

Psalm 32

Psalm 32 is one of 7 Psalms that have been grouped together under the title of Penitential Psalms or Psalms dealing with repentance or seeking forgiveness from God. They are often used as a part of Lenten studies. (See Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). All of these Psalms deal with sin, either personal or national sin. They show the horror of sin and the trouble or sorrow that sin brings if one does not confess it and deal with it. Psalm 32 speaks of the dangers of unconfessed sin and the joy of confessed sin.

The title includes the word “**maskil**” which probably means instruction. The root word carries the idea of contemplation and is related to the word "righteousness." Those Psalms include instruction in righteousness. (Psalms (32, 42, 44, 45, 52, 53, 54, 55, 74, 78, 88, 89, 142) Of these Psalms David wrote 6.

Psalm 32 seems to have been designed for worship with **verses 1, 2** addressed to the congregation/readers. **Verses 3-7** find David leading the worshippers in prayer. **Verses 8 and 9** are instructions and **verses 10 and 11** are a challenge to the worshipper or reader.

Verses 1, 2 show the blessing of confessed sin. The Psalm begins with the word “**blessed**” which is actually plural in the Hebrew so is better seen as blessedness. Psalm 1 begins that way and it is interesting to compare the two. In Psalm 1 a man is blessed when he walks in the ways of God, something that none of us do perfectly. In Psalm 32 a man is blessed when he has failed but is forgiven because he repented and confessed that sin.

What do people do with sin? Sometimes they accept it as a part of their lives or they excuse it, tolerate it, ignore it, or try to forget it. God’s approach is to acknowledge it and its ugliness and then to offer a covering for it. Sin is an abomination to God. Sin separates from God and must be covered if fellowship is to be restored. Sins are “**forgiven**” “**covered**” and “**not counted,**” all describe what God does with confessed sin because of Jesus' provision.

The Hebrew uses 3 different words for sin in verses 1 and 2. One is **transgression**, which is an act of rebellion against God. It has the idea of “going away” or “departing” from the will of God. The second is **sin**, which is the general Old Testament term for missing the mark or falling short. The third word, translated **sin** carries the idea of twisting or distorting the correct way. It comes close to the word **iniquity** used in verse 5. Sin comes in many shapes and forms and all is against God. While sin comes in all forms, so does God’s forgiveness. What God does with sins is described as **covered** which is a way of saying they can be seen no more. Note, sin is **covered**, not ignored by God. God is both the just and the justifier of our sins. He did not merely forget them but paid the price of them. Read Psalm 103:12.

David said they are **not counted against him**, that is they are canceled. The phrase is from the world of bookkeeping and was used by Paul in Romans to tell us how God writes our sins in His ledger and then writes the righteousness of Christ along side of them to show that the books are balanced. (See Romans 4:7-8.)

David knew the ugliness of un-confessed sin and how it destroys one, as will be seen in the next couple of verses. David also knew the joy of sin confessed. He had no idea all that would be involved in covering it but today we know that to cover sin took the death of Jesus on the Cross. It was His shed blood that covered sin for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

David knew from experience that **blessings** come to a man who is forgiven. As noted, the Hebrew the word “**blessed**” is plural and depicts the many different blessings that are ours in Jesus. (Six Psalms begin with **blessed**, Psalms 1, 32, 41, 112, 119, 128.)

Verses 3, 4 tell of the pain of un-confessed sin. There had been a time when he had not confessed sin and he knew the impact it had on him. David reflected on the utter frustration of living in sin, of keeping the truth of sin to oneself, of leaving un-confessed sin in a life because un-confessed sin is uncovered. David was fully aware of the sleepless nights with un-confessed sin on his mind. He knew of the miserable and uncomfortable days which resulted from the same un-confessed sin. David said day and night God’s hand of condemnation was upon him. The guilt of being out of God’s will can be ever so draining. David went on to describe the emotional drain of un-confessed sin. The picture of a plant in the heat of summer that wilts vividly depicts the impact of un-confessed sin on our spiritual life.

Verse 5 speaks of the path of forgiveness. David said that the only way he was able to find peace and joy once again was to acknowledge his sin in confession before God. Sin is called “**sin**” “**iniquity**” and “**transgression**”. These three words are common Old Testament descriptions for sinful thoughts or actions. And God forgave him. The world tries everything it can think of from material possessions to drugs to satisfy the soul but God says peace and satisfaction come only when sin is confessed. Sin confessed becomes sin forgiven. One of the lies that Satan continually tells us is that some sin of the past is not really forgiven. We keep coming back to it and asking God over and over to forgive or else we continue to live with the guilt of it. We may have to live with the consequences but never with the guilt if it is confessed. Notice that David confessed both the act of sin and the guilt or iniquity that was the result of it. Sin is committed against the Holy God and needs to be seen as such. Read I John 1:9, 10

The rest of the Psalm, **verses 6-11**, deals with the blessings that come to those who have confessed and had their sins covered.

The first blessing of confessed sin is a prayer life. **Verse 6** speaks of the prayer life that can be meaningful only when we have confessed sin. The phrase “**while you may be found**” is described in Isaiah 55:6. Note that the promises do not include exemption from difficult but preservation in them. The flood waters will come but we need not face them alone.

Verse 7 tells of the confidence and protection that is ours. Note especially the personal aspect of that verse. “My” and “me” are the focal point. God personally blesses the man who has found

forgiveness. One of the unfortunate characteristics of many of us is that we take for granted God's daily protection and care.

The phrase “**songs of deliverance**” draws out attention to the joy and rejoicing of knowing we have been forgiven. To know one is forgiven is want to celebrate.

Verses 8, and 9 express the blessing of being used by God once sin is confessed. Once we are forgiven we are expected to warn others against sin and lead others to the One who forgives.. Read Psalm 51:13. The world needs Jesus but they will never know Him if we who have been forgiven refuse to share the good news with them.

Verse 10 presents the blessing of God's love shown to us. We have a parallel picture here. One is either a “wicked” person, literally a sinner, or he is one who trust. One is either filled with woe or surrounded by His unfailing love. All humanity is divided into one or the other category. There is no alternative. Sin ends in sorrow but confessed sin ends in the joy of knowing His unfailing love. The picture is that of being befriended by God. What a beautiful thought! God is my friend! When sins are confessed He can be our friend, a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

Verse 11 is a final call to joy. It is the logical outcome of realizing the truth expressed in the preceding verses. If you are a person surrounded by His unfailing love you will respond with joy. Those to whom this was being addressed were called upon to **rejoice and be glad** and because of the joy we are to sing to Him. It is a command, not an option. To rejoice is emphasized with the word, “**be glad**.” Christians are filled with the joy of the Lord because they have been forgiven and know the blessing of fellowship with Him. **Righteous** and **upright of heart** are parallel terms that describe the man who is forgiven and that stands in contrast to the wicked man who fails to confess his sins.

During this Lenten season contemplate the blessings that can be ours because with the penalty of sins paid for on the Cross we can confess them and know renewed fellowship and joy in the Lord.