

# I Have a Confession to Make

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Well, Tuesday nights are always a little bit different in approach for a number of different reasons and one of the things that I'm mindful of as we come together on a Tuesday evening is that we are coming together at the end of a long day, many of you are coming straight from work and you're feeling the effects and carrying the weight of your past day and some hits and misses in life and in your spiritual life throughout the day; we are all alike like that and so on the Tuesday evening, it's good to come to a passage that can refresh our hearts and encourage us in Christ and remind us of what it is that we believe and why it is so precious to us and to, as it were, kind of take a fresh drink of water as we come to the end of a day. If we had the capacity and the time, it would be great to do this at the end of every single day but I think the preparation for doing that would quickly drive me to my grave and would therefore prove to be counterproductive so let's not go there. We'll just accept Tuesday's for what they are.

As Dan pointed out, we're here in Psalm 32. I invite you to turn to Psalm 32. The things that I just said, I like to let you know that as I teach from week to week, Sunday to Tuesday, I'm here sympathetically; that I'm here on your side; that I want to be an encouragement and a support to you as I bring God's word to you. It's very important for you to understand. It affects the spirit in which you receive the teaching to know whether the person who is speaking has your interest in mind which I try my best to do, or if he's simply delivering something and it wouldn't matter to him whether an audience was in front of him or not, and that is not the kind of teaching that we try to do at Truth. We want it to be personal. We want it to be applicable. We want it to be something that encourages you in Christ and this is why we are gathered together here tonight around Psalm 32.

So with those things in mind, let me say by a little bit of way of introduction, it's important to kind of come into Psalm 32 with a bit of a running head start, the Bible highlights repeatedly the fallen and sinful nature of man, of you and me, and we could go to so many passages that speak of that. 1 Kings 8:46 says, "there is no man who does not sin." Ecclesiastes 7:20 says, "there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins." There is no one like that and it's helpful for church leadership to remember that so that our expectations are realistic about what we expect from people within the church itself. We're going to find times where you fall short, you're going to find times where we fall short, and if we are just realistic and view each other through the

lens of Scripture, that won't throw us off so much when it comes to pass. In 1 John 1:8 it says, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." So here we are. We are faced with the reality that we are sinners. We fall short of the glory of God as Romans 3:23 says, and the Bible convicts us, convicts you and me. It, as it were, with the prophet Nathan pointing at David says, "You're the man. You're the woman who is like this"; that you and I are guilty of breaking God's law in thought, word and deed and that even as Christians, James 3:2 says, we all stumble in many ways. And I know the tendency is for people to just kind of highlight and focus on one particular sin, one particular besetting sin and define everything in relation to that, but the truth of the matter is that the way that we fall short of God is broad, it's varied, it's multifaceted and we're going to see that even in our text here this evening.

With that in mind, realizing that we come, as it were, to the throne of God with dirty, dusty feet, as it were, those in need of some cleansing as we come to the end of this day, here's the question: wouldn't it be wonderful if we could have an assurance of pardon, an assurance of forgiveness, that rather than living in kind of a cringing uncertainty about the way God views us from time to time, that we would have a confident assurance that despite our sin there is acceptance, forgiveness and cleansing with a holy God? Wouldn't that be great? Wouldn't it be great to be able to go through life and come to the end of a day like today and say, "Oh, do you know what? It's going to be okay and I know that it's going to be okay based on God's word."

Now, let me just say one final thing before we read the text in preparation for what is to come. Sometimes perhaps more often than I would care to think, when you stumble into sin, the tendency of some Christians is to kind of withdraw from God and say, "Well, I'd better give this some time." You feel like, "Oh, I can't pray for a while until this kind of wears off," as if it worked that way. It doesn't work that way and the good news is that you don't have to think about it that way, that there is a stable pardon, there is a consistent forgiveness found with a gracious God who is ready to forgive your sin and that's what we want to look at tonight from Psalm 32.

Turn there with me if you haven't done so already. Psalm 32, "A Psalm of David, A Maskil," and verse 1 says,

1 How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!  
2 How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no deceit!  
3 When I kept silent about my sin,  
my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long.  
4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.  
5 I acknowledged my sin to You,  
And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD";  
And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.  
6 Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found;  
Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.  
7 You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble;  
You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.  
8 I will instruct you and teach you in

the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. 9  
Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding,  
Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise  
they will not come near to you. 10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,  
But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him. 11 Be  
glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; And shout for joy, all  
you who are upright in heart.

