

Title: "The Blessing of Forgiveness"

Text: Psalm 32

Last week I shared with you the priestly blessing that God gave to Moses and Aaron to bless the people.

Can you say it again with me?

"The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace."

These are words that God speaks to all of us as His people.

-And these are words God also gave to us, that we might speak them and pray them over others.

But when we receive God's blessings ourselves,

-and when we pray God's blessings over others,

-what blessings are we talking about?

Over the next few weeks of summer, on the Sundays I am preaching,

-we will spend a little time looking at some of the specific blessings God promises His people.

Today, turn with me to Psalm 32 in the Bible, where David speaks to us of one of the most central blessings of God.

-It was a blessing which he had experienced in his own life,

-and a blessing he says he wanted all God's people to experience, too.

It's the blessing of God's forgiveness.

-Listen as I read the words of King David of Israel.

"Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count
against him."

In Hebrew, when you want to emphasize something,

-you say it two or three times.

David says this twice because he wants to emphasize it.

And it's right that he does.

-Forgiveness is the heart of the gospel.

-It's at the core of what a relationship with God is about.

When we come into a relationship with God,

-the very first blessing we need to believe and receive is
God's forgiveness.

This is simply because the thing that broke our right

relationship with God in the very beginning was our human
sin.

So it is that sin which must be overcome in order for us to be
restored to relationship with God.

That's what the whole story of the Bible is all about.

-And the good news of whole Bible, Old Testament and New
Testament,

-is that God has gone to great lengths to forgive us our sins,

-to cover our transgressions,

-to not count our sins against us, as David says here.

We know from the New Testament, that the ultimate way God
did that for us,

-was by sending His own Son to die for our sins,

-to pay the punishment for our transgressions,

-to make atonement for us.

This was the ultimate blessing of God given to us.

But even in David's day, and all through the Old Testament,

-the forgiveness of God was poured out on those who
confessed their sin, and repented of their transgressions,
and trusted in God's mercy and grace.

-This is what David is both proclaiming here as his own
experience,

-and what he is teaching others to do in this psalm.

1. First in verses 3-5 David speaks about Confession and repentance.

“When I was silent,” he says,

-that is, “when I didn’t confess my sins, and held them inside,

-trying to hide them from God and from others,

“...my bones wasted away and I groaned all day long.

I felt God’s heavy hand upon me.”

Have you ever felt like that?

-You’ve done things you know you shouldn’t have done,

-said words you shouldn’t have said.

-And you feel the conviction, you feel the weight of the thing.

-But you want to cover it up, just smooth it over.

-See if you can’t just forget about it, and it will go away.

But the thing keeps nagging at you.

-There is some guilt, and some shame, and some remorse,

-and there’s this nagging sense that just unsettles you.

We call it our conscience.

-But if you are a Christian, and Christ lives in you by His Holy Spirit,

-it is the very Spirit of God that is poking and prodding you.

As David says here, it is the hand of God that is resting heavily upon us.

-Tugging at us to walk in paths of righteousness.

-Prodding us to deal with the sin and confess it.

And there’s something in us that rebels at the very thought of owning up to the sin and dealing with it.

-There’s something in us that wants to bury it and cover it up.

-But God loves us too much to let us let us indulge that tendency.

-He knows if we let that sin sink down into us, that it will take root and start producing other kinds of issues in us.

So he keeps on tugging at us until we respond.

And when we do, we discover that dealing with our sin is not really all that difficult or complicated.

David says in verse 5, "Then I acknowledged my sin to you, Lord, and stopped trying to cover up my iniquity.

-I confessed my transgression to you,
-and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

You see, that's all he had to do. And all we have to do.

-Confession and repentance are the key that unlocks to gate to forgiveness.

-We just have to stop trying to cover it up.

-Instead, we just acknowledge it. Confess it.

-Tell God the truth of what we have done. Name it.

-He knows it anyway. It's no surprise to Him.

-But we need to confess it anyway, and name it as sin.

