

The Way of Forgiveness

Psalms 32:1-11 (ESV)

¹ Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

² Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. *Selah*

⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. *Selah*

⁶ Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

⁷ You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. *Selah*

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

⁹ Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.

¹⁰ Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.

¹¹ Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Father I rejoice and am glad this morning in the great salvation that You have given us through Jesus Christ. And I pray that this salvation would be exalted, it would be rejoiced in this morning. I pray that this special and unique message of Psalm 32 would minister exactly to the people You want it to minister to this morning. That You would use this Psalm as a balm, as a soothing medicine to souls that are struggling and are weary. Lord we are thankful that Jesus is the lover of our soul, that we stand in Christ without condemnation, no fear of death, sin's curse has lost its grip on us. And so as we face a new year, 2010, I pray that we will rejoice again in our great salvation that we have in Jesus Christ. We pray this in His name. Amen.

Well if you were dreaming of white Christmas we got it, didn't we. It's a joy. I certainly love the snow, and it has been a challenge for us to get out of our house. We have one car that can get out of our driveway and it got stuck on Christmas, so we spent the last two days shoveling. But it has still been a joy.

It's providential that we have one service. Looks like it fit just about right. I hope you'll take advantage of one service because we're mixing the two. Two services are always a challenge. I'm thankful that we have the opportunity to have two services, but you know people come to the first service, and so many people have said to me at different times, "You know, I haven't seen so-and-so forever." Well they go to the first service, or they go to the second service. So take advantage that we have one service. Greet someone maybe that you haven't met before or haven't seen in a long time. And I'm thankful for one service. I'm feeling guilty for even being paid this week, because preaching one time, but it kind of lowers the stress level of making sure I say the same thing in two different services. I just get one shot, good or bad, one time. But I'm looking forward to just having one service this morning.

Well we are on the eve of the new year, 2010. Isn't that amazing, 2010. If you would have talked about 2010 when I was in high school, you would have thought you were talking about some futuristic, far off, never-to-be place in the world, 2010. The world would be done by 2010. And yet here we are, 2010, and it continues on. During this new year you will probably hear dozens of times people say, "Happy New Year." Of course, maybe we'll probably say that mindlessly. They don't have any idea what they're saying, they just say, "Happy New Year" because you're supposed to say Happy New Year. But the best intentions is that when you wish someone a happy new year, you are wishing blessings and prosperity and goodness in the coming year. And though that may show good intention on your part, we are completely powerless to affect such blessing in people's life, aren't we. We can wish them to have a happy new year, but we can't really do anything to give them a new year.

We don't know what 2010 will hold. It may be a very difficult year. When you look at some of the things that are going on politically, I know many people are concerned – business owners – what's going on – what is 2010 going to be like? Well I think it's fitting this morning on the eve of a new year that we look at Psalm 32. The theme of Psalm 32 is, "How blessed is the one who is forgiven." We will be reminded this morning what is the foundation of our happiness in this life. It's not in our circumstances, it is in the fact that we are forgiven in Jesus Christ. How blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven.

Psalm 32 is a psalm of David. It says that it is a maskil of David. We don't exactly know what maskil means. Some think it means an instruction or a meditation, but it is a psalm of David. And we don't know the exact nature of the sin. It's not mentioned in the text, but if it is David, his sin is well known. If you are not familiar with King David, he was a king of Israel, one of the great kings of Israel, one of the best kings of Israel, and yet he fell into adultery, committed adultery against his wives and murdered the husband of the woman that he had an adulterous affair with. And so the sin isn't mentioned in Psalm 32, but if you were in Israel and you were to know that this was a psalm penned by David, the sin would only be too obvious.