Now, as we approach this Psalm in a kind of a broad general way at the beginning, I just want you to note that it begins and it ends on a position of blessing, a position of joy, of gladness, and so everything about this Psalm is designed to lead you to a place of a confident conscious sense of the blessing of God that would produce joy and gratitude in your heart as a response. Now, why wouldn't you want that? Who wouldn't want to live that way with a sense of confident joy that it is well with your soul and that you are conscious of being under the blessed hand of God? Well, what David is doing here in this Psalm 32 is he is teaching us from his own personal experience. I don't tend to do that too much and that's perhaps one of many failures in my preaching, but we all have a tendency, our ears tend to perk up when an earnest godly man starts to speak to us and say, "Let me tell you how God worked in my heart and life." That's what David is doing here in Psalm 32. He is speaking from his own personal experience both bad and good in order to lead us, to lead you, into the position of blessing that he desires for you to have. And the wonderful thing about this is that this is not simply a human writer speaking, this is the desire of God for his people to dwell in the realm of that kind of blessing, that kind of conscious sense of his goodness and living in the sense of the forgiveness of God; it is exactly why the Holy Spirit placed this Psalm into the Canon and, I might add, it is exactly why providentially he has ordered for you to be here tonight, it's because God intends this Psalm to bring blessing to your life tonight and to those of you that are watching over the live stream. So we should come with a sense of expectation and in light of our knowledge of sin as it is revealed in the word of God and in the lesser sense that we perceive it through our own conscience and our own understanding, wouldn't it be wonderful to have a confident place where we go to find pardon, to find assurance that we are accepted by a holy God and that he is not going to hold our sins against us? Wouldn't that be wonderful? Well, David here in Psalm 32 is leading us to that through his own experience.

Now, some commentators, just to give you a little sense and to kind of put this Psalm in connection with the rest of the Psalter, some commentators believe that Psalm 32 should be paired with Psalm 51 which is just a little bit more familiar, Psalm 51 being that Psalm where David confesses his sin with Bathsheba to God after the prophet Nathan confronted him about it and Psalm 51 is seen as being the first Psalm chronologically. David responds in confession and then Psalm 32 perhaps David wrote that a little bit later with a benefit of some reflection so that he could teach transgressors the way of God. That's probably a pretty good way of looking at the whole situation but it's not vital that we see it this way. This Psalm can stand on its own. What we want to do though is we want to see what this Psalm teaches us about the forgiveness of God and perhaps more specifically, how it is that you should respond when you find yourself in sin. What's the

thought process? What are the steps that you should walk through so that you could go from that place of the guilt that you feel into a place of the conscious joy and gladness that this Psalm ends up with.

Well, we're going to see four things as we go through here tonight and we'll spend most of our time, oddly enough, in the first couple of verses here and let's just state the first principle this way: is that forgiveness brings great blessing. Forgiveness brings great blessing. In the opening two verses, David is laying out his theme about what this Psalm is about and the Psalms often do that. The opening verse or two functions to kind of declare the thematic purpose of the Psalm and then he might walk you through a story like Psalm 73 does, walk you through an experience that he went through to illustrate the overarching theme that is there at the beginning of the Psalm. That's what David does here. He says, "Here's my theme for this Psalm: forgiveness brings great blessing. Forgiveness is desirable. You should desire what I'm going to talk about here in this Psalm." And what David is celebrating in Psalm 32, he is celebrating – watch this – he is rejoicing in, he is celebrating the happy position of a sinner who has had his sins taken away, his sins have been forgiven. And in these opening two verses, he is laying forth before you how wonderful that is to create in your heart a desire that you would be in that realm yourself; for you to say, "I want to know this blessing too." And David declares it with the things that he says.

Now, you notice in the inscriptions there at the beginning it says, "A Psalm of David. A Maskil," like with many of the different technical terms used in the inscriptions, there is no certainty about what those terms mean. You kind of speculate based on shreds of evidence that come here and there. Thirteen Psalms use this inscription, maskil, it may refer to skillful teaching and that's a very appealing way to understand this inscription for this Psalm because what you're going to find is as I lay out for you what David has done in this Psalm, there is a very skillful way that he has written this Psalm to convey something about the comprehensive nature of sin and the comprehensive nature of God's forgiveness to bring you and to lead you into the blessing that he wants you to know.

Now, so let's look at these first two verses here that we're going to focus on. I read them earlier in the whole Psalm, now we want to zero in a little more tightly with our interpretive radar on. Verses 1 and 2,

1 How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!  
2 How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

Now, first thing I want you to observe. Sometimes you just make observations and you let the text kind of unfold itself for you. That's certainly what we want to do; we don't want to impose our own views and false interpretations upon a text, foist our human thinking on it. We want to let the word of God speak to us and to speak on its own terms. Well, what David has done here in these two verses, very easy for you to see even in English, it is that he has used three different terms to describe sin. Notice that in verse 1, he uses the word "transgression," and then he uses the word "sin," and then in verse 2, he