And in naming it before God with remorse for what we have done,

-and admitting the hurt it has caused God, and others, and to ourselves..... we repent of it.

And we ask forgiveness....and then we receive forgiveness.

David knew in his day that that's how it works.

-And in verses 6-7 he prays that God would draw others into this practice,

-so that God might become their forgiver, their hiding place, their deliverer, too.

And then in verse 8, it's as though he turns to other people who are around him,

-and as their king he says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go, I will counsel you and watch over you."

And here is his counsel to the people, and you can tell it's advice that comes right out of David's own experience.

He says, "Don't be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding and must be controlled by a bit and bridle.

That is, don't be stubborn. Don't be stiff-necked!
-Don't refuse God's prodding's and nudges and convictions.
-Respond like I've told you to: confess your sin, repent of it,
-say you're sorry, ask for forgiveness, make amends.

"For many are the woes of the wicked," David says, "but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in Him."

And that's the most amazing thing that David has discovered in his own life.

-It's that God's unfailing love is the best motivator for our pursuit of forgiveness.

You see, if we think that the uncovering of our sin is going to lead to condemnation and rejection,

-then we are not going to tell God or anyone else anything about what we've done.

If our view of God is that He has a big "whacking stick" that He's hiding behind his back,

-and he's just waiting for us to mess up so that He can whack us with it;

-then we are naturally going to run away from him, and try to hide our sin.

-We're going to hope that God is somewhere else on the far side of the earth dealing with somebody else's issues, -and will forget all about us.

If that's your image of God, then there is no way your going to listen to David here,

-and actually take the initiative to confess your sin and tell Him about it.

But David is here to tell us all from personal experience, -that God is not like that.

David is here to tell us that the LORD is the gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

He is here to tell us that if we confess our sin to the LORD,

-He is gracious and faithful to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And David says, the sooner we do so, the better!
-So don't be stubborn about it, he says, but run to God with your sins and confess them right away.

This will prevent you from experiencing any rightful wrath that God might have because of what you've done.
This will enable you to clear up that wrong, and be reconciled to God,
-so that you may be embraced by His gracious love once again.

And how does David know that? How can he be so sure?
-Because he was not only a great king of Israel, but also a great sinner of Israel.

He committed adultery with one of his best friend's wife,
-and then when she got pregnant he tried to manipulate his best friend into coming off the battle field to lie with his wife so he might think the baby was his own.
-And when that didn't work, he sent his best friend back to the battle lines with a sealed order instructing the General to put his friend in the heat of the battle,
-and then withdraw the troops from around him so his friend would be killed.

Which is what happened, and then David went ahead and took his best friend's wife to be his wife, so they could have the child.

You see what I mean about a kingly sinner.
-And David did all of that while he already had 6 or 7 wives of his own!

It was despicable. And he thought he had gotten away with it!
-He thought no one knew.
-But God knew, and sent Nathan the prophet to David to tell him that God had witnessed the whole thing.

The only thing David did right, was immediately repent.
-He confessed his sin outright. He displayed his remorse.
-He humbled himself before God and others, and asked for forgiveness.

And there were consequences to his behavior, but God forgave the guilt of his sin,
-and walked him then through a period of reconciliation and of making amends.

David knew what he was talking about here in Psalm 32.
-And in fact, this psalm is a testimony of joy for the gift of forgiveness that David received from God.

He offers it to God as a psalm of praise,
-and he offers it to the rest of us as an encouragement to live a repentant lifestyle.

For that is the first step towards living a God-blessed life.
-When God says, "I want to bless you and keep you,
-I want to make my face shine on you and be gracious to you,
-I want to turn my face toward you and smile at you and give you peace,"
-forgiveness of sin is the first of many blessings.

So don't be like the horse or mule that have to be tugged into a repentant lifestyle by bit and bridle.
-Make confession and repentance a way of life and the blessings of God,
-his forgiveness and grace and peace will be a constant flow in your life.

Let us pray.

That is where it all begins.