

EXPOSITION OF PSALM 32

When we turn to the Bible we discover that happiness is found in one's relationship with God. If one is in a right relationship with God, one will have internal joy and happiness regardless of surrounding circumstances. If one is not in a right relationship with God, no matter what one has or is, life is lonely and miserable.

The key to having a right relationship with God is having a relationship in which no sin blocks any fellowship and communion between the individual and God. The big problem we all have is that all of us have sinned, and therefore none of us automatically has this kind of relationship with God. **It is only when the sin has been confessed and forgiven that one can be happy. One will never have peace with self until one has peace with God.**

That is the message of **Psalm 32**.

THE STATE OF BEING HAPPY OR MISERABLE IS A STATE DETERMINED BY WHETHER OR NOT OUR SIN HAS BEEN FORGIVEN BY GOD.

It is said that Martin Luther was once asked, which are your favorite Psalms. Luther said the "Pauline Psalms." The puzzled friend asked which Psalms are those? Luther said **Psalm 32**, 51, 130, 143 because they all teach forgiveness of sins comes apart from the law to one who believes.

As Augustine, the famed theologian and bishop of Hippo, was dying on his bed in Hippo, North Africa, it was said that he was at total peace because he meditated on **Psalm 32**.

Now you will notice the inscription which does show up in the Hebrew text. **This is called "A Psalm of David" and it is classified as a "Maskil" Psalm.** This particular classification means that this Psalm will bring success by being taught and understood. According to William Gesenius, this was a word particularly used for Psalms that were didactic poems, specifically designed for giving instruction and teaching.

Psalm 32 was a Psalm written by David to teach and instruct others concerning the happiness and blessedness that one has when one does not try to cover his sin, but goes directly to God and deals with his sin.

You will also notice the word "selah" (32:4, 5, 7) which shows up three times. This word means to rest or pause and keep silent and think about what you just read or heard. David and God want us to think very seriously about what is in this Psalm.

For over one year David had tried to cover his sin with Bathsheba. He had coveted, lied, stolen, committed adultery, and murdered Uriah who was a brave soldier and officer. He was a Hittite, not even a Jew, who was totally loyal to David, and David stole his wife and had Uriah killed. During that year David was depressed and lonely; but when Nathan the prophet confronted him and when David finally faced his sin and confessed it, he was able to write Psalm 32 which describes the joy and exhilaration he experienced knowing his sins were gone.

PART #1 – The one who is blessed and happy is one who has honestly confessed his sin to God and received His forgiveness. **32:1-2**

The main idea behind the Hebrew word “blessed” is the idea of being happy because one is in a straight and right relationship with God, and therefore stands to be the recipient of the blessings of God. This happiness comes directly from one’s relationship with God and one’s status before God.

Now it is extremely important to see here that the issue that determines whether or not one is blessed by God is the issue of sin. David very specifically and explicitly uses four different Hebrew words to describe the sin:

- 1) “Transgression” refers to defection and rebellion. **32:1a**
- 2) “Sin” refers to missing the mark that has been established by God. **32:1b**
- 3) “Iniquity” refers to depraved and perverse acts. **32:2a**
- 4) “Deceit” refers to fraudulent and deceitful acts in which one tries to cover up sin. **32:2b**

Now the issue of determining whether or not a person is blessed and happy is the issue of taking care of all of these sin problems. It is stated right here that blessing and happiness exists when:

- 1) Transgression has been forgiven. **32:1b**
- 2) Sin has been covered. **32:1b**
- 3) Iniquity is not imputed. **32:2a**
- 4) Deceit is nonexistent. **32:2b**

The word “impute” means to make a judicial and legal calculation. Now the truth is the forgiveness of God must come by imputation, not by works, not by promises, and not by the law because we are all guilty. The only chance David had was to have God make a mental and judicial decision not to impute David’s sin against him. If God does not judicially calculate or declare us righteous, then we are miserable and depressed because we are in our sin. The Apostle Paul knew the importance of this Psalm because he referred to it in Romans 4:4-8 in his Gospel teaching on the doctrine of imputation.

In **verses 1-2** David is saying that the one who is blessed and happy is one right with God, which means one is cleaned up from all their sin. To have this cleansing, one must honestly go to God and face the sin and confess the sin. As Proverbs says: “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion” (Proverbs 28:13).

PART #2 – The one who is miserable and depressed is one who has not honestly confessed his sin before God and not received His forgiveness. **32:3-4**

No matter what a person looks like on the outside, there will never be inward peace when a believer has inner sin. The state of the believer who covers sin is one of misery and sadness.