It's very familiar and closely related to another psalm that David wrote, Psalm 51. And we taught on Psalm 51 a few months ago. It's interesting because again in Psalm 51 David speaks about confession, confession of sin, very similar to Psalm 32. Scholars suggest and believe that Psalm 32 was actually written after Psalm 51, that Psalm 51 was written after Nathan had confronted him, when he finally broke and he writes out his confession, Psalm 51. And then as he begins to reflect on having his sins forgiven, he writes Psalm 32. Some would even suggest that Psalm 32 is the promise or the fulfillment of what David said in Psalm 51:13, where he says, "Lord restore to me the joy of my salvation, then I will teach transgressors Your way." And that Psalm 32 is and has a flavor of a what we would call a wisdom psalm, a teaching, an instruction psalm, where David is teaching sinners the way of forgiveness. And so we have here a great background for this wonderful psalm. Having learned his lessons of sin and forgiveness, Psalm 32 will teach us the way of forgiveness for transgressors.

One writer said of Psalm 32, "The psalmist views humans as sinning beings whose possibilities of happiness lies in the removal and forgiveness of that sin." The psalmist views humans as sinning beings. When I first read that I thought, that's good, but as I spent more and more time in Psalm 32, that statement became less and less appealing to me. And the word that I began to struggle with was the word, human. The psalmist views humans as sinning beings. I think that's too generic. It is too universal. David of course thought that the pagan nations, he had a word for pagan nations, they were the wicked. They were the ungodly. Of course David viewed humans as sinning beings. That's not really the issue in Psalm 32. I believe, I hope you will see, that the psalmist has a particular group of people in mind when he writes Psalm 32, and it's not humans in general. It is the people of God.

Put people of God in that statement. The psalmist views “the people of God” as sinning beings whose possibilities of happiness lies in the removal and forgiveness of that sin. I’ll tell you that resonates with me, that the people of God, Christians, still sin. We still struggle with sin. I’m a Christian. Even more, I’m a pastor, and I struggle with sin. The psalmist is writing to the people of God who struggle with sin. You know when I preach sermons I always think of different people, and I try to think, how is this going to apply to so-and-so, and how is this going to apply to so-and-so? Lord, You’re going to have to minister. I try to think of all the people that are going to be listening – Lord, how is it going to apply? And I have to tell you as I’m thinking through Psalm 32, I’m thinking, you know there are some people out there – they’re sinners, this is going to resonate with them. And there’s other people in this congregation I’m thinking – they’re pretty good people. They’re probably not going to get much out of this one. I’d mention names, but it would probably embarrass you, and I don’t want to draw any attention and say, you know, this person can’t really struggle with sin, come on.

Well the truth is, that’s false. If your heart is beating and you have the Spirit of God in you, you struggle with sin, period. There is no exceptions. Martin Luther said that, “Sin for the believer is much like a man’s whiskers. You shave them, you think it’s all gone, and it comes right back.” We deal with one sin and we think, “OK, man I got that one taken care of,” and hair comes out your ears, or your nose. It’s just the way sin is. Isn’t that a great...you take care of one sin. OK, I’ve finally defeated that, and you have another sin that you have to struggle with. Confession is never done is it, for the believer? Everyone in this room will no doubt sin, some time this week. Most of us in this room will sin every day. Every day, think of that. There will be those who call themselves Christians, people of God, who sin every day. This psalm is written for God’s people.

The theme, “How blessed is the one whose sins are forgiven.” Do you see the word “blessed” there, two times in verses 1 and 2, blessed, blessed? Usually in the Old Testament that word “blessed” is in a plural construct, which literally, if you were to translate it literally, it would be “blessednesses.” Blessings—he has blessednesses, but that doesn’t work. New American Standard says, “Oh how blessed.” There is so many blessings when your sins are forgiven. How blessed is the one whose sins are forgiven.

Then David uses three words for sin. Three words you'll notice in verses 1 and 2; transgression, sin and iniquity. It probably is unwarranted to take each one of those and press them for just a particular nuance, although there is a little bit of difference. The purpose of using this triad of words is to describe the completeness, the thoroughness of his sin. The word "transgression," if you're going to try to understand it, how it differentiates, speaks of an intentional act of rebellion against God's law, against something you know. A transgression is doing something you know you shouldn't do. That's transgression.

