

STRENGTH FOR THE STRESSES

“How Strength is Made Perfect in Weakness”

Study Number Seven – “The Problem of Guilt” – Psalm 32:1-5

The key passage of scripture that we are going to zero in on, when we come to this problem of guilt, is Psalm 32.

Psalm 32:1-5

Oh happy man whose transgression is taken away
whose sin is covered.

Oh happy man to whom Jehovah does not reckon guilt
(or iniquity).

And in whose spirit there is no deception.

When I kept silence my bones wasted away
through my groaning all the day long.

For day and night your hand was heavy upon me.

My moisture was turned into the drought of summer.

Selah.

I acknowledged my sin to you and I did not hide my guilt.
I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord
(or Jehovah)
and you have taken away the guilt of my sin.

We can make THREE OBSERVATIONS from these verses.

It's a fabulous truth for a Christian to recognize the fact that God in Christ has forgiven us—the debt of our sins.

When we come to Christ, we receive Him as Savior, it's a thrilling experience to know that the total debt of our sin has been paid.

Now the only problem is that oftentimes in Christian circles we find people, countless numbers of them, who actually recognize the fact that God in Christ has forgiven them. But they're still unable to forgive themselves and so throughout their lives they carry these feelings of guilt.

Actually it's a burden of inadequacy. It's a feeling of inferiority. It's something that's constantly seething underneath that keeps this person from really being a real freed person.

Judas probably could serve as an illustration of this fact. If he had returned to have sought forgiveness from the Lord, what a different biography we would have had of his life. He lived with the guilt of it and he took those pieces of silver and cast them into the presence of those men in the temple and said, "I have betrayed innocent blood."

Living with that guilt, Judas failed to go to the Lord and deal with it. Instead, he ultimately took his own life.

Psychologist Donald Tweedie said, "Guilt is fundamental to

almost every problem of the human personality. Guilt relates to anxiety. Guilt is manifested in an inferiority complex and guilt is also related to resentment.” (source unknown)

When we put those three ingredients together, we come up with a guilt problem. And if we can free the person of the guilt problem, we’re bringing them down the path to liberation and joy.

It’s the most beautiful experience when someone, in prayerful expression, prays for the person they hate. When they ask God to relieve them of the bitterness, and to actually mention the name of the person in prayer, that God might use them in the other person’s life.

Invariably when people are living in guilt, they are the people who talk the loudest and criticize the most about sins and inadequacies in the lives of others. Now why is that? They’re wanting to point the finger of guilt from them toward another person.

So when we’re around people who are super critical, who are always talking down other people, we can always be sure that they’re living in guilt themselves. The two just sort of naturally go together.

Now a person can’t develop normally. A person can’t develop in a healthy manner spiritually if they harbor the feeling that they’re guilty and sinful. It’ll restrict their relationship with the Father, which will constantly be strained because of the

guilt of this particular problem.

It'll affect the person both emotionally and mentally. And at the core of most of the problems in Christian circles is we find that guilt is probably the root cause of the greater problem. That's how serious this matter is that we're talking about.

Now we'll always find that a guilty person has a great deal of difficulty putting the finger upon themselves. When they talk to someone and they're wanting relief, they'll say, "I have a friend of mine who thus and also..." in order to get it off themselves.

It's so hard to own up to this honestly. We're really guilty of this point, because we create such a super-saintly attitude that some people have great difficulty relating.

Why is it that we fail to come before the Lord and deal with this problem of guilt? If the guilty person continues in the guilt and fails to admit weaknesses, and harbors something within his heart that he's ashamed to tell, this will ultimately lead to a neurotic condition.

That's a greater problem. There's a secret in his breast that will not let him rest.

Now the fear of being rejected is also another reason that the guilt-ridden person will never come and deal with the problem. The guilty person goes through life trying to prove the fact that he or she is alright when they know they aren't.

Is it any wonder that people in this kind of condition try to dodge serious confrontation about themselves? When people are super guilty, they sure do find it awfully easy to break counseling appointments. They just don't want to take time for serious reflection. They'll at a moment say, "Okay, I will." Then they have all kinds of excuses. There's not a willingness to deal with their issues head-on.

Listen to Isaiah the prophet as he speaks on this subject:

Isaiah 57:20, 21

But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace saith my God to the wicked.

Clyde Narramore in his book says:

(This Way to Happiness by Clyde Narramore)

People do not like to admit guilt. That's why the world is filled with so many methods of self-justification.

