

A TIME OF DISCOVERY

Psalm 32:1-6

This Psalm was written after David's experience of sin and failure. It was upon the occasion of his repentance and forgiveness at the preaching of Nathan the prophet after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and, in order to cover that sin, had occasioned the death of Uriah. Out of that experience, in which at last he found, to his unutterable relief and unutterable joy, the forgiveness and the cleansing and the peace of God, he now says 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."

This word "blessed" in the Hebrew text is in the plural. It may be translated, "Oh, the happinesses!" or "Oh, the blessednesses!" It does not denote an ordinary experience. It indicates a deep inward satisfaction based on rightness with God, with others and with self.

All men have their own ideas of blessedness. They count those blessed who are strong in health, who are abundant in riches, who are honored with fame and who exercise authority. But God's Word does not call any of these "blessed." Instead, God tells us that forgiven sin is far better than accumulated wealth. The remission of sins is infinitely to be preferred to all the glitter and the glare of this world's prosperity.

David knew by personal experience the awfulness of sin. He also knew the blessedness of being forgiven. He was not propounding a theory but declaring a glorious truth. He had sinned, but he had repented and God had forgiven him. He knew the reality and the extensiveness of the experience because it was his own.

I. The Soul's Conviction.

In verse four David said, "For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me." Repeatedly the Bible speaks of the "hand of God" as a symbol of God in action or as God's power. Sometimes it refers to His power in mercy and in grace, and sometimes it refers to His power in conviction, judgment and condemnation. "The hand of the Lord was against them of Ashdod, and He smote them." Now, says this man, whose life has been broken on the wheel of sin, this royal sinner, this man whose conscience has been stained with the foulest of sin, and then, thanks to the miracle of the grace of God, utterly healed, this man says, There was a time when I felt the pressure of God's condemning and convicting hand upon me, until it seemed that I would die. "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me." To whom am I speaking who is aware that the hand of the holy God has been upon you disapprovingly, condemningly and convictingly; and that in consequence your life has been a wretched thing? There has not been any peace in it, any joy in it or any sense of self-fulfilment in it. You somehow know that you are a misfit. That is what any man is in God's world who is not in God's will; who has sinned but his sins have not been dealt with as they should have been. He is a misfit. It does not matter where you live, it may be a palace or a hovel, things are just not right if the hand of God is convictingly upon you.

II. The Soul's Concealment.

The Psalmist said, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." David said that such was his condition when he refused to be open with God, when he refused to face up to his sin -- the immorality of it, the murder of it and the hypocrisy of it. Sir Oliver Lodge once said, "Modern man is worrying about his sins without being willing to call them sins. That is why we have so many mental hospitals, provided for people with all sorts of emotional and nervous disorders and breakdowns. That is why there are so many anxieties, so many phobias and so many suicides. It is sin in the life, and we are worrying about it, even though we are not willing to call it by its scriptural name, and we are not quite willing to be honest about it. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring." Remember that unconfessed sin remains unforgiven sin. Unconfessed sin never goes under the blood.

III. The Soul's Confession.

"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring." He actually was getting old before his time. That was due to the fact that this thing was such a pestering and disturbing factor in his life. Then, he said, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid." Here comes the way out. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord."

Now let us analyze this. What is there here to be faced? What is there here to be confessed? Under the convicting hand of God, and willing to face up to things without evasion and with honesty, what is there to confess?

1. Transgression.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." Transgression literally means to pass beyond a boundary. When the Psalmist spoke of transgression he had reference to doing that which had been prohibited. He meant stepping across the boundary line which had been laid down. That is what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. God laid down a certain prohibition and they overstepped His bounds and partook of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Frequently you will see the sign, "No trespassing." Men want to enter there and hunt, but they are not allowed to do so -- "no trespassing." To go beyond that point is to violate the law.

Transgression means walking across or going counter to the known will of God, in thought, in word or in deed. A transgression is the most obvious form of wrongdoing. It refers to the things that we have done which ought not to have been done.

2. Sin.

This word is used in the first verse also. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." This word, sin, is a very common one upon our lips. It occurs many times in the Bible wherein people are constantly warned of the outcome of those who indulge in it. Sin means missing the mark. It means falling or coming short of the goal set for us by a wise Creator. It means failing to do what we know God has ordered for our lives. "To him

that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." When you know you ought to do something but you fail to do it, that is a sin. You can sin against God by your evasions, as certainly as you can by your transgressions.

Sin means to come short of the point at which we should have aimed. It is missing the thing which was best for us. It hurts us. It prevents God doing for us what He would have done had we not sinned. Nobody ever gets, in doing wrong, the thing for which he did the wrong; or, if he does get it, he also gets something else along with it that takes all the sweet taste out of it. All sin is a missing of the true goal.

3. Iniquity.

"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Iniquity, literally inequity, means that which is uneven. The very word indicates depravity or crookedness. It is crookedness as opposed to straightness, uprightness and righteousness. It is the perverse turning aside from the proper course of life. What is there in your life that has made you so vacillating, so up and down, so spiritually undependable? Whatever it is, face it, talk to God about it and by His help overcome it.

4. Guile.

"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." We will never get to the bottom of the sin problem until we realize that sin is more than something we do; sin is something we are. "In whose spirit there is no guile." There had been guile in David's spirit, and he knew it. There had been guile in his mishandling of the Bathsheba and Uriah affair. What frightful hypocrisy! What pretense! Are you prepared to let the Lord go right down to the very depths of your spirit, and purge you of your guile? That is the confession to be made.

IV. The Soul's Crisis.

"For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found." There is the time of discovery. God grant that this may be the time of discovery for you.

These great words -- transgression, sin, iniquity and guile -- reveal to us our great need of forgiveness. Forgiveness is described in this passage 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 a transgression as a burden, a heavy load, resting on the sinner, and bearing it away from him to a place where it will never trouble him any more. The principal idea in the word is complete removal. It is expressed beautifully in John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Forgiveness is the relief of the burdened heart of its sense of guilt and its fear of punishment. There is no other sense of relief equal to it. There is no other joy like it. Health, wealth, fame and power fade into insignificance in comparison with the blessedness that comes into the soul when one's transgressions are forgiven.

2. As the covering of sin.

"Blessed is he whose sin is covered." God is conceived as covering the sin over so as to hide and obliterate it. It is like the snow which falls on the ground and the dust and dirt are entirely covered, so God says, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." Adam tried to cover his sin with leaves, and Cain tried to cover his with lies, but God covers sin with blood. Sin is covered over by the blood of Christ so that it may no longer be in evidence before the eye of God.

3. As the cancelling of a debt.

"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." "Imputeth" means not hold an account against. The records have been cleared and the account has not been kept against the person. As it were, Christ has stepped forward and said, "Put this man's sin to My account and accept him as you accept Me." Oh, the joy of full forgiveness! The burden of sin has been lifted off and borne away from us by the Son of God. It is no longer reckoned against those of us who have truly repented.