

INNER PEACE

The Problem of Guilt

Intro: The scene is a roof-top in the palace complex of Jerusalem. Picture one of Israel's celebrated heroes, the king of Israel, walking in the cool of the evening. Things have gone well for David. God has abundantly blessed him; his kingdom has prospered and he no longer feels the need to lead his men in battle. Perhaps it was a restless time as no clear goal lay ahead of David. As his eye spans the multitude of houses adjoining each other, he perhaps unintentionally catches what was not intended for him to see, a beautiful woman bathing. Though David had many wives none of them seemed to provide for David the excitement of this woman. Maybe she could fill the emptiness he was feeling. He sends his people to bring her to the palace for an interview. Maybe she is a harmless woman compelled by the voice of the king. Maybe she is vulnerable; her husband Uriah has been away in battle for a time. Whatever feelings were brought to that meeting, it was to begin a contact that would lead the two into a lovers embrace. But now that the affair has started it is hard to get out. And now it is complicated by a message from Bathsheba, "I am pregnant".

David sought for a way out by which he could save face. After all, could he really admit that he, the man of God, the king of Israel was an adulterer? No! His mind is consumed with prospects of embarrassment. Surely I can keep everyone from knowing. He thinks: I will bring Uriah home from the battlefield; he tries in vain to get him to sleep with his wife while his fellow-soldiers were in the field. David thinks of another course. What if he could rather marry her and add her to his harem. Other kings had done so. No one would think badly of him for that and if he acted quickly it would seem the child was conceived after the marriage. But in order to accomplish this, Uriah must be eliminated. David arranges for him to be put into the heat of battle. After all, he would not be killing him, right? He could not help it should he fall into misfortune on the battlefield, could he? Things like that do happen to soldiers, don't they? Then, upon hearing of the death of Uriah, he brought Bathsheba to his palace.

Now at last, it was over. It has been a difficult problem, but now the coverup has worked. He could set his mind at ease, right? Wrong. What David was to experience over the next year was a period of spiritual famine unlike anything he had ever known. He was to learn that a moment's physical pleasure would cost him months of spiritual pain. David was to learn a valuable lesson about guilt. With that scene in your mind, let's turn to Psalm 32.

Perhaps there is in your life a story like this. It doesn't have to be about adultery. It could be about any number of spiritual problems, all of which bring us to the same destination. We are full of guilt. It is one of the most powerful emotions in the world. This psalm teaches us four important things about guilt, as David describes that time in his life when guilt destroyed his peace and happiness.

Let's read the psalm. Observe four things about guilt.

Deliberate disobedience brings real guilt

There is no doubt that David knew that his actions with Bathsheba were wrong; and there was no rationalization that could erase the power of the teaching of the Law as it burned in David's heart. From Sinai God had said, "You shall not commit adultery", "you shall not steal", "you shall not bear false witness", "you shall not kill", "you shall not covet your neighbor's wife". David had deliberately broken every one of those commands. He knew he was living a lie!

"How blessed is the man in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Ps. 32:2b)

And now he feels the weight of those sins upon his shoulders.

When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. (Psalm 32:3-4)

He learned the powerful influences of guilt upon the body, upon the countenance. He was dried up inside. His spirit went through a famine that made him feel he was dying! He could see in his life God's displeasure and every stroke of divine judgment reminded him of what he had done! God is punishing me for my sins!

Have you ever felt like that? Did you ever do things you knew were wrong? Have you even now continued to fight against the will of God and know the struggle of which David speaks?

Only honest confession can bring relief from guilt

When we sin, there are only two courses:

Denial: You can quit caring about what is right. You can change truth to error and say, "I did nothing wrong".

Confession: Or, you can say, "I am wrong. I need to get right with God."

David had the honesty to admit he was wrong!

I acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; and Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. (Psalm 32:5)

Consequently he experiences the great blessing of God's forgiveness!

How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit! (Psalm 32:1-2)

What a blessing to know that we do not have to pretend we are something we are not, but to honestly confront our sins and receive God's forgiveness for them!

David warns of the dangers of ignoring the sin in our lives!

Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found; (Psalm 32:6a)

Sometimes people wait too long to admit their guilt. They finally win the struggle with their conscience. The Bible calls it "hardness of

heart". We can resist until our hearts are like rock, unable to be penetrated by truth.

Ill. Here is a man who feels a pain in his side. It is warning him that something is wrong; but he ignores it. It'll go away; it's nothing to worry about. Week by week he keeps resisting the truth that a problem may be there. Finally, months later he becomes so ill that he cannot go on. He goes to the doctor and the doctors says, "I'm sorry. If you had only been here earlier, we could have caught it in time". There is a spiritual version. We feel guilt, we postpone, we die spiritually.

David offers the assurance that deliverance is available to the godly who cry out to the Lord!

Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not reach him. Thou art my hiding place; Thou dost preserve me from trouble; Thou dost surround me with songs of deliverance. (Psalm 32:6-7)
Find deliverance while deliverance is possible. Learn to sing about God's deliverance from sin.

Sincere obedience prevents future guilt

David had learned, however, another important lesson about guilt. If you live right, you don't have to worry about the problem of guilt! What a blessing it is to live so as not to be charged with sin. What a blessing to live in the sincerity and honesty of righteousness. You don't have to try to be something you're not. You can just be yourself, doing the best you can to live right!

I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked; But he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones, and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart. (Psalm 32:8-11)

Let's learn to control ourselves and not be like animals who have to have a bridle and bit in their mouths to keep them under control and keep them where they need to be!

The truth is David says there is not real joy in sin! v. 10 Real joy comes in serving the Lord. That's where the blessings are! v. 10-11

When you determine in your heart to sincerely do right, you never have to worry again about the problem of guilt! You can have peace in your heart!

Conclusion: There is a way out of the guilt of sin. In a word, repentance. It is regretting the sins of the past and determining to turn our lives around. It is seeking the Lord's forgiveness for the past and seeking to do his will in the future.

Maybe you, like David, have your own story of failure. You may leave this assembly free of all guilt and rejoicing in God's salvation.