Guilt is a feeling of dread for past actions. It is a conviction that a wrong action has been committed in the past and there is no undoing that deed.

(source unknown)

The apostle Paul, talking about this subject, to keep himself

from any feeling of guilt on the vertical or the horizontal relationship, says:

Acts 24:16

...I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.

That tells us that that just doesn't happen with spirituality. That tells us that it takes exercise. It takes discipline. It takes determination. It's action on our part to deal with the problem of guilt in our life.

In one of our previous studies we talked about how the apostle said, "I have learned to be content." Part of growing up spiritually is to learn how to handle the problem of guilt in our life.

Now if we're really honest, we have some guilt. The question is, how grown up are we in our relationship to Jesus Christ in the way we're handling that?

Our answer to that shows how effective we are spiritually and how rapidly we're growing spiritually.

Paul tells Timothy that he ought to go out to battle for the right, armed only with faith and a clear conscience.

When he's writing to young Titus he says:

Titus 1:15

Those who are not genuine in their Christian confession and says that their very minds and consciences are diseased.

Now there are two kinds of guilt. We need to make this distinction before we look at these verses.

1. There's a guilt which comes from GOD and
2. there's guilt which comes from SATAN.

Now the guilt that comes from God is justifiable. And what our response should be to the guilt that comes from God is we ought to confess the sin.

And if we have a guilty conscience and the Lord's put His finger on something in our life, the best thing we can do is follow the admonition of Isaiah 1:18:

Isaiah 1:18

Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord.

Let's get this thing talked out and dealt with that we haven't dealt with in real life. And we could have real guilt from God. A guilt over something in our life that we haven't dealt with.

We're quenching the Holy Spirit. We're saying no to Him. We're unwilling to give up that unforgiving spirit. We're

unwilling to deal with that bitterness. We just love being bitter! And to think of praying for that person just devastates us.

Or perhaps it's something else that's really eating at us and we're unwilling to deal with it. And that's the Holy Spirit. There's guilt there and we're quenching and grieving Him as we continue to persist without dealing with that particular problem. And our spiritual life is going to be in jeopardy.

Actually the picture of that kind of guilt is going to be the picture that we see in Psalm 32. David was guilty of sin and the guilt he was feeling was divine guilt. God was really putting the buzz on him and there were some things that happened to him that he describes in this passage.

Now there is a second kind of guilt and this is a guilt from SATAN. And it's over the matter of forgiveness. Satan delights to keep us in the feeling of guilt after we've experienced God's forgiveness. And that renders us inoperative.

He wants to keep us carnal and childish and living in our failure and futile efforts. "In the squirrel cage" is how someone so graphically describes the guilt trip. It is going like crazy, but getting nowhere. We're in the squirrel cage of guilt. Satan just delights to have us there.

Now how does he get us on a guilt trip? It's always by retrospect. That's why Paul said in Philippians 3:12:

Philippians 3:12

Forget those things which are behind... [You can't do anything about it anyway] press toward those things which are in front.

If we've come to the Lord, we've confessed it and dealt with it, for heaven's sake treat it the same way the Lord treats it and forget it. Don't keep bringing out that dirty laundry and that dirty garbage to look it over again. It's all done and past and as far as God is concerned it's forgotten.

Satan will always move in retrospect to devastate our present experience with the Lord. For instance, he did this with Martin Luther.

When Martin Luther was sitting in his study one day Satan came in, in his mind's eye, and began to write his horrible record all over the wall. Then with a sneering smile he said, "Do you think God can forgive you of all of that?" And Luther writes in red letters all over the wall of his study, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin."

At that moment he dealt with his problem and he had victory. He could have let it seethe in his mind and he could have lived in guilt. That's what a lot of Christians do.

When we want to deal with the devil as he looks in retrospect and he uses guilt in our life, quote scripture. Thank God that we've been forgiven and liberated from that and let's move on

ahead.

So if it's guilt from God, confession ought to be our immediate response. If it's guilt from Satan, we ought to trust God that He's adequate to have forgiven us and so forget it.

So where it's **CONFESSION** when it's godly guilt, it is **TRUSTING GOD** when it's satanic guilt.

Now let's look at this particular passage a little more closely—verses 1-5.

The sin and confession on the part of David is recorded in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. David commits sin by pursuing a relationship with one of the wives of his men.

