

## Different Labels, Same Poison

J. Wilbur Chapman, noted Methodist evangelist of the nineteenth century, told of a distinguished minister in Australia who preached regularly on sin. One of the church officers came to him after one sermon to talk with him. He said to the pastor, "We do not want you to talk so plainly as you do about sin. If our boys and girls hear you talking so much about sin, they will more easily become sinners. Call it whatever you will, but do not speak so plainly about sin."

The minister arose from his desk, walked to a utility closet, and brought back a small bottle of strychnine that was marked "Rat Poison." He said, "I see what you want me to do. You want me to change the label. Suppose I take off this 'Poison' label and replace it with some milder label, such as 'Essence of Peppermint.' The milder you make the label, the more dangerous you make the poison."

### 1. The Bible doesn't soften the thought of sin to make God more palatable

- A. God loves us far too much to treat something so deadly in a light manner
- B. We see this in this Psalm – inspired by God – written by David
  - 1). Here we have an extremely honest teaching about sin and God
    - As David writes out of the experience of his own life
    - a). We see how devastating the power of sin is in a life that tries to cling to it
    - b). How willing God is to bless the sinner again when that sin is handled properly

### 2. Structure and background to this Psalm

- A. This Psalm swings in-between two extremes – anguish and joy
- B. The anguish was a result of David's famous sin of adultery with Bathsheba
  - 1). She becomes pregnant – rather than confessing the sin of adultery – getting right with God
    - a). He tries to cover the sin – calls Uriah her husband home from the front line
      - 1a). Thinking he will sleep with his wife – we'll say it's his kid – but he doesn't
        - How can I enjoy my wife when my brothers are sleeping in tents in the battle
      - 2a). David even invites him to dinner and gets him drunk – he still won't sleep with her
    - b). David sends him back to the battle with a sealed letter to Joab the commander
      - Put Uriah in the most dangerous area of the fight – Joab does and Uriah is killed
    - c). So David piles on murder to the sin of adultery - lying
  - 2). David tried to cover his sin rather than confess it – this went on for a year
    - a). God put him through wringer - pain of divine discipline caused David to be miserable
- C. But there is joy here too – God sent his prophet Nathan to confront David
  - 1). He finally breaks – the pain has done it's work and he confesses his sin to God

**Point:** So we have anguish in this Psalm = a result of David covering his sin

- A. We have joy in this Psalm = a result of David finally confessing his sin to God
  - 1). This is the main point – David writes to celebrate the forgiveness of sin

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**Ps 32 (ESV)** A MASKIL OF DAVID. <sup>(1)</sup> Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. <sup>(2)</sup> Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. <sup>(3)</sup> For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. <sup>(4)</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah <sup>(5)</sup> I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah <sup>(6)</sup> Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. <sup>(7)</sup> You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah <sup>(8)</sup> I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. <sup>(9)</sup> Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. <sup>(10)</sup> Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. <sup>(11)</sup> Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

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## I. DAVID'S CLEANSING FROM SIN

**Ps 32:1–2 (ESV)** Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. <sup>(2)</sup> Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

## 1. Defining terms

A. **Blessed** = Happy, joyful, exuberant

- 1). It is in the plural – which is used to intensify the meaning of the word
  - a). It is speaking of an **abundant, overflowing blessing**
- 2). He begins this Psalm by proclaiming the abundant joy and blessings  
That flow into the life that has been forgiven – that has no sin afflicting the conscience

**Transition:** What was David forgiven from?

B. **Transgression** = A willful defiance of God's authority in our life

- 1). This isn't slipping into sin unknowingly – this is stepping into sin willfully - defiantly  
"I know I shouldn't do this but I don't care – I'm doing it anyway"
- a). The sin with Bathsheba was a transgression – a willful act he knew was wrong

C. **Forgiveness** = To have something lifted off – here it would be the weight of sin

- 1). This would be the removal of the accusations of a stirred conscience
- 2). If you're a Christian you've experienced what David is talking about in this Psalm
  - a). That relentless nagging of a conscience awakened by guilt

**John Blanchard:** Our vices have voices; they testify against us.

- 1a). They testify with a non-stop nagging – a tormenting  
That produces mental, emotional and physical distress
- 2a). Ps. 51 – my sin was always before me

