

The Joy of Forgiveness

Psalm 32

Introduction

1. This psalm is introduced as “A Psalm of David. A Maschil” or “contemplation.”
2. Ps. 32 is about David’s contemplation over the only real solution to the burden of guilt.
 - a. He shows that life apart from God’s forgiveness is miserable.
 - b. Having experienced divine chastening and forgiveness for himself, David “encourages others to seek the Lord who deals graciously with sinners” (*Bible Knowledge Comm.* Pg. 818).
 - c. He then shows the continued happiness of accepting the Lord’s correction and instruction.
3. Vs. 8: Now we have David’s instruction to help us come to God in order to experience the joy of forgiveness.

Discussion

I. Vs. 1-2: The Joy of Forgiveness

- A. This is the end result of the lesson to be learned.
 1. Happy is the one whose sins are “*carried away.*”
 2. Only the Lord can cover our sins; only He can take them away.
 3. Rom. 4:5-8: Such forgiveness cannot be earned.
 - a. It is granted by the Lord based on one’s faith.
 - b. No amount of good works can earn forgiveness.
 - c. Many have tried to make themselves feel better by doing good deeds, but true relief from one’s guilt can only come by the grace of God.
- B. Vs. 2: “*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity.*”
 1. To “impute” means “to reckon, to take into account” (Vine’s).
 2. To take into account is to require payment of debt.
 3. Rom. 6:23: Death is required of those whose sins are taken into account.
 4. But the Lord, in His mercy, does not require payment of debt from those who come to Him by faith and without deceit (see Matt. 18:22-35).
 5. Therefore, the one whose sins the Lord does not impute is blessed—happy and relieved.
- C. “*And in whose spirit there is no deceit*”
 1. Deceit is in those who ask forgiveness for sins that they are not truly sorry about.
 2. Deceit is in those who ask forgiveness for sins they have no intention of stopping.
 3. Deceit is in those who ask forgiveness for sins they intend to commit.
 4. Deceit is in those who are unwilling to acknowledge their guilt (1 John 1:8, 10) or who come to God in arrogance rather than humility (Luke 18:9-14).
 5. But blessed are those who come to God who have no deceit in their hearts, who have great sorrow over their sins, who are struggling to overcome their sins, and who seek the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness (like the tax collector).

II. Vs. 3-4: The Curse of Silence

- A. Guilt is a terrible burden to those who are affected by it.
 1. The happiness described in the previous verses is accentuated in the heart of one who has bore the burden of guilt.
 2. The effects of David’s bottled up guilt had both emotional and physical consequences.
 3. It was like a curse on his heart and on his body.
- B. Vs. 3: “*When I kept silent...*”
 1. David describes how, due to shame, he tried to hide his guilt, even to cover it up rather than dealing with it.
 2. So many of us experience this very thing on a daily basis.

- a. Rather than facing God and acknowledging our guilt, we turn our faces in shame—we try to cover our sins in our own way.
 - b. When burdened by guilt many avoid situations where they feel God’s presence the most (avoiding church or Bible studies, neglecting their prayers, etc.).
 - c. Some try to cover up their guilt by expressing anger toward others or pointing out the faults of others.
 - d. In spite of our best efforts, our own guilt only increases in side of us, and the longer we avoid accepting accountability the more it rots and festers in our hearts.
3. *“My bones grew old.”*
- C. Vs. 4: *“Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.”*
- 1. The feeling of guilt and the weight and internal tension it causes within us is a blessing from God, for it is the force that draws us back to Him when we need Him the most.
 - 2. So many try to quite this sensation, some even express pride when their consciences become so seared that sinful things no longer have an effect on them (Eph. 4:19; 1 Tim. 4:2).
 - 3. But with David, the longer he kept silent and avoided God, the heavier God’s hand felt upon him.
 - 4. *“My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.”* Eventually the weight of his guilt became so great that he could not bear it; it drained him of his vitality, life, energy.
 - 5. As the hot sun on a muggy day in summer that seems to drain the energy out of every person, so David’s guilt immobilized him until he could go no further without seeking relief from the only source available.
 - 6. Ps. 38:3-5: *“My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness.”*