The word "sin" is a little more generic. It's one of the most generic words for just rebellion against God. It has the idea of falling short, of missing the mark, as you would say. So if transgression is doing what you know you shouldn't do, sin is not doing what you know you should do. You're not measuring up to what you should be doing. And then the word "iniquity" just speaks of crookedness, perverseness, twistedness, guilt. This is who we are. We are crooked, twisted, perverted, sinful people who are not walking in the paths. And so these are the three words that David uses to speak of sin; transgression, sin and iniquity.

But then he also couples with that the three ways God deals with our sin. You'll notice it says, "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven." Literally the word means; lifted up, taken away, removed. How blessed is the one who is weighted in John Bunyan's, Pilgrim's Progress, weighted with the burden and guilt of his sin, and the Lord picks it up and takes it away. "How blessed is the man whose sin is covered." The idea of a covering here is very clear in the Old Testament. The priest would go into the Holy of Holies and he would put blood on the Mercy Seat. The word for Mercy Seat in Greek is "propitiation." It is a covering. It covers the transgression as David said in Psalm 51, "Blot out my transgressions. Cover it with blood." How blessed is the one whose sin God covers so He cannot see it. And then he says, "How blessed is the man whom the Lord counts no iniquity." This is what God doesn't do. He doesn't count a person's iniquity against them.

Man that's staggering, if we didn't say anything else. Sinful people who have violated God's command. How blessed is the one that God doesn't count that iniquity against them. David couples those three ways God deals with sin to show how completely, how thoroughly God takes away our sin. "How blessed is the one whose sin is forgiven."

Well as David develops this theme he does something here, and this is how we're going to divide Psalm 32. I think it's fairly reflective of Psalm 32. David is going to give us his personal testimony of the blessedness of forgiveness of sins. Then he's going to give us an exhortation in fulfillment of Psalm 51. I'm going to teach transgressors the way. And then the last part we're going to see is a divine commentary on this whole thing of what God has to say about forgiveness of sins. So let's look at verses 3 through 5 as David shares with us his personal testimony concerning the blessings of having your sins forgiven.

Psalms 32:3-5 (ESV)

³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

David's testimony begins with the misery, the miseries (plural, if you will), of unconfessed sin. When I kept silent—that means I didn't confess my sin. You can go back to 1 Samuel 11 and you can read again for yourself the massive cover-up that David undergoes to hide his sin. He tried to keep silent about it. He tried to cover it up. He brought Uriah home from the battlefield, "Come Uriah," and he was hoping that if he could get Uriah to sleep with his wife, poof, problem's gone. And when that didn't work out, he sends Uriah to the front lines and he gets killed in battle. That takes care of it—now David is actually a hero. He's marrying the wife of a fallen comrade. Just cover it. Like young women who think, you know I'll just get an abortion. That will take care of it. That takes care of the sin. That covers it. David said, "When I kept silent, when I did not confess it." What happens? He speaks of the miseries of unconfessed sins. He is tormented. The physical effects of his spiritual state are staggering. He speaks of his bones wasting away, groaning all day long. This is one of the most fascinating studies I think in human physiology. It is a mystery we'll never be able to fully grasp, but the spiritual affects the physical. People get ulcers because of guilt. Their blood pressure, their blood sugars, their groaning—David literally says, "My strength was dried up." The word is "juices." Literally, my life is being sucked out of me. He is in a miserable, tormented state because he has kept silent of his sin.

But I wanted you to see something, verse 4. I want you to see that first word, “For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.” The misery, the torment was because of God. God was tormenting him. God, David says, “His hand was heavy upon me.” God was pressing down upon David. David’s trying to forget his sin. David’s trying to cover it up and just move on. God will not forget it. God will not let it go, and He is pressing David. His hand is heavy upon him, and David is about to be crushed.