David was supposed to lead the forces into battle but he stayed home and so he was vulnerable to temptation in his inactivity. And while he was sacking out on the roof, a beautiful chick next door failed to pull the shade.

David pursues a relationship. And as he pursues this relationship, he finds out that this woman is the wife of one of his men who's out in battle. And she comes with the very sad news shortly thereafter that she's pregnant.

Now what's David going to do? Here he's used his position, he's used his power, he's used his privilege in a wrong way and he sinned.

Now how's he going to handle this problem? Well first of all, he sends out to the battle to bring Uriah home quickly. He's so loyal to his country, to his men and to David himself that he won't cooperate. He sleeps on David's front porch. David gets him drunk and hopes that he'll go home the next night, but he doesn't. David only has one alternative now. He has to wipe the guy out.

So he sends back word that Joab is to put Uriah up in the front and then the forces are to retreat so he's left in isolation as a clear open target for the enemy.

Uriah's life is taken. Now David is home free. He can marry Bathsheba.

Of course he does. The hope that everything's all covered. The only problem is he has this guilt problem. Finally David goes through the terrible experience of being revealed.

Now in 2 Samuel we read:

2 Samuel 11:27

that the thing that David had done, displeased the Lord.

Now he was unwilling to confess the sin so he carried the guilt for nearly a year. God then uses the prophet Nathan. Nathan comes in and tells David a little parable. And the little parable goes something like this:

“What about this man who lives next door? He’s only got one little lamb. And the guy next door is really wealthy and he has lots of lambs. And the guy next door has some friends come and visit him. In order to feed them lamb chops, he has to have some lambs. Instead of taking one of his own, he goes over and takes the poor guy’s one little lamb and sacrifices that and feeds his friends. What do you think about that David?”

David is a super saint at this point. “Man, that guy ought to be zapped and he ought to pay the other guy four of them for the one he took.”

Nathan just says, “You’re the man. We’re going to get honest here David. You know what you’ve done.”

It’s at this particular point when he realizes that he’s being confronted with the record and he finally has a feeling of release.

Ever known something about somebody and had to confront them with it? There’s relief that comes, actually, because they’ve been living in guilt so long.

There’s almost a sense of relief and release that somebody knows. That finally it’s been found out so that we can begin to talk and move toward repentance.

David, all pent up for a whole year, living with the guilt of this murder, of this immorality and everything else was probably

deeply relieved when Nathan said, “You’re the man.” In other words, “I know all about you.”

Notice **THREE THINGS** in these five verses:

1. **SUCCESS WITHOUT GUILT**—verses 1-2,
2. **SUFFER WITH GUILT** in our life—verses 3-4, and
3. **SOLUTION TO GUILT**—verse 5.

I. Success Without Guilt—verses 1-2

v. 1 Oh happy man whose transgression is taken away whose sin is covered.

v. 2 Oh happy man to whom Jehovah does not reckon guilt. And in whose spirit there is no deception.

“Oh happy man whose transgression is taken away whose sin is covered.”

“Oh happy man to whom Jehovah does not reckon guilt. And in whose spirit there is no deception.”

Now there are **FOUR BENEFITS** to a man who is living without guilt. We see them in these first two verses. This is the **FOUR-FOLD BLESSING** on a person whose life is open and honest and he’s living without guilt.

1. “whose transgression is taken away”

In other words, his sin has been dealt with. It’s “taken away.” It’s been removed from us as far as the east is from the west. It’s been cast into the depths of the sea and remembered against us no more.

Isaiah 53:4, 6

And he was pierced or wounded for our transgressions.
Bruised or crushed for our guilt and iniquities.

All we like sheep had wandered away, each to his own way.
The Lord has caused to hit upon him the guilt of us all.

2 Corinthians 5:21

Jesus Christ, made sin for us, who knew no sins, that we might be made the righteousness of God.

As Jesus Christ hung on the cross and He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” God allowed the multitude of our sin, the mass of our guilt, and the weight of our punishment to land upon Him.

A lot of times we just say Jesus was a sin-bearer. But stop and think about what that involves. He took the mass of our sin. Not only that, He took the guilt associated with our sin and He took the punishment for our sin in giving of His life. It makes us appreciate the cross a whole lot more when we can

see it in this perspective.

The man who's living without guilt has his transgression taken away.

The second blessing that belongs to a man without guilt:

2. his "sin is covered."

It is covered in the sense that it's become invisible to God.

