

THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS

Psalms 32

Introduction:

One of the most powerful human motivators that I can think of is the emotion of guilt. From the very beginning, as far back as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, people have felt the shame of guilt as the result of sin and disobedience. In Gen. 2:25, immediately after their creation we read that “the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” Yet just a few verses later, in 3:7, after they ate of the fruit that God had forbidden them to eat, we read, “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.” They went from unashamed to shame which drove them to cover up. What made the difference? It was guilt that caused them to try to cover themselves and to hide from God. Guilt always gets in the way of our relationship with God.

This morning we are going to be looking at Psalm 32 which was written by David. In order to properly understand this psalm we need to look at some background. Psalm 32 is one of seven psalms that are referred to as “penitential psalms”. The others are 6, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143. The term penitential comes, of course, from the word penitent which refers to feeling and expressing remorse or sorrow over sin. So these psalms deal with sin and guilt and the way in which we deal with that guilt and shame.

It would appear that this psalm can be closely linked with Psalm 51. They both deal with the issue of sin and guilt, with penitence and confession, with forgiveness and restoration. Chronologically, Psalm 51 would come first. Turn for a few moments to Ps. 51. (*Discuss the title on it, mentioning David's sin regarding Bathsheba and Uriah, then read it.*)

As I read that, I cannot help but think to myself, when, if ever, have I expressed such brokenness over my sin? Have I ever been that contrite and heartbroken over the way that I have offended God?

Anyway, it would appear that some time after David's confession in Psalm 51, he wrote Psalm 32, which is an expression of the joy that comes from experiencing God's forgiveness and the renewing of that relationship that was broken by sin.

In this psalm, David skilfully approaches and discusses life's most important lessons about sin, confession, and forgiveness. The psalm itself divides very neatly into two parts. In the first five verses he reflects on these lessons from a personal perspective, remembering the lessons from his own experience. In vv. 6-11, he moves into more of a teaching mode, urging us to learn the lessons for ourselves.

I. Remembering the Lessons

Read vv. 1-2 – here we have the principle laid out for us – the principle that the truly happy person is the one who has been forgiven of his sins. There are four words used here to refer to the evil that we commit.

Transgression – a casting off of allegiance, a rebellion against rulers. It carries with it the idea of stepping over the line, going beyond the limits of God's laws.

Sin – missing the mark, coming up short. Failure to measure up to the standard God has set for us.

Iniquity – Twisting and bending the law, deviating from the way. Also suggested in this word is guilt and the punishment that goes along with that guilt.

Deceit – the concept of betrayal,

All of these are terms which describe the sinfulness that comes between us and God and causes a rift in our relationship with God. But David looks back, remembering how the confession of the awful crimes he has committed against God has brought forgiveness and has renewed his relationship with God. His experience has been that only through that forgiveness can he truly find joy.

In vv. 3-4, he looks back beyond the forgiveness to remember the desperation and despair he felt when he was unwilling to confess his sin to God. How long was it from the time of his adultery with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of Uriah, until his confession that he described

in Ps. 51? Well, the baby that Bathsheba conceived had been born already, and it would appear that he was not just a new-born, when God sent Nathan to confront King David. It had to be over a year that David remained silent about his sin. During that time, as he tried to cover up his guilt, and hide from his conscience, he found it impossible to escape the pressure God was putting on him. Look at what he says...read vv. 3-4, and discuss briefly the physical, emotional and spiritual agony he endured.

Eventually the time came when he was approached by Nathan the prophet of God, who confronted him about his sin. What was his response? Look at v. 5 – read it and discuss. There is confession and there is repentance. That closing line says it all – it takes us back to his statements in vv. 1-2 – the blessedness and joy of being forgiven.

II. Teaching the Lessons

Now we come to the second part of the psalm. It takes a turn here and becomes more of a teaching message. The message in these verses is somewhat the same as David's experience in the first part, except that it is in reverse order.

vv. 6-7 – there is a place of peace and comfort and protection and deliverance for us if we will only call on God as David did. In confession and repentance, in casting ourselves on God's mercy, we will find that same response and the same result that David did – the comfort of knowing our sins forgiven.

vv. 8-9 – here we have God speaking of his direction and instruction for our lives. He is the one who is ever-present, whose instruction is our guide, whose eye is always on us. The warning is to not be stubborn and resistant to God's counsel and teaching. David expressed so clearly in vv. 3-4 the pain and suffering that comes from resisting the hand of God. It becomes very heavy on us...

vv. 10-11 summarize the psalm for us and take us back to the truth with which David started this psalm of penitence. Read verses and comment on them... v. 11 especially reiterates the joy of the upright, the happiness of the one who has found forgiveness through confession of sin.

Conclusion:

Do you know the joy of forgiveness? As I look back on my life I find that this is one of the most amazing and awe-inspiring truths in all of Scripture.

I remember...

- As a boy – 9 years old – evangelistic meetings...that night at home, I felt like the worst of sinners. I just knew I was going to hell... a great weight was taken off – ah, the joy of forgiveness.
- To this day that awe and wonder has not left me. The thought that God has forgiven me, brings a joy that cannot be explained.
- There have been times I have been like David, resisting the hand of God, the voice of my conscience, and I have felt the weariness and the wasting that David describes in vv. 3-4.
- Even today, I am overwhelmed by the truth that I am forgiven because of Jesus Christ.
- Sin – I am the chief of sinners – explain

Do you know the joy of forgiveness? Conclude by reading again vv. 1-2, 10-11.