



Psalm 32 (2)¹

A pastor was giving the children's message during church. For this part of the service, he would gather all the children around him and give a brief lesson before dismissing them for children's church. On this particular Sunday, he was using squirrels for an object lesson on industry and preparation. He started out by saying, "I'm going to describe something, and I want you to raise your hand when you know what it is." The children nodded eagerly. "This thing lives in trees (pause) and eats nuts (pause)..." No hands went up. "And it is gray (pause) and has a long bushy tail (pause)..." The children were looking at each other, but still no hands raised. "And it jumps from branch to branch (pause) and chatters and flips its tail when it's excited (pause)..." Finally one little boy tentatively raised his hand. The pastor breathed a sigh of relief and called on him. "Well," said the boy, "I *know* the answer must be Jesus ... but it sure sounds like a squirrel to me!"

I hear many Christian speakers who say that all you need is Jesus. That Jesus is the way, the life and the truth. So people feel that just to know Jesus is all you need. But as I have said before I just love the book of Psalms in the Bible. I have probably read this part of the Bible more than any other. The Psalmists certainly knew God. To them he was indeed the truth. But they were also very honest about the difficulties they were having in life and were very open about their feelings. Jesus said:

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

John 8:32 [NIV-UK]

So yes Jesus is the truth, but I believe it is not just knowing him that sets us free, but knowing the truth about ourselves, in our innermost parts as well. And when we know ourselves in the light of Him who is the light of the world and the truth we will begin to be set free. So this morning I would like us to look at Psalm 32, which I believe holds a key to us moving towards wholeness in Jesus.

The first part of this Psalm, verses 1 & 2 I have called *Sins Forgiven*

For the Psalmist writes:

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

Psalm 32:1-2 (NIV-UK)

When we were looking at the Lord's prayer last year, we met the word transgressions. In many modern translations the word sin would be used instead of transgressions.

¹ This is the second sermon on Psalm 32



There are two main meanings of this word in the Bible. The first means to miss the mark such as an archer firing an arrow and missing the target. Whether you miss it by an inch or a mile makes no difference. In fact the English word sin comes from this meaning. And Paul clearly shows this meaning when he writes:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 3:23 [NIV-UK]

The second meaning of sin is the unfaithfulness to an agreement. To break an agreement already established between 2 parties is sin. In most of the OT this is the Lord's main accusation against the children of Israel, that they have not kept to the covenant between them. For the Lord says to the Children of Israel:

Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land

Hosea 4:1 (NIV-UK)

God's heart was continually broken by his children when they continually are unfaithful to him.

The word sin is probably not understood outside churches very well at all. For some Sunday newspapers will have headlines such as, '**Actress tells of her life of sin with a Bishop**'.

In a recent article in the Christianity Magazine which I take regularly, Lawrence Singlehurst, wrote: *So here are a few thoughts for 'sin'. Perhaps we could look at the principle of selfishness, 2 Corinthians 5:15: Christ died that we may no longer live for ourselves, but for him'. At the heart of the human dilemma is the principle of self-rule. Selfishness is a problem that everybody understands. It is common lostness. It is sin.*²

Whatever we call it, to be forgiven sin is a joyous thing within us. Some say that God has a problem with sin on his side. Whereas I think the sin problem primarily lies within us. It cuts us off from a relationship with God, within us. It also starts to tie us up or chain up our lives in ways that are not healthy or whole.

But whatever sin's effect, the amazing thing is that God took the initiative to deal with it. For the really good news of the Christian faith is that God so loved the whole world that he sent his only son. He not only came to show us what God is like, particularly his nature that is love. But ultimately he died on the cross and rose again from the dead to break the power of sin.

No wonder Wesley in his hymn 'And can it be' wrote:

My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

² Christianity Article - 'Getting Heard In Post Modern Britain'.



The second part of this Psalm, verses 3 & 4 I have called *Silence*

For the Psalmist writes:

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Psalm 32: 3&4 [NIV-UK]

How often do we keep silent when underneath we are really struggling. When we come into church or meet our friends, they will say, 'How are you?' And we reply 'Fine'. Even if we have had a very bad week or are in bad circumstances. And above all we will very rarely admit our failures to one another. Let alone actually confess our sins to any one. The Roman Catholic church has confession to a priest and then absolution. But in the Reformation this was completely thrown out, and we were taught we only need to confess our sins to God. Our sermons in the evening at Meadgate are following the Book of James. This is a very practical book and makes at times uncomfortable reading. In fact tonight I am preaching on James 4. But James writes in Chapter 5:

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16) (NIV-UK)

Interesting that he picks up this that confessing our sins to each other and getting off our chest so to speak is linked to healing. In his letter to unruly Corinthian church Paul points out that many of those who having been eating communion unworthily, which sin, have become ill.