This is why I say that Psalm 32 is not universal “humans.” This is not a psalm for humans. This is a psalm for believers. Do you know that in the world today, you do know this. In the world today people sin, sin grotesquely, sin flagrantly, and they sleep very well at night. They have no problem. They can steal from their employer and go home and be completely fine. They can cheat on their wife and live a double life and they are fine. There’s no guilt. But not God’s people. This is actually one of the signs you are one of God’s people. You cannot live in sin. You cannot live in a state of unconfessed sin because God will make you so miserable. God caused David’s misery. This is not some self-imposed misery where the good side, the good David on the side of his shoulders says, “David, you shouldn’t have done that. Ah David, no, no, no.” This has nothing to do with David. This is a force not from within David but from without of David. It is God Himself pressing David, convicting David of his sin. Such conviction is precious.

God pressed David day and night. You ever hear people say, “You need to be able to forgive yourself?” That’s a big one today. Oh, you need to be able to forgive yourself. I read several commentaries actually on Psalm 32 that talked about the blessedness of forgiving, and they had that little line in there—yeah, you need to be able to forgive yourself, too. I want you to know something. I know that people are sincere and they’re trying to be generous and gracious in this, but to speak of needing to forgive yourself is such an arrogant and completely man-centered approach to our problem, that it shouldn’t even been mentioned. Forgiving yourself is not our problem. It’s not ourself that we have offended. It is God. And if God forgives us, that’s all we need! As a matter of fact, if we’re so concerned about forgiving ourself, we don’t understand that, as David said, “My sin is against You and You alone.” That’s how wretched my sin is.

David didn't have to forgive himself. But he had to be forgiven by God because God is pressing him. And what is God pressing him to do? What is it? We find it as the testimony of his act of confession. Verse 5. Finally, what happened? What was the breaking point? I don't know. Maybe it was Nathan the prophet was the breaking point. "I acknowledged my sin to You." I did not cover my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." Here you see it again the triad, right, the three parts. I acknowledged my sin. To make known, to announce.

You know, to come to this point where you literally announce to God you're a sinner. You make it known. This is a very difficult thing to do. That God is pressing him. God is convicting him, why? Why is God pressing him? To bring him to confession. To bring him to acknowledge that what he has done is blasphemous, it is a rebellion against the Most High God. We think, well that's not much. It's huge. Do you know how hard it is for people to confess their sin? To confess their wrong-doing? You don't believe me that it's hard? I've got a little homework. I want you to go home after the service and I want you to confront someone in their sin and rebuke them. Husbands, I want you to go home, find something in your wife that you know is not right, and I want you to confront her on that. OK? Wives, you go to your husbands. When you see something in his life you know is not right, I want you to confront him. We all know exactly...I'm kidding, don't do that, of course.

But you know as well as I do that when people bring our sin to our mind, the first inclination is, "Who do you think you are?" Well, I didn't mean to... It is complete defense. It is not, "I am wrong. I am a sinner." That is not natural. Natural is to protect myself. Natural is to put on the best of face, to shield how wicked my intentions really are. That's natural. But God brings David to the place of complete, thorough confession. That's why you have those three-part formula. I acknowledged my sin. This is very powerful. That's why even in a Christ-less, generic, higher-power-being, Alcoholic Anonymous meeting, the world understands this is powerful. "Hi, I'm Tim. I'm an alcoholic." Why do they make you do that? Because the first step in healing is recognizing your problem.

David acknowledges his sin. "I did not cover my iniquity, my guilt, my perverseness, my crookedness." Again how many times do we, when our sin is exposed, we cover our guilt. We

cover it. We lessen it, "Well, I didn't mean to." "Well, I'm really sorry. You know, I didn't want to say that." Not David. "I'm not going to cover my guilt. I'm guilty."