- 3). It removes any hope of joy and replaces it with pain

**David's description: Ps 32:4 (ESV)** For day and night **your hand was heavy upon me**; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

**Thought:** As we're going to see in this Psalm the only remedy is confessing that sin to God

A. The longer we delay in doing so the heavier God's hand gets

B. So after a year of being tormented by his conscience

David finally broke and owned up to his sin before God

- 1). Now he writes with great joy and relief about the blessings of that forgiveness
  - a). The blessings of a quiet conscience – that is no longer accusing him of guilt

**Transition:** He shows what God has graciously done to bring this blessing in v. 2

**Ps 32:2 (ESV)** Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity...

### 1. Watch the progression here

A. David is clinging to sin – God's hand is crushing him

David confesses sin and the Lord immediately removes it – no longer counting it against him

**How God treats our sin when we confess it: Is 43:25 (ESV)** "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

- 1). He **blots it out** = completely removing it from His book – not a trace left
- 2). The **promise** = I choose not to remember it – I will never bring it up against you again

### 2. But there is a condition here we cannot overlook

**Ps 32:2 (ESV)** Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, **and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**

A. David had lived deceitfully for a year – lying – manipulating – trying to cover his sin

**Transition:** He speaks of this in v. 3-4 – as the Psalm shifts from the present joy to the past misery

## II. DAVID'S CONCEALMENT OF SIN

**Ps 32:3–4 (ESV)** For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. <sup>(4)</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

### 1. David speaks of the cost of clinging to sin

- A. When I kept silent – when I refused to acknowledge my sin – I suffered – my life was so hard

### 2. The misery of unconfessed sin

**Ps 32:3–4 (ESV)** For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. <sup>(4)</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah

- A. His physical stamina and vitality were drained because of the Lord's heavy hand upon him
- B. His strength was sapped
- C. He was emotionally distraught – groaning all day long

**Point:** He thought he could hold on to sin and win

God will eventually relent – remove His heavy hand

- A. But that will not happen – you must see this

**Pr 28:13 (ESV)** Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

- 1). That is an eternal – divine principle – and God MUST keep His Word
- 2). God has said “You will not prosper” – You cannot cling to sin and come out better
- B. The longer you try the harder it gets
  - 1). If you won't respond to His loving whisper to turn that sin over to God
    - He will begin to shout through adversity – difficulty - misery
    - a). That whisper meant to turn you becomes a shout meant to jolt you

**Question:** Why would God do this? Because He loves us!

- A. He is going to do what is necessary to loosen our grip from that which will destroy us
  - 1). He doesn't want to go to extreme measures – but we can force Him too – that is our fault!
- B. He wants us to have joy in our life
  - 1). But the Biblical principle is this: Joy cannot co-exist with hidden sin
    - Sin in the life of a believer can ONLY produce misery in the end - it will steal all your joy
    - a). If it doesn't then God's word is wrong!

**Transition:** So David wasn't blessed until he stopped deceiving himself and acknowledged his sin to God

- A. Brings us to his confession (v. 5) – here was the turning point for David

## III. DAVID'S CONFESSION

**Ps 32:5 (ESV)** I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

### 1. David states the same truth in three different ways

- A. Acknowledged – did not cover – confess

#### I ACKNOWLEDGED MY SIN TO YOU

- A. All sin is ultimately against God – even when it is done to others
  - 1). We have rejected His authority – trampled on His commands
- B. So David goes to God to talk over his sin

**Transition:** What did he do when he went to God?

#### I DID NOT COVER MY INIQUITY

- A. He uncovered his sin – he brought it out honestly – laid it on the table

- 1). He was concealing it – he was trying to hide it – through rationalization and deception  
But all that is ended – the pain did it's work – David finally said "It's not worth it"
- B. Here is the same thing he said in v. 1 – coming from a different angle
  - 1). The blessed man is the one whose sin is not covered – v. 1  
That happens only when that man uncovers his sin – becomes honest about it – v. 5
- C. **John Blanchard:** Sins concealed by man are never cancelled by God.
  - 1). While it may be cancelled in the sense it won't send you to hell  
It will not be cancelled in the sense that it's not going to bring you pain