uses the word "iniquity"; some people would also allude to the fact that he speaks to "deceit" at the end of verse 2 but we'll just focus on those first three: transgression, sin and iniquity. Now notice, and the first thing that you should be asking is, "Well, why would he do that? Why doesn't he just say it's really good to have your sins forgiven and then move on to his point? You know, let's go A to B and get there as quickly as we can. Let's take the expressway here rather than the local route." David takes the local. He says, "I want to go through this carefully with you," and he uses three different terms. He says, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." Well, "transgression" is a word that carries the idea of rebellion against God. It's a word that communicates the sense that, "I am going to go my own way. I turn away from God. I reject what he has to say." And that is the sense of transgression; there is the idea of rebellion that is wedded into it. The word "sin" in the original language carries the concept of "missing the mark," kind of like an archer who shoots at a target but he misses and he doesn't hit his mark; he misses the target that he was after. Sin here is the idea of missing the mark. Then the final word "iniquity" communicates something that is twisted or perverse; something that is perverted. What David is doing here, what I want you to see is the big picture here rather than diving deep into particular word studies on any one particular term. What David is doing here is he is giving you a comprehensive view of sin. He is looking at sin in its multifaceted dimension and this is one of the ways where you need to grow spiritually, you need to start thinking about sin more broadly, more deeply, rather than simply focusing on the one besetting sin that sometimes seems to dominate your life and you just kind of limit it and narrow it down to one particular thing that you struggle with.

No, you see, David is saying, "There are multiple facets to sin. Sin is rebellion against God. It is defiance against God. Sin misses the mark." God has established his law. He calls you to a righteous standard of living and you fall short of that. You miss that. You don't live in perfect harmony with what God has called you to do in his word, do you? There is rebellion. There is being astray. Missing the mark. Then it leaves you with this twisted aspect of existence that we're not right, and you can always tell when somebody has descended into sin because there is a twistedness that comes out in their lives. They start to twist the truth. They start to say things that are half true and half leaving out things that matter to the situation and things aren't square, they're not right, they're not straight. You know that from dealing with people. You know, maybe you see somebody in a different setting and you hear things coming out of their mouth that would never come out in polite company on a Sunday anyway and you say, "There's something wrong there. Something is twisted there." Well, this just gives us a sense of what sin is like. It's different ways of illustrating, talking about the spiritual reality of sinful rebellion and alienation from God and David is laying all of that out and simply saying in a comprehensive way, "Sin is rebellious. Sin misses the mark. Sin is twisted. Sin," – watch it – "makes you guilty and perverts you in the presence of God."

We come before God and we are not all that we should be and the question is, since Scripture says that we are all like this and that even as Christians we fall short in many ways, stumble in many ways, the most important question that you could ask, Christian, the most important question you could ask, non-Christian, is this: how is it that I can get myself rid of the guilt that is associated with that kind of sin? There is guilt that comes

from rebelling against a holy God. I mean, Adam forfeited paradise in Genesis 3, didn't he, when he sinned once. He lost paradise for all of us. Thanks a lot, Adam, our representative head. That didn't go well but speaking more personally, how can you rid yourself of this? How can you get out from under the weight of the guilt and responsibility of it? How can you as a tender-hearted Christian having sinned against God and feeling the weight of that, how can you come out from under the weight and the pressing guilt of that and have, as David prayed in Psalm 51, I believe, "Restore unto me the joy of my salvation"? Well, Psalm 32 is designed to help you in that way.

So, transgression, sin and iniquity, a comprehensive view of sin. Now, this is really cool. If you read the passage too quickly you miss basic things like this. Just as David gave a triad of terms to refer to sin, he also uses three terms to refer to forgiveness. This is part of the skill of the Psalm that David brought to bear upon it. Not only was he a skillful warrior, not only was he a skillful king, he was a skillful poet and a skillful musician. David was one of the great men of all of history whose greatness was marred by his own sin but was also eclipsed when the greater David came a thousand years later in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. But notice this, notice how he speaks about forgiveness in a multifaceted way also.

Look at verse 1 with me here. We're just kind of getting acquainted with the text. "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute," negative term there, "does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!" So what David has done here is he has set up this magnificent parallelism where he has talked about sin with three terms and now he meets the multifaceted nature of sin with a multifaceted description of forgiveness. He uses three terms to meet each term that he used for sin and when you start to see this, when you start to see what he's saying here, it starts to unfold to you, it starts to dawn on you, the light comes on in your mind that, "Wow! This kind of forgiveness would be wonderful to know as my own certain experience and position before God."

So he says, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." "Forgiven" here, a term that literally means "lifted." He's saying, "It's as if, and you're going to know this, you're going to know this by direct personal experience, that heavy guilt of sin, forgiveness is like lifting that burden off of your shoulders so that you are no longer carrying it." How wonderful, as it happened with Christian in Pilgrim's Progress when he came to the cross, that burden that was crushing him fell off and rolled away and he was no longer staggering under the load but rather that had been removed; it had been lifted off of him and now he was free; he was nimble; his spirit had been set free because the weight of sin had been lifted from him.

