

STORM SHELTER

A STUDY IN PSALMS

THE SHELTER OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

BIG IDEA: God's forgiveness brings restoration and joy.

DATE: September 7, 2025

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 32:1-7

OPENING QUESTION

It is very hard to admit when you were wrong. When was the last time you were wrong? What changed after you admitted you were wrong?

Today we are going to look at a psalm of David's. Here is someone who sinned greatly, received forgiveness and then rejoiced over the forgiveness he received. We will see how God's forgiveness brought David restoration and joy and God can do the same for us today!

THE SETTING

Despite being identified by God as "a man after my own heart" (Acts 13:22), David sinned when he used his position of power and authority to summon Bathsheba and engage in illicit activity. He sinned again by attempting to cover it up. God didn't fall for any of the cover up and sent Nathan to spotlight David's guilt. In Psalm 51, David poured out his heart in repentance over his sin and sought God's forgiveness. In Psalm 32 David rejoiced over the forgiveness he received.

SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 32:1-7 (NIV)

Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ² Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. ³ When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. ⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin. ⁶ Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them. ⁷ You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

DISCUSSION

READ PSALM 32:1-7

What's your initial reaction to these verses?

PSALM 32:1-2

At the peak of David's reign as king over Israel, he blew it. He abused his power as king and summoned Bathsheba, a married woman, to sleep with him. Then, when she became pregnant, David took the unthinkable step of arranging for her husband's death during a battle as a desperate attempt to cover over his sin.

Fortunately, when God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David about his actions, the king repented. David confessed his wrongdoing and turned away from his sin (see 2 Sam. 12:1-14). Psalm 51 contains David's beautiful confession to God. And in Psalm 32 we see David's response to God's forgiveness: joy.

Joy can feel like a rare commodity in our lives. We're constantly looking for joy in things around us that are only temporary. The truth is that joy comes from something much more durable. Real joy arrives only in the form of Jesus. He is eternal, and He changes our lives rather than just smothering us with temporary gifts.

Remember that happiness can show up because the right chemicals in our brain combine or the right circumstances in our lives occur. Joy is not dependent on the temporary, but on the eternal. It's the response of our souls when we encounter God. Joy comes when our sins are forgiven and our relationship with God is restored.

David found joy when he laid down his deception (see verse 2). We must do the same in order to experience God's full forgiveness, but it's hard – especially when we deceive ourselves:

- My sin isn't that bad.
- I can stop whenever I want.
- It's OK because no one really gets hurt.

Obviously, none of those statements are true. When we give up the self-deception of our rebellious lives, we can fully experience the joy of God's forgiveness.

What emotions do you experience when you receive forgiveness?

What emotions do you experience when you extend forgiveness?

PSALM 32:3-5

What's at stake when we hold on to unconfessed sin?

Have you ever kept quiet when you knew you needed to make a confession? Our silence eats away at us. David knew that feeling, too. During the time he refused to confess his sins, he felt like he was dying on the inside. He had the sense his bones were groaning and breaking. And it was constant – it was "day and night."

We come under the hand of God's conviction for the simple reason that He loves us. God wants us to confess our sins because confession brings about two major blessings. First, the sin itself is removed. David wrote in another psalm: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed

our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12). Second, the weight of conviction is released. Because the very sin that brought conviction is removed, God lifts the foreboding feeling that our life is wasting away.

Why does unconfessed sin eat away at a believer?

Here are some practical suggestions for getting better at confessing sin:

Confessing Sin to God:

1. Review the day. Set aside a time each day to allow God's Spirit to survey your heart and show you any sins you've committed.
2. Find the motive behind the sin. Oftentimes, there are deep-seated issues that cause us to commit particular sins. Allow God to show you the motive behind the action.
3. Get God's view about the issue. Ask, "What has God said about this in the Bible?" True confession is agreeing with God about our actions and attitudes.
4. Be specific. Don't generalize; instead, confess the individual and specific sins that the Spirit brings to mind.
5. Commit to repentance. Completely turn from the sin with no desire to commit it again. Ask God for strength the next time you face temptation.

READ PSALM 32:6-7

Picture this scene in your mind: because of your sin, judgement is coming toward you like a huge tsunami. You have no place to hide. But then everything suddenly goes dry. The water disappears. More than that, the world is put into the most perfect condition you've ever seen. It's a miracle! When we experience God's forgiveness for our sin, that's exactly what it is – a miracle. When we confess our sin to God, He removes it completely and fully restores our relationship. Once we have confessed and been forgiven, then we can live in the restored relationship offered to us by God.

