

Psalm 32

The Passage

This psalm has 5 sections that hold together well to form one comprehensive theme:
=coming quickly to God in prayer and confession to experience his forgiveness

I. Thesis (v. 1-2): It is a blessed thing to be forgiven by God

A. Three images of human sin

1. "Sin": to miss the mark (in archery)
= failure to live up to God's moral standards
2. "Transgression": intentional rebellion, clear defiance of a legitimate authority
Example: walking right past a "No Trespassing" sign
3. "Iniquity": a more internal word--wickedness, twistedness, crookedness
That deeply rooted thing inside that causes us to choose wrong

David was a man who was well acquainted with sin: Pride, adultery, and murder

B. Three images of God's forgiveness

1. "Forgiven": lifted up, carried away
2. "Covered": no longer exposed, out of sight out of mind
3. "Count": Accounting term: account, reckon, credit
God doesn't put our sins in the debt column

3 wonderful pictures of what our merciful God does
takes away, covers them, doesn't count them against us

C. The one condition to forgiveness

v. 2 "in whose spirit there is no deceit"

We must not try to deceive God (or ourselves); be honest, come clean, confess
Psalm 51: "You desire truth in the inner parts"

II. Personal Testimony (v. 3-5): I learned not to deceive God the hard way

A. "There is no refuge from the Judge" (v. 3-4): The negative power of hidden sin

1. "when I kept silent" = there was deceit in his heart, refused to acknowledge it
Why does he keep silent? Fear/guilt, or pride/stubbornness
2. God's hand was "heavy upon" him, creating pain and discomfort
Psalm 139: Where can I go from your presence?
David could not hide from the all-knowing God

B. "There is refuge in the Judge" (v. 5): the positive power of confession

Finally, He does what he's so afraid of doing, and the result is immediate forgiveness and peace with God

God is quick to forgive, waiting for him to confess openly

III. Positive Implication (v. 6-7): "offer prayer"

A. In light of my experience, be quick to offer prayer to God (confession)

B. Positive Image: Hiding Place

God is a refuge, shelter, hiding place who is quick to forgive and protect

C. Christians Today

Many don't experience God as a refuge, but rather as a Judge

When we sin, we feel guilt, and we think of God as a great disapprover, and so rather than running towards the source of disapproval for shelter, we run away from Him and experience only his judgment

Christians live with deep levels of guilt and shame because they have not brought their sin into the light through confession and experienced God's forgiveness

IV. Negative Implication (v. 8-9): "don't be like a mule"

A. Don't be like a mule

Mules are stubborn, and they only listen to pain (the bit and bridle)

David is saying, "Don't be like that! Don't force God to use pain to get you to stay close to him"

B. I was that mule

v. 3-4 is an example of David being like a mule who wouldn't listen to God and had to feel God's pain before he drew near to God in prayer

C. Modern day example: dogs

1. Some dogs will come and heal when you call, others require constant pulling and tugging on a leash

2. We often act like undisciplined dogs. We have our own plans, we don't like to be led, so we charge ahead without God, and it takes some painful experience (financial, relational, health, etc) to bring us back to God

God is saying, "that's not the kind of relationship I want with you. I want a relationship of trust and intimacy and consistent communication"

V. Summary and Conclusion (v. 10-11)

v. 10 Trust God

v. 11 Be glad in the Lord

Conclusion

I. What was the basis of David's forgiveness?

= Christ's death on the cross

See Romans 3:23-25: God looked ahead in time and saw Christ's perfect sacrifice, and on that basis He forgave David

II. Two Fundamental Realities for Christians

A. God knows everything about us (Psalm 139)

B. God has forgiven everything in us because of Christ (Romans 8:1-4)

III. So what do we do?

We stop hiding; we step out into the light through honest prayer

“If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”

“There is no refuge from the Judge; there is only refuge in the Judge”

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. Why is confession a prerequisite for forgiveness (or is it a prerequisite)? Why can't God simply forgive us without us having to confess our sins?
3. What do you think David means when he says in v. 6, “let everyone who is godly offer prayer to You at a time when You may be found”? Is there a time when God might not be found? What do you think was behind those words in David's mind, and how might that apply to us today if at all?
4. It was suggested that many (if not most) Christians continue to live with a high degree of guilt and shame, despite their intellectual understanding of God's forgiveness. Do you agree? If so, what are the main causes and factors of that reality in your mind?
5. Are you a mule? How did you react to David's words to not be like a mule? Can you relate to some mule-like behavior in your own life? Be as specific as you can.