

Psalm 32 • Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

Psalm 32 is only 11 verses long, but it speaks very powerfully on the subjects of sin, confession, and repentance. By the way, there are many, before we read this who believe that this Psalm is a companion to Psalm 51. You may not be familiar with that, but Psalm 51 is David's prayer of repentance and confession when he committed adultery with Bathsheba, and arranged for her husband to be killed in battle.

And there are many who believe that these are connected somehow and that, could be, we don't know for sure. What we do know, is that in this Psalm, David speaks of his own experiences with sin, unconfessed sin, and then finally bringing his sin before the Lord for forgiveness.

And as David often does in the Psalms, he begins this Psalm with a summarizing statement of the Psalm. And he says in verses 1 and 2, *“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ² Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” (ESV)*

Now, you and I, if we were writing this Psalm, we would put those statements at the very end because that's the way we read things today. When we think about stories or even short Psalms or whatever, we think of beginning, making your case, and then bringing your summarizing statement at the very end. Which is, *“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven.”* You would expect him to say that at the end. Not David, because this is Hebrew poetry and Hebrew poetry often starts with a summarizing statement before you even talk about the subject.

Well, David begins this section here with pronouncing a blessed condition on the man who is forgiven of his transgressions. And I'll remind you, transgression, means a sin that is committed knowingly.

This is the man who knows what God's Word says. He knows that various things in God's Word tell him, he is not to do that, whatever it is, and he does it anyway. Alright? These aren't talking about sins of ignorance here.

Now, after opening with his summarizing statements, David begins to describe a period in his life where he was in some sinful activity but he had not yet come to a place of confessing that sin to the Lord. And he talks about what life was like.

Look at verse 3, *“For when I kept silent, (what he means by that is, I hadn't confessed my sin to God, “when I was kept silent,) my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.”*

Do you remember in the last Psalm we looked at, he made a very similar statement about his bones wasting. And here, isn't it interesting, he literally describes a physical effect resulting from unconfessed sin. Physically, David says, my bones are wasting away because he's been involved in some sinful activity, and he's telling, prior to bringing it to the Lord, confessing it, I literally had physical effects. All right.

Verse 4. He goes on saying, *“For day and night (here's why he was having the physical effects, he says) your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.”*

And what David is describing here, is the realization that comes to us after the fact. Looking back now, as he's talking about this time in his life, when he was involved in sin, hadn't yet confessed it to the Lord, he says, you know what? I was miserable. I was miserable. I was living with unconfessed sin in my life, and I was miserable. I just got used to it. It became my normal.

Have you ever been there? I have. Living in misery, but really not taking it into consideration. Just thinking, oh, I'm just going through a bad patch, and that's what we say to ourselves. Things are hard right now, I don't know, it's just, things are just, I haven't been feeling good and, just stuff. It seems like every time I set out to do something, there's just a blockade in my way. I don't know, things are just really, rotten right now in my life.

Well, then we come to this place where the Lord, brings the full realization of the sin that we've been involved in. We confess it before God and we look back on our life and we're like, good grief, no wonder I was miserable. And this is what David is saying.

Day and night, he says, the conviction of the Holy Spirit was going on in David's life. And he talked about how his strength was literally bled away from him as in the heat of summer. Have you ever had heat stroke and tried to even stand up? It's the thing he's describing here. Of course, he doesn't drag it out.

He goes on in verse 5 and right away and he says, “*I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,”* (and what happened?) *and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.*”

This verse, verse 5, is one of the most profound, I think in the Bible. It's so profound, yet it's so simple. Look what he says. “*I acknowledged my sin.*” I confessed my wrongdoing. You forgave me. It's not that involved. It's not that complex.

There isn't this big, sort of a, well, now you got to go through all these steps. Let me give you the 24-step plan to being forgiven. It's so simple. Let me show you a New Testament version of this. The apostle John writes,

1 John 1:9 (ESV)

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

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

John reminds us that not only is God faithful, He's also just. How can He be just by just forgiving us? Because He punished His Son, remember? His justice is revealed. His faithfulness is revealed. And all it says here is, if we confess our sins, He'll forgive us. It's not that involved. It's not all that complex.

What is involved and what is complex is our humanity coming to a place of humility, and being willing to own it, to the point of willing to say, it's me, I was wrong. That's complex, because we're complex. The whole forgiveness thing, that's simple. You confess your sins to God and He'll forgive you.

You've probably heard of people who have confessed to doing wrong, but there was no admitting to it being actually wrong. When we are talking here about confessing your sin and receiving forgiveness, there is an assumed element here, even though David doesn't mention it, and that is repentance.

Repentance is key. It's where we turn away from sin. And the Bible says we need to do that. We need to turn away from our sin and it is the Holy Spirit Himself who enables us to do that.

Now, the New Testament speaks of confessing sin here, just like the old, I'm going to show you a passage from the Book of James. James chapter 5, verse 16. Look at this passage. It says,

James 5:16a (ESV)

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

2 things I want to bring out here. First of all, number 1, James is not saying that you must confess your sins to one another or you won't be forgiven. In other words, he's not saying this is the only way to be forgiven. Because John told us we're to confess our sins, to the Lord essentially.

But James is making the point that mutual accountability is a good thing. And he's not talking about one person standing over the top of another and you confess your sins to that person. He says, confess your sins to one another. That means one person confesses their sins and the other person turns around and confesses their sins. Okay. This isn't doing it to somebody who has been given the job of hearing your confessions. We are to confess to one another.

I also want to make the point here that the reference in verse 5:16 to being healed. Look at it again.