For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. 1 Corinthians 11:30 [NIV-UK]

Many doctors now recognise that there is a strong connection between our minds and our bodies. They recognise that people with high levels of anxiety or stress may be more liable to illnesses such as cancer. Well maybe the Hebrews recognised that when we keep silent and don't deal with our sin, we may well become sick in our bodies. That our bones will waste away with all our groaning all day. And Paul clearly believed that many in the Corinthian church were sick due to their sin, particularly expressed at or through the communion service. If you read the background, the Corinthian church was moving powerfully in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But when they came together for communion that is a love meal, the rich people were scoffing their food while the poor went hungry. This is the opposite of love and compassion, and to express at the heart of a communion and love feast is a gross travesty.



As the Psalmist said the Lord's hand was heavy upon them and their strength was sapped away. Those who suffer from depression know what it is to have their strength ebbing away. As one who has suffered from depression I know this feeling. Now I am in know way saying that depression is directly connected to un-confessed sin. But when we don't deal with sin, it may have many of the same effects, such as heaviness, lethargy and a drain on our Christian joy.

But as a counter act to that I have called the third section of this Psalm, verses 5 & 6

Supplication.

For the Psalmist writes:

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. Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him. Psalm 32: 5 & 6 [NIV-UK]

The word supplication is not a common word but I wanted another word beginning with 'S'. The dictionary defines Supplicate as 'to make a humble request to someone or to plead'.³ This is what the Psalmist is doing for he humbly confessed his sin to the Lord. And the encouragement to all of us is to do the same thing.

In the Anglican church in Morning & Evening Prayer since the 1662 BCP there has been a general confession of sin, right at the start of the service. In the communion service is a confession fairly early on in the service. And all the congregation say these words in the new Common Worship form of the service:

*Father eternal, giver of light and grace, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour, in what we have thought, in what we have said and done, through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We have wounded your love and marred your image in us. We are sorry and ashamed and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light. Amen.*⁴

It is a good thing to confess our sins regularly to God even if we don't do so regularly in our church services like the Anglican church. For John writing says to early Christians:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. I John 1: 8 & 9 [NIV-UK]

³ English Dictionary - WHSmith/Collins

⁴ Common Worship - from web site: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/hc/preparation.html>



But finally lets look at the result of all this in the fourth section, verses 7 & 8 which I have called *Salvation*

You are my hiding-place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Psalm 32:7 [NIV-UK]

We may also add the last part of the previous verse where the Psalmist writes:

Surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him Psalm 32:6b [NIV-UK]

This is probably more clearly translated as:

*'Surely when the waters are in great flood they shall not reach him.'*⁵

Bearing in mind this Psalm from the OT written by Jews this would have taken them back to Noah's flood. For this flood was a judgement by the Lord on the sin of his people. But in the reflection of this the Psalmist is saying that if we confess our sins, the waters though they rise, as in the flood, will not reach us. This is not to breed complacency about sin but to high light the grace and mercy of God.

This follows round to where we came in, with the Joy of our Sins Forgiven. There is a real joy in knowing our sins are forgiven, and there for we have 'Peace with God' to quote the title of book by Billy Graham. The word Peace in Hebrew, shalom, means not just peace, but salvation, healing, wholeness, richness and so much more. All Hebrew nouns come from or are based on a verb. And the verb on which Shalom is based is 'to pay'. Remember the last words cried out by Jesus on the cross were **'it is finished'**.⁶ This was not a cry of defeat. But effectively it is paid. If you paid a bill in those times these words would be written across it effectively saying, 'paid in full'. Jesus on the cross paid in full all that was needed to deal with our sin, indeed as John the Baptist cried out, **Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world'**.⁷

Not only is this a joy to us, but the Psalmist says that the Lord surround us with songs of deliverance.

In Zephaniah the prophet writes: *The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.*⁸

⁵ Psalms 1-72 [IVP]

⁶ John 19:30 [NIV]

⁷ John 1:29& 36 [NIV]

⁸ Zephaniah 3:17 [NIV]



Here we see God rejoicing over us with singing as a response of his salvation towards us. This parallels this part of the Psalm. On a previous visit I sang one of my songs and the second verse goes like this:

Father I hear your songs; I hear them round my head today
These songs of love are flowing now; Songs of love that set me free⁹

Do we realise that the Lord is singing these songs of love and deliverance around us, when we follow the advice of the Psalmist refuse to keep silent but instead confess our sins to God.

One wonders how many people not just in our society but indeed in some of our churches are sick and depressed because they do not confess their sins and faults to God.

Let us be people who constantly go to the loving heavenly Daddy father we see in the Lord's prayer and deal with all the issues in our lives. Then we will receive not only the forgiveness of our sins, but the shalom, the wholeness and healing that was paid for by Jesus on the cross.¹⁰

⁹ 'I need your love today' - © Graham J Marriott – August 2006

¹⁰ Words 2458 - 15-20 minutes