In the Old Testament whenever a sacrifice was made, sin was covered in anticipation of Christ dying on the cross to remove sin.

And when we read in John 1:29 that "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," we have the Lord Jesus coming into the picture as that perfect sacrificial Lamb to not only cover, but to take it away. And so David expresses this second blessing that is his.

The third thing we see is a blessing to the "happy man" who lives without guilt is the fact that:

3. "Jehovah does not reckon guilt" against this man.

In other words, God is not marking down guilt in His book against this man who is open, who's honest, and who is living and properly handling guilt that's coming his direction.

The fourth blessing which belongs to those who are living without guilt is seen in the statement:

4. “in whose spirit there is no deception.”

A person who is guilty has to also be hypocritical.

A person who is living without GUILT is living without GUILF.

For instance, one of the things about Nathaniel that was really so great was that he got the greatest commendation that a man could ever get from the Lord. Do you know what the Lord said when Nathaniel came walking up to Him? He said, “A true Israelite in whom there is no guile.” (see John 1:47)

He's saying, “A true Israelite in whom there is no hypocrisy, no phoniness, no guile.”

And when He's saying Nathaniel is “living without guile,” He's also saying Nathaniel is living without guilt. There is no guilt in his life, so there's no need for hypocrisy. There's no need for phoniness. The two of these things go together.

In these first two verses then, there are FOUR BLESSINGS to a person without guilt:

1. his “transgression has been taken away,”

2. his “sin is covered,”
3. the Lord “doesn’t reckon guilt” to this person, and
4. his “spirit has no deception.”

Alright, let’s look at just the opposite.

What happens to a guy when he’s living in guilt? Verses 3 and 4 give us the description of somebody living in guilt.

II. Suffering With Guilt—verses 3-4

v. 3 When I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long.

v. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My moisture was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

“When I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long.”

“For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My moisture was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.”

There are **THREE THINGS** that are true of a person who’s living in guilt. David is sharing right here his personal experience of living in guilt.

One of the Old Testament commentators says this:

For as his own experience has taught David, he who does not in confession, pour out all of his corruption before God, only tortures himself until he unburdens himself of his secret curse. The more he strove against confessing, the louder the conscience spoke. And while it was not in his power to silence this inward voice in which the wrath of God found utterance, he cried the whole day for help.

(source unknown)

There are **THREE THINGS** that happen. There are three things that take place when we have guilt in our life:

1. we are affected **PHYSICALLY** by the burden of that guilt.

“my bones wasted away through my groanings all the day long.”

Oftentimes people who are wrought with guilt, also have physical problems.

Talk to psychologists and they'll say that many times at the back of the physical problems which they're facing, there are mental problems.

But because they're carrying a burden of guilt, there are physical ramifications that have come from that. And as a result, they're jeopardizing their physical bodies by carrying the burden of this guilt that ought to be presented to the Lord.

UNFORGIVEN SIN acts as a clog to vitality.

The guilty person is a bundle of nerves. The guilty person is in a constant depression. Their physical strength and resources are consumed endeavoring to live a double life.

They're touchy, irritable, miserable in the process of carrying the guilt and they don't want anybody to get too close. They're threatened by somebody who wants to get honest and who wants to share and wants to show up. Now what happened to David was that he was affected physically by the burden of his guilt.

What happens when we carry that bitterness around inside? Eventually ulcers are going to come from it.

What's going to happen when we continue to carry those resentments and harbor those things in our heart and we never deal with them? We never get them out into the open?

What happens with that jealousy? What happens with that secret pouting? What happens with those little fits of selfishness when we have to be pampered and sort of plead with to cooperate and go along? All of those things are going to lead to physical disorder.

2. We notice that David is not only affected physically, but he's also affected EMOTIONALLY.

“For night and day your hand was heavy upon me.”

David was affected emotionally because he realized that God had His hand on him. God in His providential dealing in David’s life was trying to bring him to a convenient moment when he would deal with this problem of guilt, but he wouldn’t handle it.

He avoided any serious confrontation or opportunity. He sensed the disciplining hand of God upon him in chastening but he wouldn’t respond in a favorable manner.

This is the way God deals with us. Providentially dealing with us to bring us to the point where we will deal with the problem in our lives that’s keeping us from being spiritual people like we should be.

