

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## *The Power of Confessed Sin*

Psalm 32

**Keywords:** Stress, trials, hardship, despair, hope, encouragement, joy.

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** none

**SermonAudio Blurb:** Sin is the constant companion of all of Adam's descendants. We daily fight against its indwelling presence and we find it to be an ever present force to be reckoned with as we see the constant specter of death approach. But God has given us a great weapon in our battle against sin, it is the weapon of confession. In our psalm we have a powerful description of the power of confession. David chronicles his great struggle under the Divine hand as he sought to hide his sin. But then the glory of freedom once he truly and rightly confessed it to the Lord. Out of that experience David then gives us all great counsel on how we too are to deal with sin before our righteous Lord.

### **I. Introduction.**

- A. Read Psalm 32.
- B. We have here a wonderful Psalm for sinners.
  1. It is a worthless one for those who are perfect in their own sight. Those who reject God or reject their own sinfulness find nothing here but a nice poem.
  2. But for the sinner this is a psalm of hope.
  3. There is an underlying assumption in this psalm—people sin.
    - a. Now this seems obvious, but it amazes me how much time we waste and energy we expend trying to deny this reality.
    - b. I have taught many times that we need to embrace our sinfulness. There is not purpose in denying it.
    - c. I do not say that we are to give excuse for it, or be friends with our sin, but we must embrace it.
    - d. Because once we fully accept that we are all poor sinners, we then are able to learn how to properly deal with it.
    - e. And it is at that point in time that this Psalm begins to be a precious psalm.

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Sin is the constant companion of all of Adam's descendants. We daily fight against its indwelling presence and we find it to be an ever present force to be reckoned with as we see the constant specter of death approach. But God has given us a great weapon in our battle against sin, it is the weapon of confession. In our psalm we have a powerful description of the power of confession. David chronicles his great struggle under the Divine hand as he sought to hide his sin. But then the glory of freedom once he truly and rightly confessed it to the Lord. Out of that experience David then gives us all great counsel on how we too are to deal with sin before our righteous Lord.

## **II. The power of true happiness (1-2).**

- A. David starts out by crying out in joy over the glory and delight of forgiven sin.
  - 1. He doesn't say, "Blessed is the one who does not sin." For there is none righteous, not one.
  - 2. Rather, he says that the blessed one is the one whose sin is forgiven.
- B. "Blessed" is the word that means happy.
  - 1. It is used in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5.
  - 2. But it is not merely happiness, as I have taught in the past, it speaks of being in an enviable position.
  - 3. And what could be more enviable than to have your sin forgiven?!
    - a. Sin, that great enemy that only destroys.
    - b. Sin, that great killer of humanity.
    - c. Sin that separates us from God.
    - d. Sin that drives us over the cliff into eternal damnation.
    - e. This sin is forgiven.
  - 4. Spurgeon says it well here, "Blessedness is not in this case ascribed to the man who has been a diligent law keeper, for then it would never come to us, but rather to a lawbreaker, who by grace most rich and free has been forgiven. Self-righteous Pharisees have no portion in this blessedness. Over the returning prodigal, the word of welcome is here pronounced, and the music and the dancing begin. A full, instantaneous, irreversible

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pardon of transgression turns the poor sinner's hell into heaven, and makes the heir of wrath a partaker in blessing." (Psalm XXXII, 81)

- C. David describes sin in the broadest of ways by using three different terms for it.
1. The words are "transgression," "sin," and "iniquity."
    - a. Transgression speaks of the act of rebellion and disloyalty. It is overstepping yourself, going where you do not belong.
    - b. Sin speaks of missing the mark, failing to attain to the expected standard. It is not by mistake but by will. Rebellion is at its heart.
    - c. Iniquity speaks of a crooked, twisted act or thought. It is often connected to an intentional desire to do wrong.
  2. These three words are not to be kept separate, for that is not what is taking place here.
    - a. These are in a synonymous parallelism and therefore they are all used by David to construct simply this full picture of the presence of sin in all of its power and hideousness.
    - b. No matter how you look at it, it is sin.
- D. But notice also how he contrasts this trinity of sin by a trinity of forgiveness.
1. These verb describe the fulness of the forgiveness that is found in God through confession.
  2. And as you understand them you begin to realize why David is crying how that the one forgiven is truly in a happy position!
  3. The first is "forgiven." Here the word brings the picture of something being carried away.
    - a. It is the act of removing sin AND its guilt AND its remembrance! On judgment day these shall not be held against you. They are resolved by Jesus.
    - b. That alone is enough for me to be happy!
  4. The second is "covered." And here the image brings in the picture of atonement.
    - a. The sinner has been atoned for.

