the presence of the most powerful King. Because he was dwelling in the secret place of the Most High.

When you kneel before God, you can stand before any man. Are you walking in fellowship with Him?

## **E. I WILL GUIDE YOU WITH MY EYES**

*Psalm 32:8-9 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. 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.*

It is no wonder why king David was called "The Sweet Psalmist of Israel". This guy can write, don't you agree? I just love the way he expresses the relationship with God. OK, I admit that it is the Lord who inspired him to write, but it is still beautifully done in these two verses.

My wife Karen and I have been married 29 years 4 months and 20 days now. It is not unusual for us know what the other thinks or wants before we actually say. It is like that with our relationship with the Lord. When we start to walk close with Him in our Christian journey, we get to know His heart and desires through the Word of God, the Bible, and prayers.

Then He doesn't have to speak to us with thunderous audible voice from heaven to us like He did to Moses. We'll just know. Once you start to hear God's voice in your heart through the Bible, you don't ever forget His voice.

*John 10:27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

We don't want to be like the horse which tends to run ahead of the Lord, nor like the mule which needs to be dragged around. We can follow the Lord as He guides us with His eye.

## **F. BE GLAD IN THE LORD**

*Psalm 32:10-11 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him. 11 Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*

Sinners don't have any place to turn to when their calamities strike them. I have to wonder whom those atheists call out when they face imminent death. What a comfort we have in Christ Jesus!

But we who are in the Lord find a shelter, peace and comfort in Him, because He is our Hiding Place and the Strong Tower in times of trouble.

## **G. APPLICATIONS**

- 1) Asking forgiveness to the Lord and others requires complete humility and honesty without an ounce of pretense, nor pride.
- 2) Jesus' blood is powerful enough to cleanse any sin, but is powerless to forgive an excuse.
- 3) When you kneel before God, you can stand before any man.
- 4) Be guided by the Lord's eye. Be sensitive to the Spirit of the Living God through His Word and your prayers.