

Can I Be Forgiven?

Psalm 32

Introduction: 1) It will take you further than you want to go.

It will keep you longer than you want to stay.

It will cost you more than you want to pay.

It will require of you more than you want to give.

I am talking about sin, an absentee word in our modern culture. In fact to mention it is to draw a snicker, if not run the risk of scorn and ridicule. It is not a word we bring up in polite company.

2) And yet the Bible speaks of it, and it does so regularly. It is the major obstacle that separates humans from God. Some form of the word sin occurs more than 470 times in the Bible. A modern question may be, “Whatever happened to sin?” A biblical question is, “what can be done about sin?”

3) Psalm 32 is one of 7 penitential psalms in the Psalter (6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). It is a psalm of grief, repentance and sorrow over sin. It is also the first of 13 psalms to have the title “maschil.” Though uncertain, the word may mean a “meditation” or a “contemplation.” Others see it as only a literary or musical term. It is probably correct to interpret this psalm in connection with Psalm 51, both written in the context of David’s murder of Uriah and his adultery with Bathsheba. It was probably penned after Psalm 51, after a time of intense meditation and reflection. Leupold sees it as “the fulfillment of the vow contained in Psalm 51:13,” Then will I teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You” (Leupold, 269).

Transition: What lessons then can we learn from David in this psalm of confession of and cleansing from sin?

I. The Cleansing of Sin is a Blessing. 32:1-2

Like Psalm 1 and the Beatitudes delivered by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:3-12), Psalm 32 begins with “blessed,” a word of joy and celebration. How is it that David, having walked thru the valley of deep, dark sin could usher forth not once, but twice, the word “blessed?” Because:

1) God will cover our sin. 32:1

David utilizes 3 synonyms for sin and a threefold expression of deliverance from sin in vs. 1-2. First he speaks of forgiveness and sins covering.

Transgressions (*peshah*) speaks of rebellion and disloyalty, a departure of defiance.

Sin (*hattah*) means to miss the mark. It is an archery term. It is the idea of missing,

often with willful intent, the clear and expressed will of God. David says it is a

blessed man whose transgression is forgiven (lit. “carried away”, “lifted off”) and

whose sin is covered. The word covered is atonement language, affirming God’s

gracious act of atonement, or reconciliation whereby the sinner’s sin

is no longer a basis for God’s righteous anger and displeasure. Yes, in mercy (v. 11)

and by means of confession (v.5) and trust (v. 10), God will cover, remove, forgive

our sin.

2) God will not count our sin. 32:2

A 3rd word for sin is found in v. 2. It is, in the *NKJV*, the word iniquity, meaning a crooked or wrong act. The Hebrew word *awon*, it carries the idea of corrupt, twisted.

It is the “blessed” man whom the Lord does not imputed, charge to his account,

iniquity. Confession with the mouth is certainly crucial as v. 5 indicates. So is the

integrity of ones heart. Indeed in his spirit there is no deceit, nothing dishonest or

duplicitous. With an honest and humble heart he owns up to all his sin and in the process, receives the Lord gracious and full forgiveness.

II. The Cover-up of Sin will bring Discipline. 32:3-4

There is a simple basic spiritual law related to sin. “Confess it and you will be blessed. Conceal it and you will be disciplined.” In David’s life, and in ours, the pain and sorrow of sin’s cover-up can take several paths of punishment.

1) Sin brings physical suffering. 32:3

David kept silent concerning his sin with Bathsheba. Not until he was confronted by the prophet Nathan (2 Sam 12:7) did he acknowledge his sin (12:13). However, it appears that even before that dramatic confrontation, David’s cover-up was eating away at him. He says his “bones wasted away” (*NIV*) and his “groaning was all the day long.” Physically he was drained. Emotionally he was at the end of himself. The word translated “groaning” means to roar, usually of a lion, of thunder, a warrior, or of a person in extreme pain. Sin will do a job on you so that you roar like a lion in pain and agony. Like a cancer in the soul, it consumes and it destroys. Sin can just plain make you sick.

2) Sin brings spiritual suffering. 32:4

God is the hound of heaven, the faithful Father who will not let us go. Prov. 3:12 reminds us, “For whom the Lord loves He corrects; Just as a Father the son in whom he delights.” David’s pain and anguish is not accidental. It is providential. Further it was intense and heavy. Intense: “day and night.” Heavy: for it was God’s hand that was bringing the pressure of discipline. So great and severe was this chastening that David was all but destroyed, undone: “My vitality (*NIV, ESV*, “strength”) was turned into the drought of summer.” Like a naked body exposed for days to the searing Middle Eastern heat, David was dried up, nothing like the blessed man of Psalm 1:3

planted by the rivers of water. Physically drained and emotionally distraught: that is the price paid for covering up sin. Selah! Think about it.

