

Psalm 32
May 29, 2011
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

In Psalm 32 we have a Psalm that is filled with gospel of Christ, forgiveness for sinners through the grace and mercy of God. I knew I would be pressed a bit for time today and it is appropriate that we have reached this Psalm, a Psalm that very nearly preaches itself. Here the Word of the Lord and find your place of rest in Him.

EXEGESIS

Psalm 32 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

The Psalmist pronounces a blessing upon all those who have been forgiven. For those who understand their own sin and the guilt and shame that it brings as we stand before a holy God can relate to and receive the psalmists blessing. When we are forgiven for our real sins, it is a tremendous relief.

Being forgiven is multi-sided. The one we have wronged decides not to hold our wrong against us. We deserve punishment but instead we receive forgiveness. This is what it means when he says that the Lord does not impute iniquity. He was guilty and he knew he was guilty. However, he confessed his guilt to the Lord and the Lord forgave him.

Guile is cleverness or craftiness. In regards to words and deeds, it could be considered ad hypocritical stance. There was no guile in him because he was honest before the Lord. We should take careful note of this. Jesus said of Nathanel, “An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.” Nathanael was a straight shooter. He called things like he saw them and he did not spin the truth. Jesus commends this characteristic.

David was forgiven precisely because he was honest about his sin. This is the attitude that we desire to see in our children and that the Lord desires to see in His children. As a parent, one of the things you should be

looking to teach your children is true honesty. You do not want them to spin the truth.

If you ask your child if they have done their homework and they answer that they are almost done, it is important that you follow up. For a parent, almost probably means another five or ten minutes. But the child might be thinking, “Uh-oh, let me think, I don’t want to lie to mom. I haven’t even started my homework. But it really won’t take that long. I will hurry up and get it done. Mom will be mad if she knows that I didn’t even work on it yet. But since it won’t take me that long, I can tell her that I am almost done. After all, once I get started, here pretty soon, I will be done in an hour or two. That is surely almost. So, I’ll tell her almost and I won’t be lying.”

A diligent parent realizes what this is. In political terms, we call it spin. In parental terms, we call it lying. And parents and children would do well to speak without guile, speak honestly and then suffer the consequences. The child who goes through the entire spin story is not going to please his parents. They will be disappointed that you did not do your homework and they will be really disappointed that you lied about it in an attempt to cover it up.

A son who simply says, “Mom, I got really sidetracked and haven’t even started yet. I know I was wrong to do that, will you forgive me?” is going to be forgiven and his mother will be glad that he owned up to the truth. Also, a son who learns to use that story as a way to manipulate his mother will be found out. If you truly are sorry and own up to it, your behavior will change. If you are just trying to manipulate instead of telling an outright lie, then your behavior is unlikely to change.

True confession and real forgiveness create repentance.

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

For the true Christian, a failure to confess sins is a recipe for misery. It causes the effects of old age. We often talk now about how stress brings on all sorts of diseases and no doubt it does. We have lost the rhythms of biblical time, work and rest and so we find ourselves unable to rest. We are

constantly going with no down time. And because we never have down time, we do not even know how to rest. In this state of affairs, even the rest causes more stress.

Unconfessed sin is like that, it gnaws at you and you cannot find rest. You try to do more and more to push it down further in your mind or to minimize the reality. But until the sin is confessed and forgiven it is still there haunting you. And if it is not haunting you, you are in an even worse condition. It is still causing all of the ill effects but you are in the state of complete denial. But for the Christian with God's Spirit, a failure to yield to the Spirit is a very taxing event. You find yourself struggling with God and no doubt you will find yourself out of joint.

See how David amplifies his metaphor. His silence produces roaring. His body is crying out for confession, repentance and forgiveness.

God's hand was heavy upon him. Is God heavy handed? Well, yes, at times He is. David was avoiding God and unwilling to submit to Him and so God was pressing him sore. This sort of heavy-handedness is God's grace.

Earlier I mentioned this of thing with our own children. We sometimes have to be heavy with them to get at the truth. Their story just doesn't add up and we have to push, ask questions and pry to find out if they are just being immature and stupid or if they are outright lying to us in rebellion. But the reason we do this is not to hurt them. We want them to see the truth and to own up to it so that we can set them on the right course. We need to know the truth so that when we forgive, the issue can be put aside. Until there is confession and forgiveness the situation is going to continue to eat at the child and at the relationship.

So, when God is heavy with us, He is seeking to bring us to our senses. He does this in a mysterious and supernatural way through His Holy Spirit. He also uses other means of conviction. He uses a wife, a husband, a parent, a child, a sibling, a pastor, an elder, a deacon, a friend. This is why you need to be humble. If you fail to listen to all of God's ministers that He has put around you, you may be resisting not only them but God, Himself. Do not do this. Be humble so that your bones do not wax old as you roar all the day.

5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

When David acknowledged his to the Lord, the Lord forgave him. This line seems so simple but it often takes us a long time to get there.

