

THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN

Psalm 32

Intro: One thing that ought to attract the reader to Psalm 32 is the appearance of the word “blessed” two times at the beginning of the Psalm. It is a word which can be, and many Old Testament scholars believe that it should be, translated “happy.” Derek Kidner, who is a favorite OT scholar of mine, says that it is a word that has been used twenty-six times throughout the Psalms, or the Psalter as it is usually called. And since this is a Psalm of David, it had to be a favorite word with him.

It was a favorite word with our Lord Jesus Christ. You will remember that He used it nine times according to Matthew’s account of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount. It is a word in both the Hebrew of the OT and the Greek of the NT which indicates that the life of the people of God is meant to be a happy life, and that the people of God should be a happy people. This does not mean that God means for our lives to be without trials and disappointments and failure, but it does mean that through all of life there is a joy, a happiness, that undergirds us regardless of what our outward circumstances will be. Even at the end of this Psalm, Psalm 32, we are told:

Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart (Psa. 32:11).

Our Lord, when He was with His disciples for the last time before His arrest and crucifixion, said,

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (John 15:11).

And to cite a word from the Apostle Paul which he wrote to the church at Philippi, most of you will remember that he said, “Rejoice in the Lord always (or always): and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4).

There are many verses throughout the Bible which indicate that the Lord wants us to be happy and to rejoice.

But the problem is, that we are sinners, and everybody else who has ever lived in the world, and all the people who are living in the world today, are sinners. We are sinners by nature, and sinners by choice. Now there are various words for sin in the Bible. We have several words for sin right here in Psalm 32. In addition to sin, we read about iniquity, and we read about transgressions. All of these words describe what is displeasing

Psalm 32 (2)

to God, and that which never brings lasting joy, and which ultimately will lead to eternal judgment from God. We are told in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews that Moses who was raised as a member of the royal family in Egypt, made a major decision when he became a man. It was a decision which would make the people of the world call him a fool. But this is what the Bible records about him. You will find these words which I am going to read to you in Hebrews 11:24-26:

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

I read these verses to you because the writer of Hebrews spoke of Moses as enjoying “the pleasures of sin for a season,” that is for the length of his life. Now I don’t think that we are to understand that Moses as a member of the royal family lived a life of immorality and ungodly pleasure. A lot of people go in that direction. But Moses was living a life that had no place for God, and that was sin. The Bible also tells us in James 4:17,

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

Somehow God had taught him, maybe it was through whatever early training he may have had from his mother, or in some way that the Scriptures do not tell us how, he had come to understand that there were joys and pleasures to be had in life which could not be purchased with all of the riches of Egypt, because they were treasures which could only be found in a personal relationship with God. He obviously was one of God’s elect. Many young men would have given everything they had to have the place the Moses had. The two words which begin those verses in Hebrews 11 which I read to you, “by faith,” mean that Moses had already come to know the Lord even though he was raised in a family where they did not know or worship the true God.

People in the world will pay hundreds of dollars to go to some sports event who will never go near a church where they could hear the teaching of the Word of God. One of the main reasons that God has given us His Word is so that we will know that sin never brings true and lasting happiness. True happiness can only be found in knowing the Lord and living in fellowship with Him. David, who wrote Psalm 32, knew what he was

Psalm 32 (3)

talking about because he had sought pleasure in sin, and it could have ruined his life if God had not taught him what he wrote in Psalm 32 and Psalm 51, as well as in other Psalms.

Now I have said that we are all sinners. I say that because the Bible says that. We were born sinners. We have all sinned by our own choice. None of us have sinned as much as we could have sinned, and we have only God to thank for that, But David, speaking by the Spirit of God, wanted us to know that happiness is not to be found in sin, *but in God's divine and righteous forgiveness of our sins.*

When David lived, which was about 1,000 years before Christ, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had not yet come to earth being born of a virgin mother, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit. And why did the eternal Son of God humble Himself to become a Man. Basically for two reasons: first, to complete the revelation of God, and second, to take the penalty of guilty sinners upon Himself and to pay that penalty in full for all who had been saved, and for all who would ever be saved to the end of time.

Let me read to you from the Apostle Peter's message which he preached on the Day of Pentecost, recorded for us in Acts 2, and especially the part where he mentioned what David knew about the coming of Christ. If you want to follow what I am reading, it is found in **Acts 2:29-36. (Read.)**

Now I have read that to you so that you will know that when David wrote Psalm 32 and spoke of the forgiveness of sins, he knew that his own sins were not forgiven just because he repented, nor because he had offered an animal as a sacrifice for his sins. In fact, in Psalm 51 which is also one of David's penitential Psalms where he was repenting of his sins, David told the Lord, "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering" (Psa. 51:16). There was no sacrifice mentioned in the Law for the sins which David had committed. He knew that no one would be saved by the blood of bulls or goats. The Lord Jesus Himself, by His death, would be the One Who by His death would secure the salvation of all past, present, and future would put their trust in Him.

This is where true happiness begins. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." True happiness is not found in sin. The world cannot give us true happiness. Derek Kidner whom I mentioned earlier, began his comments on Psalm 32 by saying, "To be in close

Psalm 32 (4)

accord with God is true happiness” (p. 133). True happiness is found in knowing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and in living in obedience to His will which is revealed in His Word. Salvation is not a reward our good works. Because they are never good enough. You can't buy salvation with any amount of money. Baptism doesn't save you. There is no church on earth which you can join and have salvation –not even Trinity Bible Church. Salvation is in Christ, faith in Christ, the Son of God Who died to put away our sins.