There is another perspective on it, on this matter of forgiveness, verse 1, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!" David here speaks about sin from God's perspective as something that is hidden. It is something that God no longer considers in his interactions with you. He doesn't take into account your sin, rather sin has been removed so that the full blessing of God would be poured out upon you without

the guilt and weight of sin to hinder it. Wouldn't that be cool? Wouldn't it be wonderful to know that your relationship with God was like that? That even though you were a sinner, even though your mouth has spoken vile things to men and against God, even though your heart has been cold, lukewarm, and rebellious against God, even though you have sinned in unspeakable ways that you wouldn't want anyone to know about and you're aware of those dark closets, those dark secrets in your own life. Wouldn't it be wonderful to know that things like that were simply not an issue between you and God anymore? Wouldn't that be great? Why wouldn't you want that? Why wouldn't you want that? Isn't it obvious that that would be a happy blessed place to be? To know as in the language of Psalm 103:12 using a slightly different metaphor, that God had removed your sin as far as the east is from the west; so far from one point of the horizon to another, not being able to bring them into connection at the same time. God says, "That's the way I'll deal with you in your sin. I'll take your sin and remove it far from you. I'll bury it in the depths of the sea. It won't be the basis upon which I deal with you." Wouldn't that be wonderful to know that that was the reality of your spiritual experience with God? You'd want that, wouldn't you? I do. I want that.

Well, David says it's a blessing his transgression is forgiven, his sin is covered, and there's this generality, there is this universality. This is a blessing on anyone. This would be true for anyone, not simply the king of Israel to know. Then he looks at it from one final perspective, he says, verse 2, he repeats the blessing and he says, "How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity." It's kind of an accounting term. God no longer keeps your debt of sin in the ledger against you and so in the books of your spiritual life, the debt of sin is not counted against you and the reality of how God sees sin, it's covered, it's hidden, it's not a part of the calculus that he uses in dealing with you. It is forgiven. The burden of sin has been lifted away. Think about those pictures, think about how wonderful they are. Sin lifted away from you. Sin hidden so that God doesn't hold it against you. Sin not counted against you. For you to be a man or woman, a young person, who is a part of the fallen human race and you have been a sinner and you are a sinner, for that to not be taken into account by a holy God with the way that he deals with you, you should be saying to yourself, "That would be great. That's a blessing." That would be a wonderful position to be in because the truth of the matter is that forgiveness brings great blessing.

God erases the charges against you and here's what I want you to see and one of the reasons why we just do one message per Psalm is we want to try really really hard to see the big picture and not descend so much into details that we lose sight of what the main point is of the passage. What David is doing here, having given you a multifaceted view of sin with the different terms that he uses, now he takes these multiple terms of forgiveness to show you this: that God gives a complete forgiveness, a multifaceted wonder of grace that is given to those who turn to him in the manner that Psalm 32 describes. Watch it, mark it, trust it: God brings complete forgiveness to everyone and to anyone who responds to sin like David did in this Psalm.

Now, the Apostle Paul used these very words at a critical point in the book of Romans to communicate the truth of justification by faith in New Testament terms. Look over at

Romans 4 for just a moment. You'll see that Paul saw the value of this passage as he was speaking about justification by faith; the idea that God declares sinners righteous and imputes to them the righteousness of Christ and does not count their sins against them. Paul in making that point about the reality of salvation, that it is by grace through faith not by works of your hands, to borrow from Ephesians 2, Paul draws upon these very two verses to help make his point.

Look at Romans 4:5 while keeping your finger at Psalm 32 or your iPad bookmark at Psalm 32, as the case may be. The Apostle Paul says, "to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works." Verse 7, quoting from Psalm 32, "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." Paul is saying that God justifies sinners and even more, stating it strongly, he says God justifies the ungodly. God grants justification not to people who have worked themselves into a position of comparative righteousness, God justifies the ungodly not on the basis of works because that would never happen because all of our works are tainted by guilt, God justifies us because he counts our sin to Christ who was punished on the cross for them and then in a wonderful exchange of grace, counts to us the righteousness of Christ and says, "That's the basis on which I'll deal with you. That's the basis on which I'll accept you. I accept you based on the perfect obedience of my Son and I'll deal with you as if you had lived the perfect life that he actually lived himself. I treated my Son on the cross as if he were guilty of your sins and I smote him for it. You, I'll deal with according to the righteousness of Christ."

And you see that salvation, forgiveness of sin, then – watch this, this is really important. I mean, your whole eternal destiny hinges on this very principle – salvation, forgiveness of sin is a gift. Mark it. It is a gift to the undeserving, not a reward or wages to those who somehow deserve it. Those of you who come out of a Catholic background, don't ever stop distancing yourself from the works based idea that, "If I just go through these rituals or if I show up at the approved times to church, or if I do the right number of Hail Marys God will show me favor." That's not true. That just drive's people and sinks them deeper into guilt because they are trying to establish a righteousness of their own that is not the revealed righteousness of God in Christ. So we need to be clear if there is to be forgiveness, if there is to be a righteous standing with God, it has to be something that he gives to us from outside, not something that we earn or have intrinsic within ourselves. This is how God dispenses his forgiveness.

Now imagine that, go back to Psalm 32, imagine this and don't ever become complacent about these magnificent truths that we're talking about simply because they are familiar or because you've heard them before. Don't ever become complacent about it. This is an unspeakably wonderfully great revelation from God that there is a blessed place of forgiveness that is available to sinners and that place of forgiveness brings great blessing. It's a desirable place and yet Scripture says there are few who actually find it.