This happens as we recognize the nature of God and how He acts on our behalf. David identified three ways God cares for us:

1. **God is our "hiding place."** We need to find protection from the very judgement we deserve. God is fully justified to pronounce His judgement on us like an absolutely overwhelming flood. After our confession, however, God Himself steps in to be the place where we find shelter.
2. **God is our protection.** As we live in a restored relationship with God, we don't have to fear any trouble. He removes our fear and replaces it with His joy. We still face trouble, but we're never alone. God restores and protects.
3. **God surrounds us with celebration.** When others ask for our forgiveness, we often respond by forgiving in a begrudging way. Thankfully, God does nothing of the sort. He releases us from our guilt and begins celebrating.

How have you experienced God's forgiveness as a protection or a hiding place?

How can we celebrate our forgiveness in Christ? If forgiveness brings restoration and joy, we need to celebrate!

It's the way of God to celebrate when what has been lost is found (see Luke 15). And WE are what has been lost. How good is it to rest in the knowledge that Jesus brings us complete restoration and joy!

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

We all want the gift of joy in this life. We usually grasp for joy in the same ways we find happiness - but that won't work. Instead, choose surrender as your path to joy. Surrender your will, let go of your sin, and relish the restoration that only God can bring.

Live it Out: Consider the following suggestions for seeking joy through the blessing of God's forgiveness.

- ✓ **Confess.** Confess any sins that plague you. Turn from them, accept God's forgiveness, and make a plan with God about how to refuse their power in your life from this point forward.
- ✓ **Pray.** Pray for others who have not yet experienced the joy of God's forgiveness in salvation.
- ✓ **Forgive.** Offer forgiveness to someone who has wronged you. (This isn't easy and can only be done through God's help.) Think beyond a person to God – are you holding a grudge against Him. Do you need to “forgive” God for something you are upset about – unanswered prayer, loss, etc.? In truth we need to ask forgiveness from God for any lack of trust in His will.

PRAY: Thank Jesus that He is bigger than any mistake. Pray for your group members to spend some thoughtful time in confession this week and then to celebrate that forgiveness and experience true joy.

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COMMENTARY

PSALM 32:1-7

[VERSE 1] Psalm 32 may be a follow-up to Psalm 51, David's confession of his sins related to Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah (2 Sam. 11–12). In Psalm 51, David poured out his heart in repentance over his sin and sought God's forgiveness. In Psalm 32 he rejoiced over the gracious forgiveness offered by God. In creating this psalm of instruction, David taught that owning up to sin and confessing it brings God's forgiveness and restoration. In the same way, Christians are reminded that the coming of the Son of God at Christmas brought to fruition a divine plan for forgiveness of sins and salvation. Because the child in a manger grew to hang on a cross then become a risen Savior, believers also can come to the cross, confess their sins, and find forgiveness and restoration from God.

David began Psalm 32 with a proclamation of blessing containing two parts. Each part starts with the phrase *how joyful* and is followed by two poetic lines. *How joyful* is actually one word in

Hebrew and is used 26 times in the Psalter; it's traditionally translated "blessed" or "happy" (Ps. 1:1). The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5) uses the corresponding Greek word at the beginning of Jesus' statements we know as the Beatitudes.

[VERSE 2] In the lines of the blessing David used four different words to describe the full breadth of human sinfulness. Three of the four are paired with an appropriate image of divine deliverance and forgiveness. *Transgression* refers to acts of rebellion against God (v. 1). The Hebrew word for *forgiven* involves God lifting up, carrying, or taking away the burden of rebellion (Ps. 25:18). The word translated as *sin* in verse 1 identifies a breach of the law, usually by missing the mark or veering off the right path. God's response is to cover or conceal the sin (Ps. 85:2; Neh. 4:5). The word translated as *sin* in verse 2 indicates perverted, criminal, or willful disobedience. In turn, God **does not charge** it to the sinner's account (2 Kings 12:15; 22:7). The manner of forgiveness in each line points to the completeness of divine deliverance, which in turn provides happiness, joy, and blessing.

The fourth word used by David to describe human evil is *deceit*. This word denotes fraud and deception, especially as carried out by a scheming, plotting person. While the other three words are commonly employed as synonyms for sin in the Old Testament (Gen. 50:17; Job 13:23; Mic. 6:7), *deceit* is rare and is found only 15 times, mostly in the Psalms, Job, and Proverbs. The rare occurrence of this word, and the way David used it, sets it apart from the other three. Because it refers to an individual without sin, the statement *in whose spirit is no deceit* does not require a divine response. David seemed to alter the poetic structure of the last line in order to lead the reader to the confession of sin in verse 5. The individual *in whose spirit is no deceit* is the one who is willing to confess sin to God.