**Transition:** It will continue to cost you until you confess it – **NEXT POINT**

### **I WILL CONFESS MY TRANSGRESSIONS TO THE LORD**

- A. Confession defined = to agree with what God says about that sin
  - 1). It is humbling ourselves before God – I agree that what I did was a sin before you
- B. We hate that don't we – we want to justify – rationalize – I'm a victim – it's their fault  
"The man who smiles when things go wrong has thought of someone to blame it on."
  - 1). But confession is finally becoming honest before God – *I sinned – I did it – I'm wrong*  
"What I did was sin and that sin was against you"
- C. Then of course confession must be followed by forsaking that sin you've confessed

## **2. The great blessing**

**Ps 32:5 (ESV)** I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," *and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

- A. As we saw the "weight" of sin – the burden of sin was lifted off
  - 1). Before it was confessed it was a heavy burden – now sweet relief! It is gone!

**Transition:** So David being on both sides of this equation – concealing and confessing

- A. Now instructs us on how we should handle our sin before God

## **IV. DAVID'S COUNSEL ABOUT SIN**

**Ps 32:6–11 (ESV)** Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. <sup>(7)</sup> You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah <sup>(8)</sup> I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. <sup>(9)</sup> Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. <sup>(10)</sup> Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. <sup>(11)</sup> Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

### **1. Therefore = since this is true – since this is the result of confession**

- A. Since God will forgive – and will lift that weight off of you
- B. Therefore since that is the result then let everybody who knows Him pray like this...
  - 1). He is speaking to all God's people – He will forgive you so go to Him...
    - a). He will bless you – joy will return so go and take care of it with Him

**Ps 32:6 (ESV)** Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found...

### **1. He urges the godly to offer the prayer of confession of sin to God**

**But notice the urgency "While he may be found..."**

- A. The longer you cling to sin the harder your heart becomes towards God
  - 1). God gets harder and harder to find
    - a). You've created habits of disobedience rather than responding to God  
You've become independent – keeping God at arm's length to protect your sin

- b). You've become so dulled to His presence – so deafened to His voice
      - 1a). You just can't seem to get to Him any longer!!! Scary place to be
  - 2). I think of King Saul – God was speaking to him – directing him – he experienced God's power
    - a). He got proud – chose sin – and began to drift – God became fuzzier and fuzzier
      - Until eventually he couldn't find God at all
    - b). When he desperately needed instruction he ended up going to a medium
      - 1a). He couldn't find God – his heart was too hard
- B. The logic of David's argument
  - 1). Since confession takes the weight of conviction off of you and brings great blessing – do that!
  - 2). But don't mess around with this – there is an urgency – do it while God may be found

**Point:** If your heart is still tugging at you this morning – praise God!

- A. Respond now while He can still be found – while your heart still has some spiritual tenderness

**Transition:** Now David speaks of the blessings of the one who does respond to God in this way

## THE BLESSINGS OF THE REPENTANT

### 1. They have a sense of security in this life

**Ps 32:6–7 (ESV)** Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; *surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. <sup>(7)</sup> You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah*

- A. This is something those living in sin lack – when the waters of trouble rush at them
    - 1). They aren't right with God – they don't feel secure – they don't feel protected
    - 2). Willful, unconfessed sin will always make you feel isolated from God and vulnerable
 

**Is 59:1–2 (ESV)** Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; <sup>(2)</sup> *but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face* from you so that he does not hear.

      - a). Do you see why one in sin may feel God has forsaken them
        - He has hidden His face from them – they feel alone – isolated - vulnerable
  - B. Those who confess and repent of sin – know there is nothing between them and their God
    - 1). When the waters of trouble rush at them – they know God is their stronghold - protector
      - a). He controls those waters – He won't give me more than I can bear
 

**Is 43:1–2 (ESV)** But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. **(All that is me now. Redeemed. Called)** <sup>(2)</sup> *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*