And then, verse 3 he said, "I will confess my transgressions, my intentional sins, my rebellions against You." Now here's the staggering part of this testimony, right there at the end of verse 5. "And You forgave the iniquity of my sin." That is staggering. I acknowledged. I didn't cover it any longer. I said, "I will confess...and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." It's immediate. As a matter of fact, one commentator said you could paraphrase it this way. "As soon as I said, 'I will confess it,' You forgave the iniquity of my sin." It didn't even wait for David to actually confess his sin. It was that turning point in his heart. He says, "I'm going to confess my sin," and God forgave his sin. It was immediate. Someone said, "God is much swifter to forgive sin than we are to confess it." It was immediate.

I don't know about you but when I think of this I couldn't help but think of the prodigal son. Turn with me if you will to Luke 15. You know the story of the prodigal son as he spent his life in rebellion and sin, squandering everything that he owned. Look at verse 17, Luke 15 verse 17. "When he finally came to his senses he said, How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger. I will arise and I will go to my father and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" And he arose and he came to his father and he doesn't even say anything, but while he was still a long way off his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. The father here obviously represents God Himself. The son says, "When I see my father, I will confess...I'll tell him what I did was wrong, I don't deserve it." And before he could even say anything, the father sees him, feels compassion, and runs toward him. And then verse 21 the son said to him, "Father." And he's hugged him now, he's hugging him. He's embracing him. And the son probably has a hard, "Father, dad, I've sinned against heaven and before you I'm no longer worthy to be called your son..." Verse 22, "But the father said to his servants," like he just interrupted. He's not even interested in confession. "Bring quickly the best robe, put it on him, and bring a ring, shoes on his feet, bring the fatted calf for this son was dead and he is alive again. He was lost, and he was found." And they began to celebrate...he doesn't even get a chance to talk about his confession. The father just so overwhelmed him and received him back.

This is Psalm 32. David says, “When I said...ok, I’m going to confess my sin”—You forgave it. This is amazing. Psalm 32:5, listen to me very carefully. Psalm 32:5 destroys every man-made attempt to secure divine favor. Every, every attempt of religions, whatever they be. Any attempt where man comes along and says, “You should do this, and you need to do this penance, and you need to do that penance, and you need to do this to secure divine favor,” is a lie. It is a perversion. David acknowledged his sin. He confessed it to God and before he could even confess it, God forgave his sin.

Do you know, you may not be surprised at this, but this wasn’t missed on the apostle Paul. Psalm 32 was not missed on the apostle Paul. When he writes the greatest book ever written, the book of Romans, the gospel of faith, of justification by faith. You come to Romans chapter 4 when he is going to describe justification by faith, guess what he uses for a proof-text; Psalm 32. “The one who does not work but trusts in the One who justifies the ungodly...” It’s by faith. It’s not by works. It’s by trusting a God. By faith we receive forgiveness of sin. It was immediate, right away.

Well from this personal testimony if you go back to Psalm 32, you see David moves into an exhortation, if you will, a personal exhortation. He’s going to fulfill his vow. “If You will restore to me the joy of my salvation, then I’ll teach transgressors Your way.” And this is exactly what he does in verse 6. “Therefore,” literally, “upon this” is how the Hebrew reads. Upon this, or because of this. Because of this forgiveness of sins, it was immediate on the basis of confession, “Because of this let everyone who is godly offer prayer to You at a time when you may be found.” Now I don’t know about you, but when you come to verse 6 and David says, “Let everyone who is godly pray to You.” Big question mark—“Godly?” Godly don’t need to confess their sins. If you were godly, why would you need to confess your sins because you’re like God, right? You don’t have sins. This is a very significant turning point, word in this book and concept. Because when we think of godly, we think sinless, we think righteous, we think holy, right? This word is *chasid*. It’s used 30 some times in the Old Testament. It starts in about Deuteronomy and you can find it all the way through Malachi. You look at all those occurrences and there’s some things that come from it.

