

The Joy of Being Forgiven

Psalm 32

Once upon a time, there lived in a tiny house a little old woman and a little old man. They were very lonely, for they had no children of their own to fill their home with laughter and happy songs. One day, while baking gingerbread, the little old woman said to herself out loud, "I will make a Gingerbread Boy." So she mixed the gingerbread dough and rolled it out with great care. Then with a round cookie cutter she formed a head, and with her clever fingers shaped a little round body, with a pair of arms and two sturdy legs from the gingerbread dough.

"And now for the clothes," she laughed, as she poured some hot chocolate syrup over the gingerbread dough and smoothed it into a nice little jacket and a pair of trousers. With six fat raisins she made pretty buttons for his coat, and with pink sugar frosting she fashioned a little mouth. For his eyes she used two drops of sugar frosting and for his nose a tiny lump of sugar.

So begins the well-known story of the Gingerbread Boy. The story continues as the Gingerbread Boy hops out of the oven and runs out the open door shouting at the top of his voice: "A Gingerbread Boy, I am, I am; I can run from you, I can, I can!"

But while he's running from the old woman, the Gingerbread Boy nearly gets eaten by a sly old wildcat. A little bird in a treetop tells the Gingerbread Boy to run home before it's too late. That's exactly what he did. And when he got home, the little old woman pressed him warmly to her heart and whispered, "Welcome home, my little Gingerbread Boy!"

The Gingerbread Boy had learned the joy and the blessedness of being forgiven. But while the story of the Gingerbread Boy is just a children's story, the fact remains that sometimes we, in effect, run from God in the same way, daring Him to come chase us. But after we've grown tired and weary of our sin, we return Home to the Father, and we hear Him say, "Welcome Home!" And we, too, know the joy of being forgiven.

David, King of Israel, had done the same thing. He had run from God with all his might, first committing adultery with Bathsheba and then having her husband Uriah killed. He had done everything he could possibly do to cover up his sin, but

after nearly a year, God sent Nathan the prophet to David to confront him with the terrible string of sins he had committed. And David confessed his sin to the Lord.

There are two psalms that are believed to have been written immediately after Nathan appeared before David. One of them is Psalm 51, in which David confesses his sin. The other is Psalm 32, and in that psalm, David is telling his listeners that those who have had their sins forgiven can be truly happyô truly joyful!

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Yes, David makes it plain that God's forgiveness brings joy to the heart of the person who has been forgiven. Why? There is one main reason for this joy of being forgiven:

God's forgiveness establishes fellowship with God.

It is a fact of Scripture that sin separates from God. *"Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear"* (Isaiah 59:1-2). Even Confucius said once, "He who sins against heaven has nowhere left for prayer."

And that is what David experienced. He had once faced giant Goliath in battle, and said to him, *"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied"* (1 Samuel 17:45). And David had known the joy of triumph over his enemy. Over and over again God had given David the victory, in personal battles and military battles.

David had enjoyed many years of sweet, abiding fellowship with the Lord, but then because of his sin, his soul was in darkness. His soul was in darkness because he was separated from the Lord, Who is the Light! David had tried to live the other way, but now his experience taught him that there *is* no other way!

So he begins this psalm by singing, *"Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven!"* But actually, the opening words of this psalm could be better translated as "Oh! How happy is the man!" And David's heart is fullô in fact, it is too full to be emptied that easily. So he holds up this jewel of forgiveness to the light, and turns it around and around and examines it from many different angles.

One

First, he says, *“Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven.”* What is *“transgression”*? The word means *“rebellion,”* but if you translate it literally, it means *“to be torn apart or separated from.”* You see, the person who deliberately and willfully sins has rebelled against God, has torn himself from God and God’s holy will. We human beings do not fully understand the tragedy of sin until we see it as rebellion against God Himself.