James 5:16a (ESV)

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

Interesting reference, isn't it? And this passage most likely refers to the physical fallout that can happen when there is unconfessed sin in our lives. Because if you look at the context of what James is saying in chapter 5, this is right, that same section where James says, is there any sick among you, let him call for the elders.

The context is dealing with these sorts of issues of illness and affliction and so forth. And in the midst of that, he says, "...confess your sins to one another and

pray for one another so that you may be healed.” James recognizes, and I think we should too, like David is telling us, that there can be a physical fallout that is associated with unconfessed sin. Did you hear me say that correctly? There can be a physical fallout from unconfessed sin.

You got to remember what David said when he talked about that period of time before he confessed. He said, when I was silent, my bones wasted away. He recognized the physical deterioration that can take place when we've hardened our heart against God and we're in denial.

But there's a warning, and Christians, please hear me in this warning. When you are talking to someone and they are telling you about their physical problems, you and I are never to assume that they are in the condition they are in because of unconfessed sin. It could be, but you can't assume. You can't assume.

Do you remember? That's the mistake that Job's friends made. And they received a major rebuke from the Lord by making that assumption. Job, you're obviously a dirty, rotten, scummy sinner, and you haven't confessed it to God, and once you do, everything will be okay. And that wasn't the case.

Now, I think what James is telling us, what David is telling us, even in the Old Testament, is that unconfessed sin can have a physical effect. But you and I don't know that. Apart from a word from the Lord, we don't know that. Don't assume it.

I don't think there's anything wrong with saying, hey, let's just let's confess sins one to another. Let's pray for one another. If somebody is going through some physical issues, but we're not going to assume.

Here's another interesting point though. The thing you need to know about the word, confess and particularly as it relates to James chapter 5 verse 16 that we just read, “...*confess your sins one to another.*” The word confess, literally means to say the same thing. Isn't that interesting? Because you see, when we confess our sins, we're saying the same thing that God says about us. In other words, we're agreeing with God.

And what God has said to you and I is, we're sinners. What if we deny it? Look at 1 John 1:10.

1 John 1:10 (ESV)

If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, (why? Because He said we did, He said we are sinners. If we say, no, there wasn't sin involved) and (then) his word is not in us.

On the other hand, when we confess our sin, we're agreeing with him. We're saying the same thing, and that's what the word, confess means. Here's David's conclusion, verse 6. Look with me in your Bible.

He says, *“Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.”* And what David is describing here is what happens when we experience God's forgiveness. We want to tell others. We want to say, don't waste time. Don't stall. Don't procrastinate. If there's issues going on in your life, get it taken care of. Go before the throne of grace. Go quickly. Don't tarry.

If you're being convicted of something before the Lord, bring it to God right away. Don't harden your heart, because it's going to be easier to harden your heart the next time. Don't harden. Quickly go to the Lord.

Lord, forgive me. I need to confess this as sin in my life. And that's what David is saying here. *“...let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;”* And that's now. Now is the day of salvation. Now is the day when we can come before the Lord. Just get it out.

David says to the Lord, verse 7, *“You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.”* And what he's saying here is, when my conscience is clear, when I've confessed my sin, I've gotten thing..., I came to you. I now have the freedom to run to the Lord and take advantage of His protection and His deliverance, but not so when I have unconfessed sin.

When there's unconfessed sin in my life, I have stepped out from under the banner of His protection. I'm on my own in a very real sense. That doesn't mean I become unsaved. I'm not suggesting that. I'm simply saying that we put ourselves in a very liable situation. Vulnerable situation, when there's unconfessed sin in our lives. And we give a foothold to the enemy to do things that are not going to be good, I'll tell you that.

David says, here in verse 7, in the midst of this confession of sin, he says, *“you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.”*

Verse 8 and 9, now listen as the voice of the Lord speaks to you and I, and to David of course. The Lord speaks up in this verse and says, *“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. ⁹ Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.”*

What do we got here? We got a promise and we got a warning. What's the promise? God says, I'll teach you and I'll lead you on the right path and I'll counsel you along the way. We know that counsel is through his Holy Spirit who He has given to us and furthermore. He promises to watch over us I'll keep my eye on you, but look what He goes on to give as a warning against stubbornness and an unteachable spirit.

He literally likens that stubborn attitude to being like a senseless animal Who lacks understanding and has to be directed through external means like with bit and bridle. He says don't be like a mindless animal who has to be controlled by external circumstances. You and I have been given the wisdom of God. He has literally given His Holy Spirit to take up residence in us. He wants us to be directed internally by that sense of direction that comes from the Spirit, through His word. When His words speak to us, and the Spirit makes that word alive, and we are convicted and directed and that's the way He wants you and I to follow Him. But what happens when we becomes stubborn? Well, He's not afraid of putting a bitten bridle on you. And He'll do it, but that's not the way He wants to treat you, like a senseless animal. So He says, don't be stubborn.

Then David ends with these words, *“Many other sorrows of the wicked.”* He's talking about that person who has hardened their heart. *“¹⁰ Many are the sorrows of the wicked, (they dig in their heels, they stiffen their necks, they bring sorrow into their lives) but (he says) steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.”*

And so in light of all these things, David ends with these words. He says this in verse 11, *“Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”* Why? Because the Lord is in our life. He's giving us direction so our lives will go well.

It's interesting, isn't it? Sometimes we act like spoiled children. We think that when God tells us no, that He's doing it to like keep us from being happy or something. When the fact is, He's saving you from heartache. Untold heartache and difficulty because He knows that the direction we're going is a dangerous one. Oh, if we would be quick to repent, quick to confess our sin, quick to go to the throne of grace.