3. God affected him SPIRITUALLY.

We notice this man carrying his guilt is his “moisture was turned into the drought of summer.” And if you’ve ever been in a position where you’ve been guilty, you know that you’re well dried up and you’re living in sand and desert. Right?

At a point where we failed to trust the Lord, at a point where we have yielded to temptation, and we know it’s wrong, the well dries up and we can feel it. And we know that when we get it straightened out, the well fills up and we’re just so excited and so thrilled and so enthused we just can’t believe what the Lord’s doing. We can hardly contain it.

And it's so fun to see somebody just come off a guilt-trip because they're just so excited and so thrilled and so enthused because the Lord's alive and has dealt with the problem. Everything's super great again! And that's what happens.

But when we're living with guilt:

1. we're affected PHYSICALLY,
2. we're affected EMOTIONALLY, and
3. we're affected SPIRITUALLY because the well's gone dry.

Out of our inner being cannot flow rivers of living water because we are parched in the problem of living in that guilt.

Now this isn't the way the Lord designed life to be lived. Please recognize that fact. He wants us living in verse 1 and 2—success without guilt really. Not living with guilt.

The solution's given in verse 5.

III. The Solution to Guilt—verse 5

v. 5 I acknowledged my sin to you and I did not hide my guilt. I said I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah and you have taken away the guilt of my sin.

“I acknowledged my sin to you and I did not hide my guilt. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord [or Jehovah] and you have taken away the guilt of my sin.”

Whereas in verses 1 and 2 he told us where he wanted to be, in verses 3 and 4 he told us where he was, and in verse 5 he told us how he got out of it.

1. “I acknowledged my sin to you”—that’s the first thing he did.

Romans 3:19 says that “...every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.”

2. “I did not hide my guilt.”

Proverbs 28:13

He that covers his sin shall not prosper, but whoso confesses and forsakes it, shall have mercy.

3. “I will confess my transgression unto the Lord.”

For we who are saints, 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

In 1 John 1:9 he says He not only forgives us our sin, but he cleanses from all righteousness? Ever wonder why he put both of those phrases there?

He not only forgives, but He cleanses us from the guilt associated with the sinning.

As a result of our confession, He cleanses us. He not only forgives our sin, but he cleanses us from the guilt associated with it. That's part and parcel of what should come when we come to the Lord in confession. He's promised to FORGIVE and to CLEANSE from the guilt associated with it.

Now the fourth thing we see in this fifth verse is the work of the Lord, as a result of the confession of David:

4. “you have taken away the guilt of my sin.”

There it is. The guilt has been taken away as a result of the three previous things that David did.

We've talked about the three things now that relate to this problem of guilt. If we have guilt in our life, we need to follow the admonition of Psalm 51. Those THREE THINGS are:

1. “create in me a clean heart, oh God,”
2. “renew a right spirit within me,” and
3. “restore unto me the joy of my salvation.”

If we have a problem of guilt, CONFESS the sin:

“create in me a clean heart, oh God.”

And then secondly, pray for a RIGHT SPIRIT, because it's been a wrong spirit that's produced this ugly thing in our life.

And thirdly, “restore unto me the joy of my salvation.” Fill that well up again so we can be overflowing with joy because of our salvation relationship to Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.

Our heavenly Father, thank You for the scripture's clear teaching with regard to this matter of guilt. We ask that we might be those who actually are Christians in whom there is no guile. Lord, and no guilt because we're walking openly and honestly in the light, there's not any secret, hidden compartments to our lives. You have run of the house. You have total possession of us in Your Spirit. We love You and praise You for Your plan to liberate us from this guilt. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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“How Strength is Made Perfect in Weakness”

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Notes

I. Success Without Guilt—verses 1-2

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v. 2 Oh happy man to whom Jehovah does not reckon guilt (iniquity). And in whose spirit there is no deception.

II. Suffering With Guilt—verses 3-4

v. 3 When I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long.

v. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My moisture was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

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v. 5 I acknowledged my sin to you and I did not hide my guilt. I said I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah and you have taken away the guilt of my sin.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
(ref. 1 John 1:9)

LESSON #2: He not only forgives, but He cleanses us from the guilt associated with the sin.

LESSON #3: As a result of our confession, He promised to forgive and to cleanse us from the guilt associated with it.

LESSON #4: If we have guilt in our life, we need to follow the admonition of Psalm 51: (1) “create in me a clean heart, O God”; (2) “renew a right spirit with me”; and (3) “restore unto me the joy of my salvation.”