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- b. The sin is covered. The stain of sin is hidden and covered by God.
- c. And the sin shall never be brought up again by the Lord. It is done, it is finished.
- 5. Finally the third term is “does not impute/count.”
  - a. Here we have an Old Testament account of justification.
  - b. All who are sinners have a debt that is owed that cannot be paid. Yet here we see the glories of forgiveness, that debt is no longer on our account. It is removed and shall not be considered by our Lord.
- E. Truly these are good words, but they are not to be taken lightly or casually—notice the final line in vs 2.
  - 1. What is meant by this? Some see it as a fourth term for sin, but that is not correct. It is designed to stand alone and by doing so, it is to stand out in our minds.
  - 2. It cannot mean that there is not deceitfulness in any way in the heart of the forgiven one, for then they would not need forgiveness!
  - 3. So what does it mean? Here we have something very important.
    - a. What David is going to describe in the upcoming verses is that his forgiveness came **when** he confessed that sin (5).
    - b. But when he speaks of confessing, he is not merely speaking of some outward act where he just says the right things.
    - c. There are many times when we go and confess to our Lord when we have every intention of committing that sin again. Let not that person think that they shall be forgiven.
    - d. Nor is there any forgiveness to the one who half-confesses.
      - (1) Is that you?
      - (2) Are you known for confessing with a begrudging spirit? Do you say only what you have to say and not one word more? Is your heart an open book before the Lord or do you carefully craft your words and thoughts to downplay your sin?

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“He who makes half repentance, makes none” (Perowne, 290).

“We must lay before [God] what is in us, not what ought to be within us.” (C. S. Lewis, from Kent Hughes, *1001 Great Stories*, 71).

- F. To confess without deceit requires two things at the very least:
  - 1. To confess fully.
  - 2. To confess freely.
  - 3. And to that person, the promise is made—deep, soul-satisfying, God-delighting joy shall be yours. Sins are covered and righteousness reigns.

### **III. The power of a clean conscience (3-4).**

- A. David now turns his mind backward to the time when he held deceit in his heart.
  - 1. That deceit was manifested in refusing to confess.
    - a. He kept silent about it
    - b. He suppressed it and rationalized it.
    - c. He called it a mistake, a misunderstanding, a problem. But never would he declare it to be iniquity and sin. Certainly not against the Most High.
  - 2. Here we have the folly of the human heart in the grips of sin.
    - a. Sin sinks its claws into our lives and instead of being tender and sensitive to it, we cover it and protect it.
    - b. We deny its presence and rename it in whatever manner we feel is needed.
  - 3. But what we fail to remember is that sin is our enemy and it seeks to have its dominion over each of us.
    - a. It is a killer, for there is never any life in sin.
    - b. But it is a liar as well, for it promises life, a life it can never deliver.
    - c. Instead it becomes a fire to our bone and a devouring disease in our souls.

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- d. When it is hidden and rationalized it becomes like a great rivers that sudden is dammed. The waters simply build up more and more and the pressure becomes greater and greater. There is no relief unless the dam is broken. So to with sin and confession.
- B. Notice that when David hid his sin the cost was immense.
1. Though there is the possibility to see these vss as describing the physical cost to sin, most likely it is poetic language that describes the great spiritual pain that unconfessed sin brings.
  2. A guilty conscience bring great pain.
    - a. It is a horrible thing to have a broken conscience that torments us.
    - b. But may I say that it is an even great horror to have a seared conscience that no longer feels that pain.

“Conscience is our moral intuition. It’s that part of us that passes judgment on our own state. And it takes away our confidence when it is sour or when it is bad. It takes away our security when it is soiled. You have two very firm weapons for battle—faith and a good conscience. Without those weapons we crumble like a dry cookie that’s been sitting on the shelf for three or four days. There’s no tenacity. There’s no resilience. We finally fall. (Swindoll, *Illustrations and Quotes*, p. 117)

- C. It is all driven by pride:
1. David would not confess.
  2. He would not be humbled before God.
  3. And therefore God humbled him! He placed His omnipotent hand upon David and began to press.
  4. Beloved hear this well, if we will not humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand, He shall press down upon us until we are broken.

“Present-day religion far too often soothes the conscience instead of awakening it; and produces a sense of self-satisfaction and eternal safety rather than a sense of our unworthiness.”

(Martyn-Lloyd Jones, in Swindoll’s book of quotes)

- D. What we see here at this point in the Psalm is that David is in the throes of agony as his soul finds no release.

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1. God's hand is upon him—even this is grace, for not all feel God's hand.
  2. But that hand also gives David no peace and no happiness because it keeps David from fleeing, for there is no refuge to flee to!
- E. And so the hand presses and presses and presses. . . .

## **IV. The power of a forgiven life (5).**

- A. Here in verse 5 we come to the climax of the Psalm.
- B. David has come to the end of himself.
1. The hiding of his sin is not worth the hand of the Lord upon him and he is now broken before the Lord.
  2. It is an amazing and sad thing to watch people under God's hand. Some people must go amazingly deep in the depths of discipline before they break and they repent.
  3. Beloved, a small lesson here for each of us.
    - a. Watching a person under the hand of the Lord is a painful thing. Parents especially hurt for their children as they see the consequences of sin come about and the discipline of the Lord take place.
    - b. And it is here that we have a temptation to come in and soothe and take away those consequences.
    - c. But wisdom tells us to let the Lord do His work so that the sinning person might come to confess fully and freely and receive true forgiveness.
    - d. As Proverbs 19:19 says, “*A man of great anger shall bear the penalty, For if you rescue him, you will only have to do it again.*”
- C. But for David, the end has come. He no longer is rationalizing, no longer fighting, and no longer hiding.
1. To acknowledge and confess are the same word, just translated differently.
    - a. It is the word, *yada*, which means to speak openly, which explains the other line, “I did not hide.”

