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June 13, 2021

David on Forgiveness

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Let's walk through Psalm 32 together.

"Forgiven" is a Blessed State

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. (32.1-2)

Forgiveness is a gift of blessedness, "blessed" meaning "happy" but even beyond that. Why does this make one happy? This person is about to collapse underneath the full weight of sin – here defined: "transgression, sin, iniquity, deceit". It's this big tumor of overgrown-breaking-of-God's-laws, failing to obey his purpose for you, and, like a tumor, it hides until it's too late. But God removes the sin described in two words: "Lifting, removing" and "covering, hiding".

A Hidden Sin is a Hidden Cancer

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. 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. (32.3-5)

Here David details the struggle of the wrong approach to sin. You can hide it. You can be in denial about it and lie. But sin like a cancer grows. We don't have the strength to get rid of the disease. It warps us. Drains us. Shrivels us. "Regret" the Uninvited Guest comes to you in your sleep, to keep you awake all night. You toss and turn. What does David do? He acknowledges his sin. He fesses up. He stops running away. That's the paradox of sin: it's only when you uncover it that God is freely willing then to cover it (vv.1,5). It's only when you uncover your iniquity, that God ceases to count your iniquity (v.2) Can you imagine what this would've felt like? Forgiveness feels like a text at 3am that your child is okay; is news that the tests are in and the prognosis looks good; learning while you're in crippling debt, that you're the inheritor of an unknown estate; that the one you secretly admire, loves you too; it's like the first life-breath you take after caught in a nasty tide that keeps dragging you under.

David's Teaching

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. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. (32.6-7)

Those who have experienced forgiveness are the best teachers. So, David says "Look for God when he may be found" – "acknowledge your sin before it's too late" "stop running and find rest. When you say "Go to God while you still can!" You're implying there's a time-limit. And we don't know when that is. So here's David's great realization: There is no refuge *from* God, but only refuge *in* God: You forgave (v.5); You hide me (v.7), You preserve me (v.7), You surround me with shouts (v.7). Behold, a God who does not wish to afflict but to forgive. That's all he wants.

God's Teaching

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. 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. (32.8-9)

God's promise to you (v.8). God's warning (v.9). A mule doesn't love you enough to come to you just because you want it to come. It must be coaxed, with a carrot or a rod. That's not the kind of relationship God desires. He's not a pagan God. Don't let your relationship with God be a "have to" relationship (as in, "Aw, Dad, do I *have* to?" "No, you don't *have* to").

Closing

Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart! (32.10-11)

This is a joyful thing. Especially when you realize that God's faithfulness to you is not dependent on any works on your part – but by trusting him (v.10). Just as verse 2 is echoed in **Ro.4.6-8**. It comes a part from works, but by faith and simple confession.