

Psalm 32

Title: The Blessedness of Forgiveness

Author and Date: David (see Rom. 4:6)

Key Verses: Psalm 32:1-2

Type: Penitential

Outline

- A. The elation of forgiveness (verses 1-2).
- B. The consternation of forgiveness (verses 3-4).
- C. The confession of forgiveness (verses 5-7).
- D. The instruction of forgiveness (verses 8-10).
- E. The exhortation of forgiveness (verse 11).

Notes

Title: “A Psalm of David.” See the notes on Psalm 3. “Maschil.” This term (used in 13 of the psalms) means something like a contemplative psalm or a devout meditation; a psalm intended to teach a lesson. This is a psalm that intends to instruct concerning the very important topic of sin and forgiveness.

Verses 1-2: Psalm 32 is the second of seven penitential psalms – psalms that deal with sin and forgiveness (see also Psalm 6, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). The occasion for this psalm may have been David’s sin against Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 11-12).

Verses 1-2: These verses are quoted by Paul in Romans 4:7-8 and applied to all who need to be forgiven through justification by faith in Jesus Christ. “Imputes” (ASV, NASV, KJV) means “to reckon”; “to put to one’s account;” “to charge” (HCSB); or, “to count” (NIV, ESV). When the Lord forgives, he does not reckon or charge iniquity to the account of the sinner. He wipes the record clean. When we sin there is a debt against us (verses 1-2), there is a pain within us (verses 3-4), there is a flood around us (verses 6-7), and there is a choice before us: stubbornness or uprightness (verses 8-11). Note the three words for sin used here (and in verse 5): “transgression” (Heb. *pasha* = rebellion), “sin” (Heb. *chataah* = a general term for sin), and “iniquity” (Heb. *avon* = guilt or wrong). Note also the Hebrew parallelism in this verse 1: “transgression” is parallel with “sin” and “forgiven” is parallel with “covered”.

Verses 3-4: The words in these verses are a poetic description of the physical and psychological pains associated with the guilt of sin.

Verse 4: For the word “Selah” (verses 4, 5, and 7), see the notes on Psalm 3.

Verse 5-6: The psalmist moved from cover-up (verses 3-4) to confession (verses 5-6). Divine forgiveness is conditioned upon acknowledging (confessing) one's sin and prayer. There must also be no "guile" (deception) in the spirit of the penitent sinner (verse 2b). Note how quickly the Lord's forgiveness came after the confession. For praying at the right (acceptable) "time" (verse 6), see Psalm 69:13. The overflowing of the "the great waters" (verse 6) may be a reference to the trouble brought on by sin (verse 7), or to divine judgment. The forgiven one will not experience these things.

Verse 8: Compare the words, "I will instruct thee...", with Psalm 51:13. Paul immediately taught others the right way after he was forgiven of his sins (Acts 9:18-22).

Verse 11: The psalmist went from silence prior to forgiveness (verses 3-4), to singing after forgiveness (verses 7 and 11). What lies between these two states is the moment of honest confession of sins and prayer (verses 5-6). Honesty really is the best policy.

Questions

1. What is the condition of the one who is forgiven (verses 1-2)?
2. What three words does the psalmist use to describe his sin and what three words does he use to describe the Lord's forgiveness (verses 1-2)?
3. What happened when the psalmist kept silent and what happened to the psalmist day and night (verses 3-4)?
4. What did the psalmist do and how did the Lord respond (verse 5)?
5. What does the psalmist encourage the godly to do and when are they to do it (verse 6)?
6. What will the Lord do for the psalmist (verse 7)?
7. What does the psalmist plan to do after he is forgiven (verse 8)?

8. What two animals does the psalmist encourage his readers not be like and why (verse 9)?
9. What will come to the wicked and what will come to those who trust in the Lord (verse 10)?
10. What does the psalmist encourage the righteous and upright in heart to do (verse 11)?

Applications for Today

1. Blessed is the sinner who is forgiven (verses 1-2). Where is forgiveness found (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 2:13)? What does the sinner need to do to obtain forgiveness of sins today (Acts 2:38)? What does the sinful Christian need to do to obtain forgiveness of sins (Acts 8:22)?
2. We must not try to hide our sin or ignore it (verses 3-4). What happens when we cover (hide) our sin (Prov. 28:13)? What is sin (Jas. 4:17; 1 Jn. 3:4; 5:17)?
3. In an age of denial, cover-up, and excuse-making, we need to remember the importance of confessing our sins to God (verse 5). What did David do after Nathan's lesson (2 Sam. 12:1-13)? What did the people do who came to John the Baptist (Mt. 3:6; Mk. 1:5)? What does James teach about sin (Jas. 5:16)? What does John teach about sin (1 Jn. 1:7-10)?
4. It is good to confess our sin to the Lord and pray to him while he can be found (verse 6). What does Isaiah 55:6 say? What kind of God do we serve (Ex. 34:6-7)?
5. We have a choice in life; either resist and be disobedient like a stubborn horse or mule, or submit and be obedient while trusting in the Lord with a righteous life (verses 8-11). What two different reactions to the gospel does Luke record in Acts 19:9 and Acts 19:18?
6. Divine forgiveness brings "songs of deliverance" and a "shout for joy" (verses 7 and 11). What do the angels in heaven do when one sinner repents (Lk. 15:7, 10)? What did the Ethiopian Eunuch and the Philippian jailor do after they were baptized (Acts 8:39; 16:34)?