One, *chasid* is synonymous with God's servants, with His people, with the faithful. It's used synonymously in usually the same verse. *Chasid* is contrasted with the wicked. There is the wicked and then there's the godly. But there's one place in the Psalms that actually defines or describes who the *chasid* are. I want you to turn forward just a few pages, Psalm 50 verse 5. "Gather to Me My *chasid*, My godly ones who made a covenant with Me by sacrifice!" The godly aren't sinless people. That's not who the godly are. The godly aren't people that have all their act together. The godly are people who are in a relationship with God on the basis of sacrifice. It is synonymous with the covenant people of God. The godly are God's people. Do you understand the ramifications? Today there is only one covenant. There's only one way to have a relationship with God, and that is through Jesus Christ. That is the sacrifice. And this is a message to us, God's people. "Those who are in a relationship with Me on the basis of sacrifice"—Jesus Christ. You listen to Me, the psalmist says. Pray, offer, come to Him, get forgiveness of sins.

That's why confession in a Christ-less, generic supreme-being, AA meeting is meaningless. This isn't teaching some basic principle about, "Well if you just confess God, He'll just forgive." That is not Psalm 32. There are people all the time, that say, "Oh you know, I'm sorry, I do this." God doesn't forgive that. That's not how God forgives people. This psalm and this forgiveness, this instantaneous forgiveness from our transgressions is a privilege for those who are in a relationship with Jesus Christ, period. That's the scandal. That's why I said this is a unique psalm with a very special message to God's people. For you godly, for you who are in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, pray.

What is the heart of the psalmist? What is he wanting to communicate? What is he exhorting? What is he teaching us as transgressors? It's very clear. This is really the highlight; this is the point. Confess your sin. Pray. Don't go another minute in your life with unconfessed sin. I believe the psalm. I believe Psalm 32 is such a precious and unique psalm because it addresses a perennial problem among the people of God, among Christians. A true child of God, a Christian, knows very well about guilt. The Holy Spirit does a phenomenal job of pointing out and bringing to light our guilt. What do we struggle with? Forgiveness. Forgiveness.

If there's anybody in this room that should struggle with forgiveness, it should be me. I'm not only a Christian, I stand up here and act as if I am an example. And when I sin, oh my goodness. Who in the world do I think I am? This psalm is a precious truth. It is so unique. It's hard to find it anywhere else in Scripture. But the godly, the Christian, they know what guilt is, but they struggle with forgiveness. Because we know better, don't we? When we sin, good grief, we know we shouldn't. We know it's a transgression. We know our iniquity, our perverseness, our guilt. We stew. We get angry at ourselves. We struggle. We are confused. We often go in a self-imposed exile. We have our little forms of penance. We argue with ourselves—"I don't have any right to just sin and then think I can be forgiven." Isn't that what Christians do often? Don't we, do you, shake your head if you share that at times with me. Just some of you. I'm hoping that it's not just me. That when we who know so much truth, know so much grace, we still sin. And how dare we think that we can just come and be forgiven again. Do you struggle like that? Psalm 32 is written by David to address us.

David says, "What are you doing?" When you come under conviction of sin, repent and confess it. Don't go through all this self-imposed misery where God must press you and press you and press you. Don't do it. Confess it and get it over with. Look what he says at the end of verse 7, "You surround me with shouts of deliverance." Isn't that amazing? Here we are in our little self-imposed penance and God is saying, "Turn to Me. Salvation, deliverance is here. Turn to Me, turn to Me, turn to Me." I am surrounded with shouts of salvation. I am surrounded with God saying, "Come to Me and it's forgiven. Why delay?"

What is self-imposed penance? Exile away from God. Well this is great. So we have David, he has this personal testimony because he spent probably close to a year in some self-imposed exile away, out of fellowship with God. God is pressing him, he's covering his sin. And David said, "You know what's amazing? I came and I confessed it, and God forgave it immediately. Listen to me, you godly ones, confess your sins. Don't go through the misery of what I did. Acknowledge it. Own it up and receive that full and free pardon, and move on."