III. Vs. 5-7: The Relief of Confession

- A. Vs. 5: *“I said, ‘I will confess my transgression to the Lord.’”*
- 1. At times, the sinner must become so frustrated and so tired of the guilt that he is willing to confess his transgressions to God no matter the cost (embarrassment, loss, etc.).
 - 2. This kind of action requires a determined mind on the part of the sinner to turn his heart to God.
 - 3. Like the prodigal son, *“I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’”* (Luke 15:18-19).
 - 4. Thus, David laid it all out; he kept nothing back: *“my iniquity I have not hidden.”*
 - a. His confession was not a heartless *“Father forgive me.”*
 - b. He did not downplay the severity of what he had done, nor try to make excuses.
 - c. He bore his heart, expressed his guilt in great detail, describe the horrible nature of his sins and acknowledged the wickedness of what he had done (Ps. 51:3-4, 14; Ps. 38:
- B. *“And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”*
- 1. Like a father, waiting for His lost child, the Lord is willing to forgive the iniquities of His children and embrace them once more.
 - 2. Like David, so many of us would rather endure such hardship and suffering on account of our guilt, too ashamed to turn to God.
 - 3. But all the while God is there, waiting to embrace us. We pay such a terrible price, why not instead confess our sins to God, beg His forgiveness and accept His warm embrace?
- C. Vs. 6: *“For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You.”*
- 1. Notice: those who are godly are not sinless, but rather are willing to confess their sins to God with humble hearts and without deceit.
 - 2. David advises all who are godly to pray to God *“in a time when He may be found”* and to not delay as he did.
 - 3. Those who choose rather to ignore their guilt and hide from God will not receive such forgiveness, nor can they be considered godly.
 - 4. But those who are willing to pray to God, to confess their iniquities and humble themselves in the sight of the Lord will find God, for He is not far from each one of us (Acts 17:21).

D. Vs. 7: *"You shall preserve me from trouble."*

1. As much as we feel desolate and void of vitality under the burden of our guilt, when we confess our sins to God we can experience the security and safety of the Lord's protection.
2. David does not say that God will cause us to avoid trouble, but He will preserve us from it.
3. Our burden is taken away, our steps are once again directed by God, and because we have drawn near to Him, He will draw near to us to protect us in distresses.
4. In vs. 3 David is seen hiding from God, but after He acknowledged his sin David is found hiding in God in vs. 7.

IV. Vs. 8-9: The Blessing of Correction and Instruction

A. Vs. 8: *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go."*

1. Forgiveness is not the only thing we should seek.
2. When asking God for forgiveness, there must also be repentance in our hearts.
3. Those who truly repent will seek correction from God that they may know the right way that they should walk.
4. Those who desire forgiveness for their sins must also learn how to come out of their sins by receiving instruction from the Lord.

B. Vs. 9: *"Do not be like a horse or a mule."*

1. Horses and mules have no understanding; they are stubborn beyond reason.
2. If we are to be instructed by God, if we are to receive His forgiveness and embrace, then we need to stop acting like mules and start obeying His commands!
3. These animals have to be harnessed in order for their owners to direct them.
4. God does not want to harness us, He does not want to have to put a bit in our mouths to make us go where we should. Sadly, there are many Christians who have the same mentality as a mule who will not budge unless pricked and prodded several times.
5. God guides us with intimate and vigilant care, *"I will guide you with My eye."* Let us with humble hearts, freely and willingly respond to His guidance and learn from His instructions.

V. Vs. 10-11: The Security of Trusting in the Lord

A. *"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked."*

1. Those who refuse to trust in the Lord will experience many sorrows from being separated from their God.
2. Their sins will destroy them.

B. *"But he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him."*

1. Those who trust in the Lord will confess their sins to Him and beg His forgiveness.
2. They will experience the blessedness of God's mercy.
3. They will be glad and rejoice, for their burdens will be lifted.
4. In the uprightness of their hearts they will rejoice in the Lord, seek His righteousness, and take comfort in His instructions.

Conclusion

1. There is great joy in being forgiven, but the longer we avoid confessing our sins to God, the farther we grow from Him and the more sorrows we will suffer with the wicked.
2. Are you suffering under the burden of your guilt? Seek relief from the Lord. Confess your sins and turn to Him.

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