In **verses 3-4** David gives us a good look as to what was negatively happening to him on the inside when he tried to cover and hide his sin from God. He was depressed to the point that his physical body actually lost strength. David had been a vibrant outdoor guy, but when he did not face his sin, he lost his vitality, joy, and strength.

We do know from the N.T. that when a believer is in sin there can be physical consequences - weakness, sickness, and even death (I Cor. 11:30). In fact, James describes one who so realizes this judgment that he calls for the elders of the church, and they pray that God will lift the sickness (James 5:14-16).

PART #3 – The one who will receive the forgiveness of God is one who will honestly face his sin himself and confess it before God. **32:5**

There are three steps that David took that were critical to his restoration:

Step #1 - The believer must acknowledge his sin to God. **32:5a**

When David said, “I acknowledged my sin to Thee,” what he specifically is saying is, “I have clearly perceived and seen and am aware of every mark I missed in sinning against Thee.” David went to God with a very clear acknowledgement of the evil he had done.

Step #2 - The believer must not try to hide his iniquity from God. **32:5b**.

If one is to have fellowship with God, one cannot try to cover up or conceal the depravity. David saw what he had done as perverted and depraved and he acknowledged it to God. People will go to great lengths to try to cover their sin:

- 1) They will call it an accident rather than an abomination.
- 2) They will call it a sickness rather than a sin.
- 3) They will call it an error rather than enmity.
- 4) They will call it an infirmity rather than an iniquity.
- 5) They will call it a mistake rather than a morbid act.
- 6) They will call it a personality weakness rather than a personal choice.

God demands open, honest confession if we want His forgiveness.

Step #3 - The believer must confess his transgressions to God. **32:5c**

That Hebrew word “confess” means to show or point out the sin and the guilt of self (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 332). **David went before God and specifically pointed out to God all of the ways he had rebelled and defected from God.**

Here is one of the great unique truths of the Bible which is totally opposite of man’s thinking. **With men, confession of sin makes it possible for condemnation ; but with God, confession of sin makes it possible for forgiveness .**

The Bible is very clear that if one has godly sorrow for sin (Psalm 38:18; II Cor. 7:10), if one will confess the sin (Psalm 32:5, I John 1:9), and if one will forsake the sin (Prov. 28:13), one can find the mercy and the forgiveness of God and be greatly used by God.

By adding the word “selah” at the end of **verse 5**, David wanted all to stop after this verse and think about this very important truth.

PART #4 – Every believer who has sinned against God must be willing to follow these steps if he wants God’s blessings. **32:6-7**

The opening of **verse 6** is extremely important because this prayer of confession is not a prayer for the wicked, but it is a prayer of the godly.

In this dispensation, no one who has not trusted Jesus Christ can confess sin and receive forgiveness, because he has rejected Jesus Christ. Truth is, people without Christ have very little conviction of their own sin or their need of a Savior. It is the godly people who can confess sin and find forgiveness.

Observe from **verse 6** that David says this confession needs to take place “in a time when Thou mayest be found.” The obvious implication of this is that it is possible to pray and confess sin when it is too late. In fact, King Saul is a good example of one who prayed too late (I Samuel 15:24-29).

The proper time to deal with the sin is when God has brought one to the conviction of the sin. When Nathan confronted David, David was brought to conviction; and he dealt with his sin before God and found the grace and the mercy of God.

God promises four things to one who will honestly deal with his sin at the proper time:

- 1) He promises He will grant forgiveness of sin and guilt. **32:5b**
- 2) He promises that He will be a hiding place. **32:7a**
- 3) He promises that He will preserve from trouble. **32:7b**
- 4) He promises that He will deliver the depressed believer so he can sing again. **32:7c**

To one who will deal with sin:

(Final Thought #1) - God will give great understanding, insight, and direction to one who faces his sin. **32:8** - He will instruct, teach, and counsel.

(Final Thought #2) - God will not give understanding, insight, and direction to one who does not deal with sin. **32:9**

(Final Thought #3) - God will cause sorrow to plague one who refuses to deal with sin. **32:10a**

(Final Thought #4) - God will grant His lovingkindness and joy to one who does deal with sin. **32:10b-11**

If you are depressed today because you know you have sinned against God, you can find the forgiveness of God and be greatly used by God if you will face it and confess it.

That is exactly the teaching of Psalm 32.