

Psalm 32:1-7.

Amazing Grace

It was the perfect crime.¹

It was a beautiful springtime evening when kings were out in the field with their armies, regaining territories and borders lost during the winter months. However, this king decided to stay in the luxury of his palace and enjoy a respite from the many duties of running a kingdom. After all, he IS the king, and the kingdom belongs to him, and that includes all of its properties ... and all of its people. He deserves his rest, and his entertainment.

The king can have any woman in the kingdom whom he calls upon, and it would be considered as an honor by any father to have his daughter brought to the king. With all of this at his disposal, while strolling along the top level of the castle, his eyes fell upon the sight of a beautiful woman, bathing upon her rooftop. Rather than look away, he engaged in a gaze that escalated into desire. The King decided he wanted this woman, and called to have her brought to him. Such an offer from the king cannot be refused. However, there was one issue that stood in the way of the desires of the king: this woman was married.

With her husband away from home, tending his duties in the army, the King used his power to seduce and engage the woman for his own pleasure, without regard for her marital state. After all, her husband is not aware of this dalliance and there is no chance of his coming home. However, there was one part of this drama that the king did not expect: pregnancy.

The Cover-up

It was now necessary for the King to take action to avoid a scandal. As the commander of the armies, the King recalled the woman's husband from the battlefield with instructions for him to visit his wife. Everyone would assume the child to be the appropriate product of their marriage, and the husband could then return to the field.

However, because of his loyalty to his comrades in arms, he could not bring himself to spend time with his wife while his friends were engaged in battle, and respectfully requested to return to the field.

Now, the necessity for cover-up is escalating. The sin of the king will be revealed

¹ 2 Samuel, Chapter 11.

when the husband testifies to his celibate visit. Therefore, the king gave instructions to the man's commander to place him in the front lines of the battle where he would be killed. The man died.

The cover-up was now complete. Everyone would assume that the child was conceived by the woman and her husband, and the King would be showing mercy to her by bringing her into the palace. An event that had the potential to bring criticism upon the king would now bring only praise. His secret was secure. Nobody was aware of his sin except for the woman. At least that is what he thought.

The Indictment.

Unlike the other kings in the land, this king had set himself apart by his faith in God, and as a man of faith, his sin was all the more grievous. He knew that the LORD was also aware of his sin that was a securely-kept secret from all others. The king now entered the darkest period of his life. While the woman grieved her husband and the unborn child grew, the King knew of the displeasure of the LORD and his guilt grew within him, stifling his joy and separating him from his relationship with God. When her time of mourning was over, she came to the palace, but the joy was gone. The king's conspiracy hung over him like a dark cloud. There was a price to be paid for the security of his egregious and yet-secret sin, one that would dramatically change their lives forever.

The king's closest friend and ally was a priest by the name of Nathan, a godly man who had a gift of perception, and the LORD revealed to him how he knew of the circumstances of the woman Bathsheba's presence in the palace. Using a carefully chosen presentation, the priest confronted David, the King of Israel to tell him that his sin is known by the LORD and by himself.

The Sentence

David knew that he deserved a sentence of death for what he had done. He had seen the wrath of God in action, and could only assume that he would receive such wrath. However, the LORD's response is instructive: God does not dispense his wrath upon the faithful. We find the "sentence" that the LORD levied upon David in Nathan's response to David's confession:

2 Samuel 12:13-14. *And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. ¹⁴Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.*

The sentence is two-fold, and is the same sentence that is levied upon every person of faith who commits sin.

1. David's sin is forgiven. God has promised to grant forgiveness of sin to everyone who sincerely places their faith and trust in Him.² Though unconfessed sin dramatically diminishes the quality of our relationship with God, sin no longer has the power to condemn a person of faith to an eternity separated from Him.³ We did not come to salvation through the cessation of sin, but through its forgiveness. Consequently, we will not lose our salvation due to sin. Few of us have committed a sin as grievous as David's adultery and an act of murder to cover it up, yet sin is sin, and this example illustrates that God forgives sin. We can praise God for this gift of forgiveness that covers all of our sin, from the smallest to the greatest.
2. David will experience the full range of consequences of his behavior. His sin, that he thought was secure in its secrecy would be known by all. The sin nature that he demonstrated would be passed on to an unfaithful son who would rise up in violence against him. The culture of adultery that he demonstrated would remain in his household, and would be practiced among his unfaithful wives. Though the LORD has forgiven our sin, we will still experience the full consequence of its impact on us and upon those we have relationships with.

THE BLESSING OF FORGIVENESS

Psalm 32:1-2. A PSALM OF DAVID. A MASKIL. *Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ²Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.*

It is generally believed that David wrote Psalm 51 prior to Psalm 32. Psalm 51 is a testimony to David's confession, and upon recognizing the LORD's forgiveness, David wrote of his promise to "teach transgressors Thy ways" with the purpose of bringing them to salvation.⁴ This Psalm is referred to as a "didactic" poem, a reference to its teaching purpose. David wished that those who would read and hear his words would learn from his own experience and would be moved to live a life of obedience so that such sin and its consequences can be avoided.

David used four well-encompassing words for sin in this short passage.

² John 1:9.

³ Romans 5:8.

⁴ Psalm 51:13.

