

GOD'S WONDERFUL FORGIVENESS

Psalm 32:1-11

Frequently people speak of a sermon as being dull, and perhaps some are. But it is difficult to see how any message could be counted lifeless and uninteresting when within its bounds are the good tidings of forgiveness. In fact, there are few, if any, sweeter words in human language than forgiveness.

David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and, in order to cover that sin, had occasioned the death of Uriah, her husband. As a result of the preaching of Nathan the prophet, and the convicting power of the Spirit of God, David truly repented of his sin and received God's forgiveness, he penned the words of this thirty-second psalm in which he gave expression to his joy which was overflowing on account of his being forgiven. The knowledge of sins forgiven is undoubtedly one of the greatest blessings that can come to any person.

Out of that experience of God's wonderful forgiveness, David said in substance: "If you really want to discover yourself, if you really want to find the true way of life, this is what you must do. I had to do it; it is inescapable. This is essentially what must be done."

Concerning the forgiveness of sins, we can learn some wonderful things from this remarkable chapter in God's Word.

I. David's Condition. Psalm 32:1-2

On the basis of his personal experience David knew the awfulness of sin. After he had repented and God had forgiven him, David also knew the reality and blessedness of being forgiven.

This word "blessed", with which this chapter opens, in the Hebrew language is in the plural, and may be translated, "Oh, the happinesses!" or "Oh, the blessednesses!" All men have their own ideas of blessedness. Some count those blessed who are strong in health, or abundant in riches, or honored with fame, or exercise authority, but God's Word does not call any of these "blessed." God informs us that the forgiveness of sins is far better than any or all of these things.

Three words in these verses describe the need of forgiveness. One of them is "transgressions", which literally means to pass beyond a boundary that has been laid down. Transgression; which is the most obvious form of wrongdoing, means walking across or going counter to the known will of God in thought, word, or deed. Transgression refers to the things that we have done which we ought not to have done. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." The second of these words is "sin." Sin means missing the mark, or coming short of the goal set for us by our Creator. It means failing to do what we know that God has told us to do. The Bible says, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." You can sin against God by failing to do what He has commanded you to do, as certainly as you can sin against Him by doing what He has told you not to do. To sin is to come short of doing the thing which was best for you. "Blessed is he ... whose sin is covered." The third of these words is "iniquity." Iniquity, which means that which is uneven, indicates depravity and crookedness. It is revealed by changeableness, or by being first up and then down, or by failing to be spiritually dependable. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."

These three words -- transgression, sin, and iniquity reveal the need of forgiveness. You should note that forgiveness is described here in three ways:

1. As the removal of a burden.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." To forgive is to lift up and to take away. It is to lift up the sense of guilt and the fear of punishment, due to transgression, and bearing them away from the one who has sinned to a place where they will never trouble him any more. That idea was expressed beautifully by John the Baptist in John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

2. As the covering of sin.

"Blessed is he whose sin is covered." God is conceived as covering over the sin so as to hide and obliterate it, like the snow which falls and completely covers the dust and dirt. Remember that God said, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." Sin is covered by the blood of Christ so that it will never again be seen by the eye of God.

3. As the canceling of a debt.

"Blessed is the man whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Imputeth means not to hold an account against a person. The records have been cleared and the account has not been kept against the person.

Oh, the joy of experiencing God's wonderful forgiveness! There is no other like it.

II. David's Conflict. Psalm 32:3-4

David made the serious mistake of trying to conceal his sins. He said, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." As long as he refused to confess his sins of immorality, murder, and hypocrisy, he continued in an unforgiven condition. Remember that unconfessed sin remains unforgiven sin. There could not be any relief from his distress day or night until he repented toward God and turned from his sin.

III. David's Confession. Psalm 32:5-6

When Nathan the prophet pointed out to David how terribly sinful he was, David came to have a deep regret that he had offended God, as well as committed a terrible crime against his fellowman. David was exceedingly anxious to be forgiven and cleansed of all defilement, so he immediately acknowledged his guilt, frankly confessed his sin, and prayed for forgiveness and cleansing. He described his experience when he wrote verse five, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

IV. David's Confidence. Psalm 32:7-11

Having experienced the horrors of concealed sin and found them to be well-nigh intolerable, and having been forgiven therefor, upon his repentance, David had come into possession of a joy which he had never known and which was unutterable. Thereafter he thought of God as his hiding place. Every person needs a refuge or hiding place. A refuge means a protection against danger. Each of us needs a hiding place from the pangs of an accusing conscience, from the power of Satan, and from the storms of life. Many hiding places for the souls of men are inadequate, but the Lord is a safe, adequate and eternal hiding place.

Not only does God deliver and preserve His children, but He instructs them as to the way in which they should go. He has promised to guide those who trust Him. He said, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." There is something powerful and tender in the very thought of God being the guide of His children. His promise "I will guide thee with mine eye" is for us just as certainly as it was for the men of faith who lived in the long ago. God is just as able and willing to direct our steps as He was to guide any who have lived before us. His guidance is available to us in our daily lives.

To His perplexed and troubled children, who were experiencing various and numerous difficulties, He said, in substance, "I will give thee the capacity for understanding and then I will show thee the right way." Thus we are promised instruction and fellowship. We are not only told the way, and directed in it, but we are accompanied by Him.

The soul that is in loving and intimate fellowship with God will have intimations of His will which can be felt and fully realized even though they cannot be proved and explained. There is no compulsion in God's subtle guidance. It is offered to those who need it, but they are free to follow or to decline to do so.

There is a negative aspect of God's guidance. It is a guidance of restraint. Sometimes one hears Him say, "This is not the way. Do not walk in it." There is also a positive aspect to God's guidance. What a glorious confidence one has when he knows that he is the object of divine selection, direction and control! "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct thy paths." When God's Word is the lamp of our feet and the light of our pathways we shall walk safely.

God guides us with the eye of fore-knowledge, constant watchfulness, and loving sympathy. He never loses sight of a single one of us. His watchfulness over us is unceasing. God gives us guidance through His Word. He guides us through His providences. He both opens and closes doors. The Holy Spirit speaks to our souls when we are near to God in loving surrender to His will.

Surrender to God is a condition not only of guidance, but of victory, joy and power. God expects us to trust Him and to follow His guidance.

Let those of us who are forgiven rejoice in the Lord under all circumstances. He is always the same. His grace and His power never change. Let us rejoice that He governs all things in the manner in which He does.