Now, why is that? How is it that people fall short of this goal? Well, David starts to move into his own experience here and to help us understand it a little bit and we'll give our second point this title, we've said that forgiveness brings great blessing and we'll say it this way for point 2: stubborn sin brings great pain. Stubborn sin brings great pain, or you could say, hidden sin brings great pain. David was like us, he was a sinner, and there was a time in which before David had entered into the blessing of the forgiveness that he's talking about here, there was a time where he wasn't in this state of mind. He wasn't in this frame of spiritual understanding. And the question is when he was like that and taking this as being something that he is talking about in the aftermath of his sin with Bathsheba and his orchestrated murder of her husband, Uriah, how did David respond to his sin at first? Well, at first, not so well and the truth of the matter is that you're going to see yourself in a mirror, at least in terms of some of your past experience, perhaps for some of you your present experience as you're sitting here tonight. David wasn't responding too well at the start.

Look at verses 3 and 4 of Psalm 32. He said,

3 When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long.

Oh, this is a different tone, isn't it? We've just been talking about blessedness and the splendor of having our sins forgiven and then David steps into a completely different realm. He says, verse 4,

4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.

There was a time and you can read about the story in 2 Samuel, there was a time where David did not acknowledge his sin. He covered it up. And here David is describing what that was like for him. It was a miserable experience. He was hiding his sin. He was strengthening himself in his stubborn resistance to correction either from without or from within the accusations of his own conscience and what happened is this, he started to feel the weight of that on his conscience. He started to feel the weight of his stubborn resistance to God on his conscience and it started to wear him down physically and yet, he refused to deal with it.

Look at it, he said, verse 3, "I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away." Maybe he was actually physically sick. Maybe he's just speaking poetically about the weight that he felt inside and the loss of energy that comes when you're covering up sin and this went on for a period of time. Look at verse 3, "Through my groaning all day long. Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah." He says, "Stop here," "selah" being a word probably that means "stop and ponder this." David says this is a common experience to humanity and don't you know, those of you that are sitting here in the room, don't you know what it's like to harbor unconfessed sin? You young people, don't you know what it's like? You feel that sense of things not being right with your mom and dad when you've been disobedient.

You've spoken badly or you've done things, you've stolen from them. You know, I remember doing that, stealing money from my mom's purse. I need to give that back to her, by the way. That goes back 50 years or more but I need to give her back that quarter. But don't you know what it's like to harbor that and just the sense of shame? The sense that things aren't right and you can't be natural, you can't be yourself because there's something inside that's bottling you up, that sense of guilt and the accusations from your conscience? You adults know. You've just become a little more sophisticated in dealing with it and covering it up but you still know what that's like. "Uh, things aren't right here but, you know, that was his fault, not mine. I'm not going to say anything. I'm not going to start."

Well, here's the thing, what David is saying, rather than you continuing to be like that in that kind of stubborn sense, what you should do is you should start to empathize with what David is saying and as you identify with his own spiritual anguish over unconfessed sin to start to say, "Oh, I see myself in that," and to let that identification with David help lead you, help bring you to the place of blessing that he designs this Psalm to do. You should learn from his response. What did David do? He said, "I went through this window of time, I went through this period where I was silent and I stubbornly refused to acknowledge my sin." He says, "You think about it because if you realize, if you think about it, you'll see that there are aspects of that in your life either now or you have gone through it in the past that you know exactly what I'm talking about. Think about it," he says, "you know, don't you?" And the question is: what did David do when he finally came to the end of that stubborn refusal to acknowledge it?

Look at verse 5. Verse 5 is the longest verse in the Psalm suggesting its central importance to the message. Verse 5, David says and it's almost, I'm saying too much here but you almost get the sense that he's kind of blurting this out in the midst of his silence. He says,

5 I acknowledged my sin to You [and the floodgates were opened], And  
my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the  
LORD";

Notice, I haven't finished that verse yet, I know that, but what I want you to notice is, again, the skill with which he has written this. He has repeated, once again, those same three verses for sin that he introduced the Psalm with. Slightly different order. He said, "I acknowledged my sin, my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.'" He repeats all three words of it and what he's saying here is this: having given a comprehensive view of sin using multiple terms to describe it – oh, beloved, mark it close. This is really important for you to grow spiritually and for you to know the thorough cleansing of your heart that can come from an honest confession of your sin. David here says, "I confess sin, iniquity, transgression." What he's saying is, "I made a thorough and complete confession of all of this to the Lord." He opened with a complete description and his confession matches identically the breadth and depth of the description that he gave to sin in the opening part of the Psalm and the repetition shows a thorough confession and notice, beloved, the threefold confession that he makes. He says,

"I acknowledged my sin to you." I admitted it. I stated it up front. "My iniquity I did not hide." I didn't cover it up anymore. I spoke it, negatively speaking, the other side of the coin, I didn't hide it. "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.'" In other words, what David is saying is, "I stopped the cover up. I stopped hiding it. I stopped the hypocrisy. I stopped the pretense and I came to the Lord himself." Notice that he came directly to the Lord with his confession, "and I openly stated it all to the Lord."

