

### A Psalm of Confession and Forgiveness

#### Psalm 32

Psalm 32 – *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long, for day and night Your hand was heavy upon me. My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah*

*I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

*For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found. Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him. You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble. You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah*

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you.*

*Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but mercy shall surround him who trusts in the LORD. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”*

#### Background Notes

In this psalm of confession and forgiveness, David relates his experience of confession, and then he relates his experience of God’s forgiveness and restoration. David speaks of keeping silent about a sin he had committed (v3). What sin was this? It was probably David’s sin of adultery with Bathsheba, and then the sin of having her husband, Uriah, killed to cover up the evidence. After Bathsheba’s period of mourning for her dead husband was over, David married Bathsheba, who then bore his child.

David thought that he had succeeded with his cover-up, but what David thought was concealed and hidden was obvious to an omniscient God – the God who sees everything. 2 Samuel 11:27 says that what David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord.

Sometime later, God sent Nathan the prophet to confront David with the sin he had tried to cover up. The good news is

that when Nathan confronted David with his sin, he did not deny it or excuse it; he rightly confessed his sin. 2 Samuel 12:13-14: *“So David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.’”*

Under the Old Testament Law, David was guilty of adultery and murder - sins that carried the death penalty. In His grace, God withdrew the death penalty and restored David. But although he was forgiven, there were long-term consequences to David’s sin.

Psalm 32 is closely related to Psalm 51, which was written soon after Nathan confronted David with his sin. The title of Psalm 51: *“To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.”* Psalm 51:1-4 says, *“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight— that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.”*

And Psalm 51:14-17 continues: *“Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. These, O God, You will not despise.”*

Psalm 32 was written after Psalm 51, after David had been fully restored to fellowship with the Lord and the joy of his salvation. Psalm 32:3-4 reveals that all was not well during the attempted cover up period, before Nathan came and faced David: *“When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me. My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah”*

David’s unconfessed sin affected him mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. He could not eat, his body was wasting away, and he silently groaned all day long. He had no energy or vitality. He knew that he was under the discipline of God. This will be true in the life of every believer who tries to cover up his or her sin.

## **Doctrinal / Teaching Points**

### **1. Godly sorrow results in repentance and salvation.**

Our doctrinal point comes from 2 Corinthians 7:10 - *“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted.”* We see this illustrated in David’s life in Psalm 32. It took some time, but in the end David’s godly sorrow

produced repentance and salvation - salvation, or deliverance, from his problem of being alienated from fellowship with the Lord. *"I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah" (v5).*

In the case of an unbeliever, godly sorrow will lead to repentance, and turning to the Lord for eternal salvation from the penalty of sin. In the case of a believer, godly sorrow will lead to repentance and salvation, or deliverance, from the discipline of God, as in the case of the Corinthian believers. Read the context of 2 Corinthians 7:10, and you will see that it was written to believers in Corinth who were under the discipline of the Lord.

And that was true of David in Psalm 32. David was under the heavy hand of God's discipline. As he says in no certain terms in verse 4, *"For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me."* But God's discipline served its purpose. David's godly sorrow resulted in repentance of his sin and deliverance from discipline.

Now, deliverance did not mean that the **consequences** of David's sin were removed. No! There were many consequences and bad fall-out in the future. But David's fellowship with the Lord was restored. *"You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah"(v7).*

What a blessing it is to come clean before the Lord - no longer trying to cover up sin with deceit! What joy to know your sins are covered by the blood of Christ as the result of godly sorrow and repentance. *"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit" (v1-2).*

Godly sorrow results in repentance and salvation.

## **2. Godly instruction results in direction and joy.**

*"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart! (v8-11).*

Question: In verse 8, is God speaking to David - or is David speaking as a godly counselor to others? Verse 8: *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye."* Who's speaking here?

Answer: We can't say for sure, but I tend to go with the interpretation that God is speaking to David. A number of

translations show this by capitalizing the word “My” in the phrase *“I will guide you with My eye.”* In either case, the doctrinal point is true. Godly instruction results in direction and joy!

The term *“Maschil”* in the title of Psalm 32 has to do with wisdom and insight, which is closely associated with godly instruction. What a blessing to be guided and directed by the eye of God! This is possible if we receive and follow instruction from the Word of God. Don’t be like the horse or mule which has no understanding, and which must be harnessed with bit and bridle (v9). Rather, seek out godly instruction without having to be forced to it. And guess what? You will find the direction and joy in life that you’ve always been looking for!

Many sorrows surround the ungodly - but mercy will surround the godly (v10-11). Let me ask you: Do you want direction in life? Do you want joy in living? Godly instruction results in direction and joy.

## **Practical Application**

### **Keep “short accounts” with God.**

*“For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found. Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him” (v6).*

Do you see the point of this verse? Godly people will come before the Lord quickly when they sin. They “keep short accounts” with God. That means not waiting to get our relationship with God back on track. It means going quickly to Him, confessing our sin, asking for forgiveness, and receiving His cleansing (1 John 1:9).

If you wait and don’t confess your sin, then God must withdraw from fellowship with you, and He must bring discipline into your life. You may even have to experience *“great waters”* of discipline that put further distance between you and the Lord. The more time that goes by, the harder it gets to return.

Just as the relationship between good parents and disobedient children is maintained when the children don’t hide their sin, or try to cover it up, but are repentant, show a godly attitude, and admit their wrong doing, so our fellowship with the Lord is maintained when we keep short accounts with God.

When we keep short accounts with God, He does not have to use *“floods of great waters”* or other calamities to get our attention. We are thus delivered from painful and unpleasant - and sometimes lengthy - discipline in the family of God. As 1 Corinthians 11:31 says, *“For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.”*

Keep “short accounts” with God!