But what happens to our transgressions? David says they are forgiven! But let’s be careful to understand what *that* means. The word *“forgiven”* here means *“lifted up, and carried away.”* Psalm 103:12 confirms this: *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”* How far is east from west? Can you measure the distance? No, it’s impossible! God has forgiven us; He has *“removed”* our sin; He has *“lifted it up and carried it away.”*

But how? For an answer to that question, hear the words of John 1:29, where John the Baptist is preaching and baptizing in the Jordan River. He sees Jesus, and John says, *“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.”* Jesus does it! Jesus restores fellowship with God. Jesus said once, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by Me.”*

Two

And then David says, *“Blessed is he... whose sins are covered.”* Here David twists that jewel of forgiveness just a little so we can see the light reflected from another angle. What does he mean by using the word *“sin”*? Now we know what sin is, or we think we know, but we need to remember that the Hebrews used several different words for sin, because there are different ways of sinning against the Lord. The word *“sin”* here means *“missing the mark.”* There is a New Testament word for sin which corresponds to this. You see, sin seldom hits what it aims at, and if it does, you can be assured that it is aiming at the wrong thing! Whatever exists in our lives that causes us to miss the mark, to miss the goal of the glory of God *that’s* sin!

And what happens to our sins? They are covered! They are hidden from the sight of God! That is what *we* try to do with our sins, isn’t it? We are so ashamed of what we have done, or what we are, that we try to hide from God. Adam and Eve tried to hide themselves from God in the Garden of Eden, but they could not. David tried to hide his sins from God, but he could not. We try to hide from God and ignore our sin, but we cannot. *We* cannot cover our sins from the sight of God,

but **God** can cover our sins from Himself! This is the mystery and the glory of the gospel! In Isaiah 44:22 God Himself tells us, *“I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”*

Peter preached in the Temple at Jerusalem: *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord”* (Acts 3:19).

I read somewhere that when there is any foreign or dead matter in a beehive that is too large for the bees to remove, they simply cover the matter with wax so they can't smell it or see it. When God covers our sin, He does much more than cover it with wax so He can't smell it or see it. Our sins are covered by the blood of Christ. He removes them from us completely, and draws us back into fellowship with Himself.

Three

But there is yet another angle to this jewel of forgiveness. Look at verse two. *“Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.”* The King James Version uses the word *iniquity* instead of *sin*. The word means *something twisted or distorted*. And that not only describes iniquity, but it describes what iniquity can do to your mind and heart and soul. You can become so twisted and distorted spiritually that you don't look anything like the image of God, as you were created. Iniquity, sin, works in your heart to produce a spiritual monster, a distorted, misshapen, spiritual wreck.

That's what sin did to David, and though he tried to ignore it, and push it to the back of his heart, in the short span of a year, he was different. Life became twisted and out of shape. Verses three and four describe his experience:

“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.”

And we do the same, the exact same thing, and we experience the exact same results. We may not have committed adultery or murder, but if we have sinned, we experience the same consequences. Life becomes boring. Our prayers fall unheard to the ground. Most of the time we don't want to pray at all, anyway. We lost our spiritual sensitivity. We no longer want to be around other Christians, doing

Christ-like things. Our Bibles go unread. We are no longer concerned and burdened for others.

And what does God do with our iniquities? The Bible says that He does not count them against us. The KJV says that He "imputes them not." What does that mean? It simply means that in the Lamb's Book of Life, those sins are not added to our account. It is as though we had never committed iniquity at all. It is as though our spiritual lives had never been twisted and distorted.

The message of John the Baptist as recorded by Luke was "*The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth*" (Luke 3: 4-5). Blessed is the person for whom the Lord does not count his sins against him! Blessed is the person whose life has been straightened out!

And unless our sins are taken away by the blood of the Lamb of God, they remain still. Unless our sins are covered by His shed blood they lie there still before the throne of God. Unless His blood has wiped out the record that is against us, that black page of the record of our sins stands forever. And we are separated from God forever and forever and forever! Only through the forgiveness of God can we have the joy of being forgiven of being forgiven!

Are you even now running away from God? Or is it possible that instead of running away from Him, you've just chosen to walk away? You've turned your back on Him and all the meaning and joy He offers, and you've turned your face and your life toward things that do not bring Him honor.

Jesus had His own Gingerbread Boy story, and it went like this:

And when he came to himself, he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my Father, and say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants.'"

And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:17-20).

Welcome Home, my little Gingerbread Boyô Girlô Manô Woman!

God is longing to do the same for you! He is longing to restore you to fellowship with Himself! He knows that is the only way you can have real joy in your life.

Do you have that joy? You can have itô todayô as you come to the Lord Jesus Christ confessing your sins, and giving yourself to Him. Won't you do that?