And what did he say? "God," using these terms for sin, what did he say? It wasn't simply, "God, I did this bad thing," although that was an initial superficial part of it. No, beloved, right here we are getting ready to cross a bridge in your spiritual life. That's what we're getting ready to do. On the left side of the shore here is your superficial experience of Christianity where you view things in kind of a superficial way. We're going to cross a bridge that will lead you to spiritual growth and a deeper understanding and a deeper experiential recognition of what the forgiveness of God means, but as you cross that bridge, the crossing of this bridge is a denial of self and a rejection of your pride and just laying everything out openly before a holy God.

What did David say as he used these terms? He said, "God, I am rebellious. God, I have missed the mark. God, I am a twisted man full of sin and contradiction." You see, it's not just simply, "Forgive me of my sins," he enters into the depth of sin and owns it as that which defines him and marks him as a man in the presence of God without forgiveness and the question for you is whether you go there with your self-assessment in the presence of a holy God. You know, it's superficial and wrong and an insult to God to simply say, "Well, yeah, I'm not perfect," which leaves you plenty of room to say, "I'm not perfect but, you know, I'm pretty good." The question is whether you thoroughly renounce yourself because of the reality of sin in your heart and in your life. Notice the difference between someone who says, "Yeah, I'm not perfect," to a confession of sin that says, "I'm a rebel. I have missed the mark. I have fallen short of the glory of God. I'm twisted. I look to be one thing but I know inside I'm actually something else." What I want to know, what I mean by that is what I call you and encourage you and beg you to do is to assess yourself like that before God and I ask you whether you view yourself that way or not or do you stop short in order to preserve a little bit of self-righteousness and not own the complete nature of sin that Scripture says is true of each one of us? You see, you have to thoroughly confess your sin if you're going to thoroughly enter into the blessing of which this describes. David holds himself out and says, "Here's what I did," and he does that not simply to put himself on display but to instruct you in terms of what you should do with your own sin.

Look over at Psalm 51, I think it's verse 13. You see, when David was making his initial confession of his sin in Psalm 51, he anticipated teaching sinners how to respond to sin and he said in Psalm 51:12, he said, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways." So now here in Psalm 32, do you know what he's doing? He's teaching you as a transgressor against God the ways in which you find forgiveness of sin and the way that you find forgiveness is by a thorough going renunciation of your pride in the presence of God and saying, "Lord, I'm a transgressor. I'm full of iniquity. I'm a sinner and I have missed the mark." And you

humble yourself before a holy God which is the only proper way for someone who has sin in his heart to do when he comes before God. No self-justification. No excuses. No pretense. "God, I openly acknowledge all these things to be true of me." That's humbling, isn't it? It's humbling to teach these things because as I teach these things to you, I'm making an open confession that this is all true of me too; that I'm the same man described here: rebellious, missed the mark, full of sin and contradiction.

So what I want to know, what I want you to ask yourself is a better way, is have you confessed sin that way? And in principle, have you come to Christ and acknowledged that this is true of me in principle? In a statement of utter self-denial, self rejection and complete repentance, a declaration in the language of Matthew 5:3, "I am spiritually bankrupt. I am poor in spirit and I mourn over my sin." And you confess it openly like that. Proverbs 28:13 says that, "He who hides his transgressions will not prosper, But the one who confesses them will find favor." 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Look, beloved, God is more than willing to forgive all of your sins. God is happy, he delights in unchanging love, he delights in being gracious to sinners, but he dispenses that kind of grace on those who humble themselves before him and acknowledge their sin and confess it.

David went through a period of time where he was feeling great pain, verses 3 and 4, and I skipped and failed to tell you point 3 when I transitioned into it so go back to your notes and do a squiggly line and put it back in there. You can put in the margin: "preacher failure" on the side and that will explain why your notes aren't as clean as you want them to be. Point 3 is this: confession brings God's full forgiveness. Actually, maybe I didn't mess it up so bad after all. Hidden sin brings great pain and we got through the first couple parts of verse 5 and now point 3: confession brings God's full forgiveness. Let me show you the rest of verse 5 and you'll see what we're talking about here and this is one where if emotions matched the reality of truth the pages of our Bible would be watered with tears of joy and gratitude as we see what David says here at the end of verse 5. He says, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and what happened in verse 5?

You forgave the guilt of my sin.