In a disagreement with a spouse, the simple solution is to pray to God. Once you do this, your own sin will become apparent and then it will be easy to confess that sin to your spouse. But we often do not do this. We want to justify our sin, so we do not pray. We maintain our righteousness before our spouse and the situation is not resolved at all. But say unto yourself and unto the Lord, "I will confess my transgressions!" If you confess, He will forgive. If you do not confess, He will not forgive and you will stay in that horrible place.

Now, our sins are not only against the Lord. Few of our sins are simply in our mind before the Lord. Most of our sins have to do with other people. We get angry. We speak roughly. We fail to listen to our children. We lie about something to someone. So, it is not enough to confess your sins only to the Lord. If you have sinned against someone, and they know this, then you need to seek their forgiveness as well as the Lord's. This is vital because only forgiveness will restore the relationship.

Incidentally, some sins are only in the mind and it is not helpful to confess them to someone that does not know about them. For example, let's say that you have an envy or bitterness issue with someone in the church but you have never acted out on it. As far as they know, your relationship with them is cordial and friendly. You should not go to the person and confess that you are bitter against them and envious of them. Doing so will only give them a reason to be tempted to sin against you. Deal with truly private sins before the Lord. But here is a word of caution, do not convince yourself that public sins are actually private sins. If you have said something about them that is bitter, slanderous and you need to confess that, then do so.

6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. 7 Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt

preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

This is a warning about a failure to confess sins. The one who fails to confess sins may find that the Lord is far away when your troubles finally come crashing down upon you, and they will. The New Testament calls this a seared conscience. If you grow cold towards the Lord through a failure to confess sins, then you may find that the Lord is nowhere to be found. Pray when you can because someday you may not be able to. Sadly, if you have been a Christian for very long, you have seen someone who has professed Christ for many years, get to the point where they cannot even confess sins.

Even in a flood of tears, you cannot repent. Esau sought for a place of repentance, even with tears, and he could not find it. This seems to be true of Judas as well. He returned the blood money but could not confess his sins and receive forgiveness. A man does not get to this scary place overnight. He practices not repenting until he perfects it. But if a man practices repentance, even the flood waters of judgment shall not find him.

The man who confesses sins is hidden in Christ. He is hidden from punishment from God but also from the consequences of his sins. They are forgiven. Iniquity is not imputed to him. Once forgiven, he is guiltless before the Lord. He is preserved, that is saved. He is delivered and knowing this, sings with joy.

How joyous are we when we are delivered from a present evil. When you narrowly escape an automobile accident, it is a time of rejoicing and thanksgiving. Thus, the man who confesses his sins. He is escaping a narrow place. He must give God the glory and rejoice with singing.

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. 9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

David here instructs those who will listen, his sons, his subjects. Children, listen to these words. Saints and sinners, heed the Word of the Lord and live! God is speaking to you now. Are you listening? Do not be stiff-necked, like a proud horse. Do not make me come out there and stick a bit in your mouth and a bridle on your head. Hear and obey without

compulsion. Here is a sad truth. If you grow that stiff-necked, you will not heed anyway. Those stiff-necked men and women who find themselves in the pastor's office where the bit and bridle are fitted, seem to only obey as long as the pastor is riding rough-shod upon their back. As soon as they leave the office, they tear off bit and bridle and run wild wherever they desire. They act as those without understanding, having not been trained by the blessed obedience of confession of sin and faithful repentance. Running wildly and blindly, they find destruction.

Take the yoke of the Lord Jesus upon yourself willingly, for His burden is light and His yoke is easy.

EXHORTATION

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.

Observe this contrast. Sorrows for the wicked, those who will not heed the Lord's prodding, those who will not humble themselves before the Lord, their spouse, their parents, their children, their neighbor, their boss, their employees. A stiff-necked Christian man, in the end, becomes a wicked man. Such a man shall receive sorrow upon sorrow. Do not deceive yourselves, sins befriended make enemies of God.

But a man who will confess his sins, trusting in the Lord Christ will find the mercy of the Lord all around him. He will be set free from his guilt but also in his desire to resist the Lord's will and way. Finding the mercy of the Lord, he will desire to please his Lord in obedience. But even in this, he finds mercy for he is not able to obey perfectly. And when he sins he learns that he has an advocate with the Father, his elder brother Jesus, and he turns to Jesus whenever his tender conscience strikes him. And whenever he does this, he finds mercy aplenty. This draws him ever closer to his Lord and a desire to do His will.

11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

The righteous are not inherently so. They do not have a righteousness all their own. But they stand in the righteousness of God. God has done for them and given to them what they could not accomplish on their own. He has given them a free and easy conscience through the forgiveness of sins. But this free and easy conscience does not come to the one who stubbornly will not confess.

But for those who do confess sins, seeking pardon in Jesus Christ, they find it. God is faithful and just to forgive their sins.

Ye, gathered here are the righteous, if it be so that you have confessed your sins to God. Have you hidden sin? You cannot hide it from God. He sees it anyway. But you will not be forgiven anew unless you repent anew. If you have retained particular sins, or have entered into a sinful pattern of life, today is the day of repentance. God's Spirit is speaking to you now and you must forsake your ways for His. Confess. Repent. Lay hold of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and come and find the abundant mercy of the Lord. Then you will be upright in heart and you can shout for joy. Amen.