

Session 5

May 14, 2023

RECOVERING FROM A FALL INTO TEMPTATION

Psalm 32:1-7

The beauty of forgiveness begins with the simplicity of obtaining it. This psalm is written by David, the most famous king Israel ever knew, and also the most infamous. His heroics against the giant Goliath (1 Sam. 17) and his dedication as a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14) on the one hand are met on the other by a man who was utterly human; who committed adultery and then compounded his sin with murder. His confession is painfully poured out in Psalm 51. His redemption is preserved for us here. Helpfully, the psalm is labeled a *Maskil*, which means "to give instruction." Hence, the text is more than simply the story of one man's forgiveness; it's an instructive example for all of us to follow.

The delight of forgiven sin (vv. 1-2). Where most of us would dive into the topic by lamenting the pain and guilt of our hideous sin, David (mercifully!) begins the psalm with the joy of forgiveness. This is the result of having *transgression forgiven* and *sin covered* (v. 1). The English word "transgression" means *to cross over*. God has placed boundaries on us. These are divinely drawn lines in the sand accompanied with the thought (if not the actual words), "Thou shalt not..." They represent limits to our rebellion as well as guardrails that guide us. To transgress, then, is to cross out of our safe zone and into rebellion. The word "forgive" means *to lift one's burden*. Hence, our transgression makes us guilty before God, but His forgiveness "lifts" the burden of our guilt. Notice the role God plays: He sets the limits, then He lifts the burden when we can't abide by them! In general usage, to "sin" is to *miss the mark*. Again, the standard is set by God, and we cannot live up to His standard. Fortunately, He *covers* our failures. Here, the word means *conceals*; not that they are kept in secret, but rather they are blocked out. Verse two indicates the negative side of *imputation*. Simply put, God does not "charge us" with our sin. For reflection: *Read 2 Cor. 5:21. How does this verse demonstrate the positive side of imputation?*

The damage of unconfessed sin (vv. 3-5). Now that David was on the forgiven side of his sin, he goes back to recount the horrors of unconfessed sin. Notice that his sin burden affected every aspect of his life. In verse 3, he was *physically* stricken from the stress that it caused him. In verse 4 he was under God's "heavy hand;" that's *spiritual* conviction. *Mentally*, he was depressed, worn down like a worker under the hot sun (v. 4). The phrase literally means "brought into the drought." The solution was not to hide his sin, but to reveal it. Notice that his confession was first to God, the one against whom all sin is committed. Confession to others would come later. For reflection: *Read David's confession in Ps. 51. What other consequences of living with his sin are inferred in that passage?*

The deliverance from the condition of sin (vv. 6-7). Forgiveness begins with confession. The New Testament word means *to say the same thing*. The word here is simply "pray," but the idea is the same. It is the prideful heart of the sinner finally agreeing with God and letting go in humble surrender. This should be done at *a time that He may be found*. The implication is clear: confession should be done while God is convicting the heart and wooing the sinner, rather than waiting for God's patience to run out and His anger to seethe! (see Nahum 1:3; Rom 2:4-5; 2 Pet.

3:8-10). The great promise of verses 6 and 7 is the second half of forgiveness: restoration. Not only does God take away the penalty of our sin, but He restores us to our rightful position with Him. In this case, it is a place of safety. Whether from the various floodwaters that come our way or the everyday struggles that seem to plague us, the repentant sinner is restored to a place of protection and surrounded by shouts of joy (v. 7). For reflection: *It is popular for us to say, "I can forgive, but I will never forget!" Is that a valid response to someone who has hurt us? How does that attitude compare to God's?*