You wiped it away and notice this: God's forgiveness was immediate upon the confession. He did not and he does not send a sinner off into probation and say, "Come back to me after you've thought about it a while. Come back to me after you've done some acts of penance and then maybe we can talk about restoration. We need a cooling off period here, sinner, and so during that time, there is still going to be this sense of reserve that I have toward you because your sin is so great." That's not God. That's not the God of the Bible. That's a demonic misrepresentation of who God is. God forgave David immediately and what he did in response to David's confession was he lifted that sin off of David's life, covered it with the intention never to charge it against him again and that is the way that God deals with us as sinners. Do you realize the immense gratitude that that should bring forth from your heart? Do you realize the great assurance that that should settle in your mind? Do you realize that you cannot rely on your feelings

about this but that you must go to the word of God and trust the word of God that declares this is how God deals with us when we confess our sins honestly and openly before him?

Oh beloved, mark it well, those of you that struggle with sin and you come back and say, "God, I'm confessing this again. What is this, like the 33rd time today, God? The 10th time this month, God?" But don't view the grace of God through the perspective of your own failure. That's a big mistake. That will strangle you and stunt your spiritual growth. View God through the way that he has declared and revealed himself to be. David said, "When I confessed my transgressions to the Lord, God immediately forgave me." And he's praying it to God, he says, "You forgave the guilt of my sin." What does that mean except something really really simple, really basic, really wonderful: God receives sinners just like you and forgives them. God is so gracious and so merciful that as we come to him in confession of our sin as believers, God says, "I restore you." He brings us back and holds it not against us anymore. James Montgomery Boice in his commentary on this passage says this and I quote, and listen to this those of you that are weary and heavy laden with your shortcomings before God; put aside yourself and your thoughts about yourself and think about who God is as he declares himself to be. James Boice says this and I quote, "God is ready and even yearning to forgive and restore us fully if only we will confess our sin and come to him believing in Jesus Christ who has made atonement for it and he will do it right away."

You see, we view God all wrong. We make accusations against him in our unbelieving sin-defiled conscience that says, "God won't forgive me for this," or, "God is still mad at me for this," or, "I need to wait a few days beforehand." None of that is true. All of that is the deceit of your own heart inflamed by demonic influence that comes to bear to discourage us and cause us to stumble. None of that is true. Scripture is clear about this. "I confessed my sin and God forgave the guilt of my sin." David says, "Sinner, that's the way God is. That's how he deals with us. Confession brings God's full forgiveness." Wonderful grace of our loving Lord, huh?

Well, what should you do then? Since God is like this, since David has set forth this personal example for you, since David has set forth this realm of wonderful blessing for those who would have their sins forgiven, what a blessed happy place that is to be. David says, "God dealt with me this way and my life is a mere illustration of the way that God deals with every sinner who comes to him in confession." The question is: well, what should you do then? David wrote to instruct you and now we're going to finish up quickly here. I knew coming in that we would spend most of our time, 80-90% of our time in the first couple of verses and have to finish up rapidly now. What do you do in light of these truths, the greatness of forgiveness, the pain of hidden sin, the pain of a stubborn cynical rebellious heart that just will not bow the knee? What you do when that's what lies at the end of stubbornness is pain and knowing that God brings full forgiveness? What should you do, beloved? David wrote to instruct you, the Spirit of God used David to say exactly these things to you that we are about to see.

Point 4, what do you do? Bring your confession and submission. Bring your confession and submission and, boy, am I attempted to take a 10 minute break and then just do another 60 minutes sermon on the back end of this, but I'm not going to do that to you. I want to but I'm not going to do that. What should you do? Bring your confession and submission. You have to get this. You have to get what I am about to say and especially those of you who do not know Christ, you need to understand the utter urgency of what is about to come to you from Scripture. The first thing that you should do in light of what David has said is that you should hurry up and take advantage of this kind of grace.

Look at verse 6, David says, "Therefore," here's what comes from it, this is what you should learn from this, "let everyone," look at verse 6 with me,

6 Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.

Beloved, here's the thing, here you are in the year 2016 in a church that is preaching the Gospel to you, here you are still alive, still breathing with a beating heart and a sentient, to one degree or another, and to that capable mind and in light of your sin, it has just been described to you the gracious way that God receives sinners and completely and fully forgives them when they come to him without deceit and say, "God, here I am." What do you do with that? Well, you should hurry up and take advantage of that grace because what that means is there is opportunity for you right now tonight right in your seat, to be forgiven of all of your sins, but don't make the mistake of thinking that this is an open-ended offer that you can just come and take any time you want. Don't assume that the present open window of grace is always going to be open to you. There is an opportunity in front of you now to take advantage of this grace and God has laid it out and says, "Come and be forgiven." But sooner or later, perhaps without warning, that offer is going to close and you won't have opportunity then. Then you'll mourn the fact that you didn't take the opportunity for grace that was presented to you tonight. Then you will wail and mourn and say, "Why didn't I do it?" and it will be your own fault and your own responsibility that you didn't respond to Christ when you had the opportunity to do so. You see, a flood of judgment is coming. It won't reach those who turn to Christ now. The flood of judgment waters won't lap on the feet of those of us who know Christ but that flood is coming and if you're not in Christ, you had better pray to God now while he may be found because a time will come when God will say, figuratively speaking, "It's time to close the windows." The windows are closed. There is no more light to come through here. There is no more fresh air to come here. Now is the time for judgment either eschatologically or when you suddenly die and stand before a holy God.