[VERSE 3] David realized God was pleased with a broken spirit and a broken and humble heart (Ps. 51:17). This is the kind of confession that brings deliverance and forgiveness. In these three verses of Psalm 32, David offered a personal example of moving from an experience of anguish over sin to the act of confession, and then to the gracious response of God's forgiveness. David attributed the cause of distress in verses 3-4 to keeping **silent** and refusing to confess his sin. He first admitted that when he **kept silent** his **bones became brittle** or wore out in **groaning all day long**. The Hebrew word for *groaning* can also be translated as the "roaring" of a lion (Isa. 5:29; Ezek. 19:7). In regard to human subjects, it could refer to groaning or anguished cries (Ps. 22:1; Job 3:24).

[VERSE 4] The agony of unconfessed sin did not cease. **Day and night** David felt the **hand** of God **was heavy on** him. This pressure weighed on his conscience, and it signaled David's own recognition of the need for repentance. The turning point in David's distress comes in verse 5.

[VERSE 5] Without explaining or describing the events or circumstances that led to the point of breakthrough, David offered the solution to unconfessed sin. He opened up and **acknowledged** his hidden sin to God. Verse 5 contains the same three words found in the blessing from verses 1-2: **sin** (sin, v. 1), **iniquity** (sin, v. 2), and **transgression**. The order is different, but their use signals the thoroughness of the confession. In speaking to God, David declared in first person: **I acknowledged my sin to You**. The parallel line continues by noting that David **did not conceal** his **iniquity**. The verb translated *conceal* here is the same as *covered* in verse 1. It is a blessing when God covers our sin from His sight. But in order to gain the victory over sin, we must uncover the sin, freely showing it to God.

"I will confess" indicates David's personal resolve to end the physical and emotional pain that came from harboring sin in the heart. David's confession in the first three lines of verse 5 is immediately met with God's forgiveness in the fourth. There is no further punishment or penance required. David reported that God simply **took away the guilt of his sin**.

Two interesting points are found here in the fourth line. First, the verb translated **took away** is the same verb rendered **forgiven** in verse 1. God lifted or carried away David's sin. Second, the phrase **the guilt of my sin** combines two of the words for sin in verses 1-2 (*sin*, v. 2; *sin*, v. 1). The doubling of the words emphasizes the completeness of God's forgiveness. Therefore, the blessed state of being forgiven in verses 1-2 is the product of the Lord's carrying the totality of our sin. David had learned that the sinner only needed to confess to gain the Lord's forgiveness.

[VERSE 6] After sharing his personal testimony on the debilitating effects of unconfessed sin, David turned in verses 6-7 to speak about his restored relationship with God. He expressed this deeper connection through a prayer addressed to God. The use of **therefore** at the beginning of verse 6 connects the prayer with the joyous affirmation that God had forgiven him at the end of verse 5. Because David understood the impact of this forgiveness, he first raised a request to God that others might not follow his example.

David didn't want others to experience that pain and suffering he went through, saying **let everyone who is faithful pray**. The **faithful** are the ones who practice covenant faithfulness with God. David prayed they would seek God **at a time that He may be found**. David recognized a sense of realistic urgency at this point, arguing for an established pattern of ongoing communication with the Lord (Isa. 55:6; Jas. 4:8). Such a relationship must be built over time.

David also recognized that trouble will inevitably come to the faithful. David used the imagery of the **great floodwaters** to represent the chaos that often confronts us in the problems and worries we face in life. The psalms recognize that only God can rescue us from these chaotic forces (Pss. 18:16; 69:1-2,14-15). The torrential floodwaters **will not reach** the one who has an ongoing relationship with the Lord (Ps. 124:4-5; Isa. 43:2).

[VERSE 7] In the second part of the prayer David turned his attention to address the Lord directly. David declared first that the Lord was his **hiding place** or shelter. David understood that God will hide the faithful in the protection of His presence. The Lord will conceal them from the schemes and plotting of others (Ps. 91:1). David then proclaimed that the Lord would **protect him from trouble**. The noun **trouble** can refer to the narrow or tight places we find ourselves in at times.

The prayer ends with a reference to songs of rescue. David was grateful that God surrounded him **with joyful shouts of deliverance**. The reason for the joyful shouts was that David had been delivered from the ravages of sin. The word translated **deliverance** here has the basic meaning of "escape." It was God who had brought him out, helped him to escape. Thus, God had saved him (Pss. 37:40; 43:1; 71:4). But David was not only praising God for his own personal deliverance; he recognized at the end of his prayer that other worshipers singing songs of deliverance surrounded him. Others have also experienced forgiveness of sin; others have been restored to a right relationship with God; and others are rejoicing in the protective care of God. These are the confident songs of those who have placed their trust in the shelter of God's forgiveness.