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- b. Again this goes back to the point made in vs 2, the true confession is a full confession. Nothing held back and nothing hidden.
2. David is now ready to declare to the Lord that he had go astray. That he had transgressed the ways of the Lord.
- D. This passage is also interesting for it shows us that Israel's system of sacrifice and such was not a dry thing that was merely external.
  1. Though there were hundreds of priests throughout the land David went directly to the Lord.
  2. David fixed his mind on that which was most important, and it was forgiveness from his Lord. Not to some other man, not to a priest, but straight to YHWH did he flee.
- E. And what does he find when he does confess? Full forgiveness.
  1. The hand of the Lord was not merely tormenting him, twisting him in the wind simply for pleasure.
  2. It was a hand of discipline and a hand of guidance that was bringing David to the proper place—God Himself.
  3. And in the simplest of terms David declares, “Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.”
  4. The word for forgiveness here is a simple word. It means to lift up and to carry.
  5. A few observations here:
    - a. First notice what was actually carried away . . . [guilt].
      - (1) Not just the sin, but the guilt itself was taken away by the Lord.
      - (2) A conscience that is clean because there is nothing there that condemns him. The charge of guilt is removed by the Sovereign Judge.
      - (3) Why? Because he served his time? Because he did a good thing to offset it? No, because he came to the Lord of Mercy for mercy.



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- b. Second, this picture of carrying away the guilt has some connections back in the rest of the Old Testament.
- c. Cain comes under the judgment of God in Genesis 4:13 and says "My guilt is greater than I can bear." (Same root as forgive)
- d. This thought continues throughout the Old Testament over and over. An example is Leviticus 5:1 which says that if a person is a witness and refuses to testify then "he will bear his guilt."
- e. The idea is that the guilt involves taking responsibility for the sin and accepting the consequences thereof.
- f. But what is beautiful is how the Old Testament develops this idea of bearing guilt and how YHWH Himself says that there is a time when He shall bear up the guilt of Israel, He shall forgive them.
- g. Perhaps the greatest is **Isaiah 53:4** Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. . . . **Isaiah 53:11** As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it* and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.
- h. This then moves us to the New Testament where we read in:
  - (1) **Hebrews 9:28** so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.

"The forgiveness of God is the foundation of every bridge from a hopeless past to a courageous present" (George Adam Smith, from *3000 Quotations*, Simcox, p. 132).

- F. But David does not end there, forgiven of the Lord, he then turns his mind to the people of Israel and begins to instruct them.

## V. The power to rightly instruct (6-11).

- A. The words are straightforward here so we need not spend too much time on them.
- B. But notice vs 6 for in there we have a somber reminder by this man.

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1. David's instruction has a sense of urgency about it, "Seek the Lord why there is still time."
  2. Perhaps this is merely poetry, but I think not. There is the reality that the Lord stretches His out to us, but we should never assume that the hand of the Lord shall always be outstretched.
  3. There is eternal folly to assume that first I shall pursue my way, and in good time I shall return to the Lord.
  4. Rather, we must echo Paul's words, now is the day of salvation.
- C. We need also to learn that the Lord does not readily make Himself available to those who only will come to Him in times of distress.
1. We must learn to cultivate a heart of prayer.
  2. We must learn to confess quickly and freely.
  3. And we must learn to not delay.
- D. Times of trouble are certain to come to us all, this David knows (7).
1. Whether it is trials.
  2. Or it is discipline, the answer is the same, seek the Lord and you shall be secure.
  3. Notice the graphic way this is described in vss 8-9.
    - a. The image is of a person who is able to be directed merely by a glance.
      - (1) We must keep a sensitive spirit to the Lord.
      - (2) We must keep a conscience that is ever aware of the working of the Spirit.
    - b. Let us not be like the mule or horse, who only will come if there is a bit and bridle to force them.
      - (1) The bridle is for the fool.
      - (2) But the glance of the Lord is enough for the righteous.

## **VI. Conclusion.**

- A. He ends this then with the simple yet often forgotten truth.

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- a. Psalm 32:10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked; But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him.
  - b. Do you believe that?
  - c. If you want to know if you believe that, consider how eager and how willing you are to confess your sin. It will tell you in but a moment.
- B. And so, typical of David he now invites all who are righteous and upright of heart to rejoice with him. Why?
- C. Because they who are upright of heart are those who also have experienced the forgiveness of their Lord.

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## *Community Group Questions*

- **What stands out with the idea of agreeing or saying the same thing when it comes to confession? How hard is this for you and why?**
- **If you are willing what are some ways or times that God brought you to the end of yourself? (Remember that this is something you may have to go through numerous times in your life so speak with humility here)**
- **Spend time in prayer simply thanking God for the forgiveness that is found through Jesus Christ**