III. The Confession of Sin brings Forgiveness. 32:5

The discipline of God humbles us and should bring us to the point of repentance and confession of sin. This is what we see in v. 5. A great God provides a great forgiveness. It is complete and it is immediate. Note the 2 steps involved.

1) Acknowledge your sin.

David acknowledged (made known) his sin and he did so to God. Ultimately all sin is against God (Ps 51:4). He no longer attempted to hide or cover-up, conceal his iniquity, his corruption. David now saw his sin as God saw it; he called his actions what God called them: sin (2X), iniquity (2X), transgressions. Do not lie to God about your sin. You cannot fool Him. You are only deceiving yourself.

2) Confess your sin.

Like the Prodigal Son, David came to his senses and had a talk with himself. He said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." Note the parallelism:

- "I acknowledged my sin to You"
- "I will confess my transgression to the Lord"

And the result: "You forgave the iniquity of my sin."

We confess and He forgives!

We confess and He forgives!

We confess and He forgives!

Proverbs 28:13, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Calling sin what God calls it, and on the basis of the perfect atoning work of His Son, the Lord Jesus, God forgives and covers, imputing our sins not to us, but to the spotless and sinless Son of God. David kept silent to hide his sin. Our Savior, the Suffering Servant of the Lord, kept silent and bore our sin (Isa. 53:7). Can I be forgiven? Yes, through the Savior sent from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. The Cure for Sin is discovered thru Prayer. 32:6-7

Prayer is in its most basic sense having a conversation with God. It is talking to Him and listening to Him. The problem for most all of us is not that the Lord is not available for us to spend time together. The problem is we don't show up. We don't make ourselves available to spend time with our Creator and Savior. As James, the half brother of our Lord Jesus reminds us, "you do not have because you do not ask" (Jam. 4:2).

Transition: So, what must we do? And, what will we receive?

1) You must seek the Lord. 32:6

The godly are those who confess their sin and find the forgiveness of God, a forgiveness that inspires them not to sin more, but to pursue a life pleasing to the "Great Forgiver" of sin. Part of pursuing God is praying, seeking the Lord when he may be found, a privilege that should not be taken for granted. I like the words of instruction and challenge we find in Isaiah 55:6-7 where the prophet writes, "Seek the LORD while he may be found; Call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, And to our God, for he will freely pardon (Isa. 55:6-7)."

Those who seek the Lord and draw near to Him are promised that when troubles come, "in a flood of great waters, They shall not come near him."

Transition: And what is this promise made to the one who seeks the Lord in prayer?

2) **You will be secure in the Lord.** **32:7**

David makes 3 great declarations about who God is and what God will do.

- You are my hiding place (protection).
- You preserve me from trouble (preservation).
- You surround me with songs of deliverance (praise).

Protection, preservation and praise! Selah! Think about it.

V. **The Counsel about Sin is Essential.** **32:8-9**

There is a sudden and dramatic shift in vs. 8 as God now speaks directly to David. In vs. 6-7 God has ministered to the heart. Now He moves to minister and enlighten the mind. I like how John Piper puts it: “Protection with direction, care with counsel, that is the happy condition of the person who prays to God and receives forgiveness for his sins.” Two challenges are put before us.

1. **Listen to the Lord’s instruction.** **32:8**

God promises 3 things to us in verse 8: I will 1) instruct, 2) teach, and 3) guide you. He will do so “in the way you should go” (Psalm 1 and the blessed man) and “with My eye.” The idea is God will counsel and guide us with a watchful eye upon us every step of the way. He sees our every step, watches our every move, His omniscient eye never misses a thing. What an awesome promise to comfort us, especially when the great flood water come (v. 6). There is pure wisdom in listening to this One who instructs us.

2. **Submit to the Lord’s direction.** **32:9**

Verse 9 introduces us to “God’s animal farm.” Two particular individuals are highlighted for our edification: the horse and the mule. Both can be stubborn. Both can act stupid. Indeed the text draws attention to their lack of understanding and stubborn disposition. What then is God’s point?

disposition and affection. The godly who are mindful of all the benefits (forgiveness, protection, guidance) of the Lord will rejoice! These benefits are not indiscriminate gifts but are given only to the “righteous,” who are “upright in heart,” descriptions that parallel the blessing in v. 2 on those “in whose spirit is no deceit.”

Conclusion: Psalm 32 was Augustine’s favorite psalm. It is reported that he had it inscribed on the wall next to his bed before he died that he might meditate on it better. Why did he like this psalm so much? Because he said, “the beginning of knowledge is to know oneself to be a sinner.” Yes that is the beginning, but it need not be the end. In Christ you can be a forgiven sinner. You sin now forgiven and covered, not reckoned or imputed to you but another, to Christ. Can I, can you, can we be forgiven? The good news in Christ is yes, and know this: there is enough to go around for everyone. “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice you righteous; and should for joy, all you upright in heart.” (v.11).