Well, in light of the fact that God freely forgives sinners and that he offers that grace to you in Christ right now, why wouldn't you receive that grace? Why would you turn away? In light of the great blessing that comes to those who are forgiven, why would you harden your heart again and turn away from Christ again when God has so graciously said, "This is the way that I am. Just come and I'll wash away all of your sins and will never discuss them with you again." If you walk away from that, your blood is on your own head and so you should hurry and take advantage of this grace.

Now, what about us who are Christians, those of us who openly confess our sins in principle at the moment of salvation, that openly confess now the sins that taint our lives as believers? What does David say? He spoke to men, now he speaks to God. We stand in David's shoes and we say, "O God,

7 You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

"O God, O God, it's not just that you have washed away my sins. It's not just that you have taken away my guilt. It's not just that you will never raise it with me again. Now I am in a position where you are my hiding place. I went from hiding from God and refusing to confess my sins, now I hide in God and he is my protection and my source of comfort and deliverance and I rest in the perfect reconciliation that I have with God in Christ." That's what you do. Christian, be encouraged at the end of your long day and at the end of this interminably long message, recognizing that as you, now that you have confessed your sins in this manner, God preserves you through trouble in this life and he will preserve you in eternity and give you blessing untold and without end so that your heart will be filled with songs and praises for deliverance from sin that just get louder and more glorious as time goes on because the fullness of your recognition of the greatness of this blessing just deepens and broadens and expands your capacity to give even more heartfelt praise to him.

Well, the final four verses here are written as if God is now speaking to the repentant believer and it's a word of comfort and it's a word of warning. Look at verse 8,

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. 9 Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you. 10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him.

We ask the question: what should you do in response to the fact that God is gracious like this? Stay with me just a little bit longer if you can. On the one hand, don't be like a stubborn animal. Don't be like a mule that you've got to put a bit in their mouth and exercise force and compulsion on them to get them to go. Don't respond to God that way. Don't make God deal with you by discipline and chastisement and force when he is such a gracious God like this. Come to him in loving submission and say, "God, lead my life, instruct me and where you lead I will follow." Don't be a stubborn animal. Simply submit to this gracious God.

Notice also the warning. Verse 10, "Many are the sorrows of the wicked." Beloved, in light of the way that God is, why would you continue on a wicked path? Why would you do that? It is so contrary to your own self-interest to harden your heart in your bitterness and jealousies and greed and all of those other wicked heart sins. Why would you harden

in that when all that does is bring sorrow? Why not instead simply enjoy the loyal love of God? David is saying here, "Don't be foolish and stubborn like I once was when I kept silent about my sin." Instead, verse 10, look at it with me, "trust in the LORD because lovingkindness will surround you if you do." David says there is free forgiveness from enormous sin, promises of deliverance now and forever more, the grace and mercy of God on your life in exchange for humble repentance. Why, I ask you, why would you not do that? Why would you continue in sin, rejecting the blessing and embracing the curse? Why would you do that? It makes absolutely no sense.

Look at verse 11 as we close,

11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

Hallelujah, God is like this! God is a God of loyal love. God is a God who grants free complete forgiveness to those who confess their sins. God is eternally merciful to those who approach him in our Lord Jesus Christ. Shout for joy! Be glad! Find joy and happiness in your heart because God is like this and if you have come to him in this kind of confession, he is your God and he will always deal with you according to his eternal nature that has been revealed to us in Psalm 32. Beloved, God is more ready to forgive you than you are to confess your sin.

Let's bow together in prayer.

For those of you who are not Christians in the audience tonight, I urge you, I beg you, I plead with you to confess your sins to Christ and turn fully to him, the one who was crucified and resurrected, now ascended to the right hand of God, did that as an atonement to take away your sin. Christ would have you know the fullness of blessing that we have talked about from Psalm 32. He offers it to you and says, "If you'll come to me, I will never cast you out." You must come to him tonight and not presume on tomorrow and not harden yourself again in sin.

For those of you who are Christians, perhaps you've been harboring unconfessed sin, perhaps you are stale and stubborn in your Christian life but this has convicted your heart. Oh, take advantage of the opportunity. Take this occasion to unburden your heart and the hardness of the way that you have stood apart from God and stiff-armed his grace, for what end I can't possibly imagine, but take this occasion to break from those patterns that you have established. Confess your sin freely to God in the confidence that he will receive you just as graciously and fully as he did David after David had committed adultery and killed a man. I'll say it again, Christian: God is more ready to forgive you than you are to confess your sins to him. Let his readiness be that which motivates you to come. And for those of you that are walking with Christ, I thank God for you. I just pray that you would find greater reasons for gratitude in light of what we have seen here in Psalm 32.



*Lord, may it ever be our spirit to walk honestly, humbly before you and to own you as our gracious God who takes away all of our sin. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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