Let me take you to another passage in the NT where the writer, the Apostle Paul, quoted from Psalm 32 after he had referred to how Abraham was saved. Listen as I read from Romans 4, the passage we had in Sunday School just a little over a month ago. Reading from Romans 4:1, this is what we learn: **(Read Rom. 4:1-8.)**

Now the Romans passage helps us to understand that what David was actually talking about here in the beginning of Psalm 32 is the wonderful doctrine of justification. Let us make as sure as we can what these words in verses 1 and 2 mean.

There are three words, and possibly four, which represent what we have done which is so displeasing to God. We could say that they are different aspects of sin, although sin is one of the words David used. I am using Franz Delitzsch and my Hebrew dictionary here as my authorities.

1) “Transgression” - is what we do to break loose or to tear ourselves away from God. It is rebellion against God. It is a violation of the revealed will of God as recorded in Scripture.

2) “Sin” - is often defined as missing the mark. It is a deviation from what we are told in Scripture to do, or not to do.

3) In verse 2, “iniquity” - this is a perversion of God's Word, or a distortion. This can be something major like turning marriage into a homosexual relationship, or abortion, on the one hand, or a person who tells the truth when its to his advantage, or will lie to get himself out of trouble, or lie to keep from getting into trouble. It is any distortion of Scripture. To have iniquity “imputed” to us is to be charged with the sins that we have committed. Charges against us are dropped, not just because God has decided to overlook them, but because they have been imputed, or charged to Christ Who paid our penalty in full at Calvary. Our debt was so fully paid that they will never, even can never, be charged against us again.

4) “No guile” needs to be added to the list. “Guile” is deceit. It speaks of

denying, or hiding, or excusing any transgression, or sin, or iniquity.

“Forgiven” means to be lifted up and taken away, and never to be brought back. “Covered” has been described as not being taken away, but just put out of sight, but it is still there. Some say that its complete removal awaited the sacrifice of Christ. But the truest interpretation seems to mean that it is covered from God’s sight just like it had never taken place.

It is no wonder that King David repeated the word “blessed.” What God has done with our sins is permanent. We have deserved none of it. It is all of grace, all of Christ, all of God.

But looking again at these two verses we can see in addition to what I have already said about “guile,” it is added to show that our repentance has to be sincere, from the heart, and not just a form we go through like the Pharisees of the NT who put on a good act outwardly, but inwardly they were whited tombs, hypocrites to the core. And this is why David went on to say what God had done to bring him to genuine repentance and to make him not only to regret, but also to detest and grieve deeply over his sins.

In verses 3 and 4 David gave the Lord all of the glory for his repentance. It is very, very important that we repent of our sins. There can be no real faith apart from a sincere repentance. But both repentance and faith come not from ourselves, but from God. In verses 3 and 4 David tells us how God brought him to repent of his sins, the greatest of which were his adultery with Bathsheba, and the murder of her husband, Uriah.

Before we look at what God did to David, let me remind you of a very important NT passage which has to do with repentance. The words are the Apostle Paul’s; and they were written first to Timothy, but are for us to understand as well both for our own salvation, and what we need to anticipate in our witnessing to others who need the Lord. Cf. 2 Timothy 2:23-25:

23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

Psalm 32 (6)

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

We can never argue people into salvation. It is not our business to argue with people about the Gospel. We are to proclaim the Gospel, and to do it with gentleness and patience, teaching them, answering their questions, but not debating with them. God is the One Who uses His Word. He may not use it so we can see what is going on in the heart of the person we are talking to, but we need to believe what the Lord said in Isaiah 55:8-11:

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

We need to believe verse 11 very confidently. We may never see the person saved to whom we have spoken. We may be just one of several whom the Lord will use to bring that person to Christ, if they are to be saved at all. Our responsibility is to be faithful in witnessing as we are given the opportunity. But how the Lord uses what we say is up to Him, and not to us.

Now look at what David said about what the Lord did with him.

In David's case, we have a believer who had sinned, had sinned very grievously, and had been very slow about confessing his sin to the Lord. In verse 3 we read what he said about himself. "When I kept silence" has to do, not with men, but with God. And so God began to deal with him both physically and emotionally. He may not have been speaking to God, but God was speaking to him. And it kept up "day and night"; for how long we are not sure. But his condition got worse and worse. At first he may have thought that all of the pressure that was on him would stop. But it didn't. Behind all of this we ought to remember what David had probably taught Solomon because Solomon wrote words to apply here. They are found in Proverbs 3:7 and 8, and then verses 11 and 12:

Psalm 32 (7)

7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil.

8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones (Prov. 3:7-8).

And then:

11 My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:

12 For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth (Prov. 3:11-12).

Not all chastening is because of sin. Often the Lord chastens us to cause us to love Him more, and to be more faithful in our lives. The greatest of the saints experience the Lord's chastening. But in David's case at this time, it was sin. God was working in David's health and his emotions to bring him to repentance. And, as we see in the following verses, God's work succeeded.

Concl: We have seen different aspects of sin in our text this morning.

And it gives all of us a fresh opportunity to look into our own hearts. David tells us what the Lord did to him so that if we see that something like that is going on in our own hearts, we will know that He is speaking to us, that He loves us, but He hates our sin, and wants us to come back into fellowship with Him.

If this is so, we don't need to tell anyone else unless others have been involved in what we have done. *But we do need to make things right!* And it ought to encourage us to see, as we read on, that David confessed, and God forgave, and fellowship was restored. It is that easy.

May the Lord enable all of us to do what I heard an old, seasoned missionary say one time when I was teaching at Multnomah, "We all need to keep short accounts with the Lord." He has promised concerning all of us that having begun a good work in us, He will keep working on us until "the day of Jesus Christ." David comes to us in Psalm 32 as a godly counsellor. Let us not let his words fall on deaf ears.