        - 1a). Now I hide in Him – I let the rushing waters (circumstance of life) hit Him
        - 2a). He is that fortress I run into and I'm safe
      - a). Therefore I walk through this life not afraid of stray germs or stray bullets
        - 1a). My God has my day set out – nobody can take me out before that moment
        - 2a). He has the day I'm going and way I'm going – He's perfect – That's all up to Him!
  - C. Notice the difference – when concealing the sin – he was groaning all day
    - 1). After confessing the sin
 

**Ps 32:7 (ESV)** You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; *you surround me with shouts of deliverance.*
    - 2). **Selah.** Pause – consider this – let it cause you to act correctly
- Thought:** You do not want to face life feeling distant from God – this world has gotten too weird

- A. How great is it to walk through this life knowing He is in absolute control
  - 1). That He is our provider – protector and sustainer
  - 2). Waking up every day knowing that Ps 23 is true for you **THAT DAY**  
**Ps 23:6 (ESV)** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...
    - a). Everything that comes into my life today is filtered through those beautiful twins  
 I can face life when I realize that – now it becomes exciting
- B. When you're walking close to God – no sin separating – the promises are all so real to you
  - 1). When you choose to live in sin they lose their power
    - a). His face seems hidden – you feel so vulnerable – on your own

**Transition:** They have a sense of security in their life

## 2. They will enjoy divine guidance in life

**Ps 32:8 (ESV)** I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

- A. How great is this – the one who created life – who knows what it takes to make life really work
  - 1). Now offers guidance to those who don't stop that guidance with sin  
**Pr 3:5–6 (ESV)** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. <sup>(6)</sup> In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
    - a). Those who trust that His way is best for their life
    - b). Those who acknowledge Him in all their ways = live according to His ways  
 He will give understanding – He will make their paths straight

**Thought:** So God wants to guide us into a life that works – a life that is satisfying – filled with Him

- A. So trust Him – desire that guidance – and let Him guide you easily – don't be stubborn

**Ps 32:9 (ESV)** *Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,* which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.

- A. David writes from experience – he lived a year like a horse and mule
  - 1). Where God had to put in the bit and bridle and yank him through adversity and pain
- B. How much easier to respond easily – why wouldn't we want too!
  - 1). We know where He desires to lead us spent two months in Psalm 23
    - a). He wants to lead us to green pastures – still waters  
 A life with blessing – satisfaction – contentment in it
- C. But some don't want to trust His leading – don't want to acknowledge Him
  - 1). So they make Him yank them by adversity instead
    - a). If that is you this morning are you enjoying that? Makes no sense

**Transition:** David ends his argument – his exhortation to deal with sin powerfully

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## V. THE CONTRAST OF THE WICKED AND GODLY

**Ps 32:10–11 (ESV)** Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. <sup>(11)</sup> Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

### 1. Clinging to sin will only lead to many sorrows

- A. Plural – just like the one who confesses and forsakes their sin enjoy many blessings  
 The one who chooses sin and forsakes following God will suffer many sorrows

### 2. But those who simply respond to God by dealing with their sin

- A. They will walk in a conscious awareness of God's steadfast love surrounding them
  - 1). Doesn't that sound good – sin will stop that – deal with it

### 3. David finishes with a great exhortation

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**Ps 32:11 (ESV)** Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

- A. Be glad in the Lord! Stop trying to find your pleasure in sin – it's not there
  - B. Rejoice in the Lord! Here is true delight – here is true treasure
    - 1). Don't trade in true treasure for the fools gold of the world
  - C. Think it all through – the blessings in your life – you have God! You know God!
    - 1). Let that cause a shout for joy
  - D. This all comes to the upright in heart
    - 1). Not the perfect but those who are willing to deal with sin when they fail
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## CONCLUSION

### 1. What a Psalm!

- A. It calls us to choose what we are going to do with sin
  - 1). Cling to it and you'll never enjoy the blessings of God – you will lack His joy – His life
    - a). You will feel isolated and vulnerable – living life on your own
  - 2). Turn from it and watch what God will do in response
    - a). Secure – sensing His love surround you wherever you go!
    - b). He will begin to guide you – opening doors – closing doors – life that works

**Question:** Tired of living in the wasteland sin has produced – it's hidden God's face from you  
Removing your source of joy

- A. David has showed us how to move into blessing – green pastures and still waters