Well we move in verse 8 and 9 to the divine commentary on all this. When you read those verses you begin to wonder—well is this David talking or is this God talking? But as it unfolds it has to be God talking. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel

you with My eye upon you. Don't be like a horse or a mule without understanding which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you." This is God saying, this is the path. This is the path for the godly. Confess your sins. Acknowledge it, and it's forgiven. Don't have penance. You don't have to hide it and cover it up. Confess it. Deal with it. Be forgiven. Don't be like a stupid...mule. I wanted to say something else...a stubborn jackass. "Oh, it's not right. I don't deserve it." Look what God says. Don't be like a horse or a mule without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle or it will not stay near you.

You see, that's why I don't like horses. They don't come running to you like dogs. They don't want to have anything to do with you unless you've got food or something along those lines. You've got to put them in the bridle..."stay here!" And God is saying to His people, "I have surrounded you with shouts of deliverance. What in the world are you doing in some self-imposed exile? Come near! I am the Father who will embrace you. I will forgive before you even confess it. Do not delay one more minute out of fellowship with Me. Acknowledge your sin and you will be forgiven."

That's the special...where else can you find that in all of Scripture? I don't know. Psalm 32 is so precious to me, because I think the natural tendency of a blood-bought saint is that when he fails his Lord, you know what? "I, more than the worst pagan in the world, deserve God's damnation, because I sinned against grace, I sinned against so much truth. I have no right." And this psalm is written for us. Oh how blessed is the one whose sins are forgiven. The Lord says, "Don't stay estranged from Me. Confess and you'll be forgiven."

Do you want a happy new year? This is the path. Right here, this is it. Immediate confession and dealing with your sin before God. Restore fellowship immediately. Don't be like a stubborn mule that God has to pull you to Himself. That's the message. Come near. Confess right away. Live in the light of the great grace that Christ's sacrifice has provided for you. Isn't that an amazing message as Christians? No more condemnation. Sin's curse has lost its grip on me. Do you realize how full that means? Even when I sin God does not estrange me, alienate me. That He says, "Come to Me. Acknowledge your sin. Confess it and I'll forgive it."

No wonder this psalm closes, "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord." The godly who trust in the One who justifies, declares righteous, the ungodly. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous. Shout for joy all you upright in heart!"

Some of you this morning may be in your self-imposed exile right now and you know it. You are miserable. Maybe just because you're so dead spiritually, or fleshly. Psalm 32 is written for you. Confess your sin, just acknowledge it. Don't cover it up. He forgives. Oh how blessed it is to have your transgressions lifted from you. To have your sin covered. For God not to impute to you your iniquity, your guilt. That's precious. And it is ours in Christ Jesus. This isn't some generic confession, but as I come into the presence of God, because I'm in a relationship with Him by sacrifice, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, this is mine. This is our privilege. Avail it. That's Psalm 32. Don't go another day in your unconfessed sin. This is the secret I believe to a happy new year, because if a child of God knows his sins are forgiven, it's ok. Everything is ok if my sins are forgiven. Let's pray together.

Father I thank You for this precious message, Psalm 32. Your people, Your godly ones, we need to hear this. This is the character of the God who has redeemed us from our sins. This is the character of the atonement that Jesus Christ our Savior has provided for us. Father I pray that we will be quick in 2010 to deal with our sin, to confess it, to experience again and again and again the joy of our salvation. Lord I pray that You will bless this for the multiplication and magnification of Your grace and the great sufficiency of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for our sins. That is the only way we can interpret Psalm 32. This is not some generic act of confession. It is made possible only through Jesus Christ, and if you are here this morning and you have not confessed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, this is not your privilege. And I urge you this morning to look upon Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who was born into this world so that He could die for our sins, He was buried. And He was raised again because God looked upon that sacrifice and said, "That's it. That's enough. Penalty Paid." Look to Jesus Christ today. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. And then you live the rest of your life in the reality of this precious, precious privilege of the forgiveness of sins. Thank you Father for Your Word. Bless it according to Your wisdom and wise bestowal. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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