

Gamma 26

Study 5

Praying Our Confessions: A Study of Psalm 32 Part 1

1. What is the primary difference between "repentance" and "confession"?

Repentance is fundamentally a "change of mind," representing a complete 180-degree turn away from sin and towards God. It signifies a fundamental shift in one's orientation.

Confession, on the other hand, is the specific act of admitting and acknowledging one's guilt before God.

While distinct, confession is presented as a "crucial part of repentance" and is closely related to it. Last week's study focused on repentance, while the current one delves into the "actual confession".

2. What is the initial blessing received by one whose transgression is confessed in Psalm 32?

The initial blessing received through confession is forgiveness of transgression and the covering of sin. This means that God looks upon the confessing individual with favour.

The concept of forgiveness implies that the wrong committed is "lifted up and thrown away". When sin is "covered," it is put "out of sight," signifying that God chooses not to count it against the individual, essentially removing the judgment and punishment associated with it.

3. How does confession allow individuals to "live within the truth," as opposed to the alternatives?

Confession enables individuals to "live within the truth" by giving testimony to their sin, thereby avoiding denial, ignorance, or distortion of reality.

When one confesses, they "reconnect with the truth" and are no longer living a lie or hiding from God.

Conversely, without confession, one walks in darkness and lies, which hinders genuine fellowship with God. 1 John 5:6 states that if one claims fellowship with God while walking in darkness, they "lie and... do not practice the truth".

4. Describe the negative consequences of unconfessed sin on an individual's emotional or psychological state, as illustrated by David's experience in Psalm 32?

Unconfessed sin manifests as significant emotional and psychological pain. David vividly describes it as "bones wasted away" and his "strength dried up as by a heat of summer".

This imagery powerfully conveys the internal torment and physical decline that can result from hiding one's wrongdoing from God. David's experience illustrates his emotional state when he kept silent and hid from God.

One of the primary reasons we must confess is specifically "to avoid the pain of guilt". This pain is depicted as a persistent burden, likened to "carrying a heavy backpack" on one's life. When individuals deny their sin, this heavy feeling of guilt continues to weigh upon them.

b) Discussion - What are our own personal experiences when we did not confess our sins?

c) What are the positives that happen when we choose to confess?

Confession provides us a path to psychological freedom. It removes us from a highly negative situation, frees us from pressure, and significantly alleviates guilt. Even secular psychologists corroborate this, recognising that confession leads to mental well-being and relief.

Interestingly, studies have shown there are significant differences between partial and full confessions. Partial confessions tend to elicit worse responses for the individual on top of harsh judgment by others.

Individuals who fully confess and own up to their behaviour are the ones to experience the full benefit, even when the consequences are severe.

5. What does it mean for God to "cover" sin, and what important caveat is given regarding this concept?

For God to "cover" sin means to put it "out of sight" and not count it against the individual. This concept applies particularly to "Khata" (missing the mark), meaning that the divine standard has been fallen short of, but God removes it from his view. It also implies that the judgment and punishment for that sin are not imputed.

The important caveat is that while sin is covered and not counted, it is "not gone". The individual's sinful nature remains, and they must remember they are still a sinful person in the process of being transformed. Tim Keller puts it as "we must not imagine that we're completely free of it," as such pride would prevent confession and repentance.

6. How does Paul, in the book of Romans, connect the idea of God "not counting iniquity" to Christ's righteousness?

This theological concept means that instead of a "debit" of sin (where an individual owes God punishment), God issues a "credit" of Christ's righteousness through faith.

Paul explains that for those who "does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly his faith is counted as righteousness". This transformation from debit to credit, from sin and death to Christ's righteousness, is what empowers believers to confess gladly. As 2 Corinthians 5:21 states, God "made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we may become the righteousness of God".

7. Why is it essential to experience both "sorrow of guilt" and "joy of forgiveness" in the process of confession?

Without the "sorrow of guilt," there is no recognition of sin, and consequently, "nothing to forgive". The pain of guilt serves as a necessary emotional recognition of wrongdoing.

Experiencing both aspects leads to genuine relief and restoration, as the sorrow of acknowledging sin is met with the liberating joy of being forgiven and having one's spiritual account credited with God's righteousness.

8. What is the significance of the phrase "at a time when you may be found" (v6) in the confession by King David with God's patience?

The phrase "at a time when you may be found" highlights a degree of urgency and implies a "timeline" for confession. While God is "fully loving and patient," His patience is not infinite.

King David understands this and thus seeks to confess while He "may be found". The implication is that if confession is delayed indefinitely, there may be severe consequences, symbolised by "the rush of great waters," which signify judgment.

There are three options when one sins: confession, discipline by God (if one doesn't confess), or a "hardening of heart".

Takeaway

2 Peter 3:9-10 says:

*9 The Lord is **not slow** to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

May we be wise in turning towards God
for confession, repentance and restoration
while He is still patient with us.