- The first, rendered *transgressions*, *peshah*, referring to one's breaking of an established standard, and in this case, that standard is the Word of God.
- The second word that is rendered sins, *kata*, refers to one's missing the mark. An illustration of this is missing the bull's eye when throwing a dart at a target. Though the player is aware of the target, any number of distractions causes him to miss. The target for David, as for any Christian, is obedience to the LORD.
- The third word, is not evident in the King James Version as the second word, *sin*, is *awon*, a reference to something that is clean being corrupted by impurity. The purity of a life that is obedient to the LORD becomes corrupted when a person of faith allows impure thoughts and actions into their behavior.
- The fourth word used that is rendered *deceit* refers to one's building a conspiracy to make them look innocent when they are not.

It may be instructive to note that each of these four words refers to acts of sin against the LORD, and are relevant only for people of faith. A person who is not of faith lacks the standard of transgression, lacks a target of obedience to shoot for, is already corrupted, and lacks an innocence to protect. However, all of these sins are quite relevant for a person of faith who is subject to that standard, has been given a target of obedience to aim for, has been cleansed of their sin, and can find innocence when living an obedient life.

However, people of faith still sin. David states that "blessed", or more accurately, "joyous" is the one who finds the LORD ministering to them in forgiveness of sin. Those who are lost find no forgiveness. Those who are saved are not destroyed or rejected by the LORD, but rather, have an opportunity to find complete forgiveness and a fully restored relationship with the LORD following confession and repentance.

David knew what it was to have a joyous relationship with the LORD, and through the commission of his sin with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite who he murdered, he knew what it was to have that joy destroyed and his relationship with the LORD blocked. Then, following his very public confession and a commitment to repentance, he found that joy and relationship restored. Consequently, David wrote this Maskil to teach anyone who would read or hear his words of the wondrous forgiveness of God.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF UNCONFESSED SIN

Psalm 32:3-4. *When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah*

The commission of sin effects people of faith in a far different way than it affects those who have not placed their faith and trust in God. To the lost, the commission of sin is simply a choice in life, one that is made relative to the cultural mores of his/her community. Often the commission of sin comes with a reward, such as in the act of theft. Choices are shaped by consequences. Had King David not been a man of faith, his sin would have given him little reason for angst since he obtained what he desired and did so with little consequence. Those four words for sin that David used in the previous verse would not have had any impact on him since they all involve a relationship with God. God is not surprised when a “sinner” sins, since that is their nature. He might even work through that experience to show Himself so that the individual can come to faith.

However, a person of true faith in God will respond to their own sin in a much different manner. Each of those four words for sin are very relevant for a true Christian. A person of faith has made a commitment of obedience to the LORD, and all sin becomes a sin against the LORD, due to that commitment. Furthermore, when one comes to faith, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in their spirit. The Christian is taking that Holy Spirit with him/her through the sin experience, and the Spirit serves to then convict them of that sin. Sin serves to break down the relationship between the individual and the LORD, and compromises the blessings that the LORD can and will provide. For example, the sin of gluttony can compromise the LORD’s intended blessing for health and long life.

When David sinned against the LORD he found the joy and excitement of the relationship he had with God replaced by darkness and sorrow. He could not find joy in his relationship with the LORD when he was behaving in such a sinful and rebellious manner.

First, he kept silent. He attempted to hide his sin and orchestrated an elaborate conspiracy to maintain his secrecy, a conspiracy that cost the life of Bathsheba’s husband.⁵ That silence also included his lifestyle of praise and worship of the LORD. It was a time when the prayers were little more to him than a hollow

⁵ Note that it was unlikely that Bathsheba knew anything about David’s instruction to her husband’s commanders. Following Uriah’s death, Bathsheba went through the grief process before moving into the palace. There is no evidence that her grief was not real. Also, it would not be typical for a woman, much less a mistress or concubine, to be engaged in the decisions of the king.

echo. When we are engaged in the depths of sin, it is much harder to hear the still-small voice⁶ of the Holy Spirit as we break off communication ourselves. One of the frustrating experiences for a Christian is when our prayer life is compromised by our sin. It is not God who closed the door of prayer. It is we who barricade the door.⁷

His bones wasted away. This is a reference to the experience of emotional depression. Depression is like a set of sunglasses that, when worn over the eyes, darken the perception of the light that is around us. Everything we see and know is filtered through the lens of depression. For David, it is likely that he could not enjoy eating since there was such a significant theological meaning behind the courses of the Jewish meal.

The LORD's hand was heavy. When David was in the slough of despond,⁸ he was kept there by his guilt. The Holy Spirit was providing for him the whole range of guilt and remorse that he deserved because of his egregious disobedience. His was no little sin. The Mosaic Law contained a litany of offerings that were meant to serve to atone for sin, but none of these would atone for sins of deliberate commission (or omission). David had no hope of forgiveness without the LORD doing so on his behalf. His sins of the past found forgiveness without issue, but now the rules had changed. He had committed adultery, conspiracy, and murder, and engaged others in his act. How could he find forgiveness? Until his encounter with Nathan, he had no hope. He only felt the heavy "hand" of the LORD as God constantly reminded David of his sin.

His strength was sapped. A person of faith finds that their strength truly does come from the LORD. When one breaks off their relationship with God, the source of that strength is also broken. David feels like the source of his strength is gone.

Selah. This word is presented in its translated Hebrew form, simply because we are not sure of its exact meaning. However, based upon the context of when it is used, it is likely an instruction to pause to consider the gravity of what has just been said. David has just given a comprehensive exploration of the consequences that un-repentant sin has upon a person of faith.

⁶ 1 Kings 19:12.

⁷ Revelation 3:20.

⁸ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

THE NECESSITY OF CONFESSION

Psalm 32:5. *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. Selah*

David's restoration came after he made the decision to confess his sin and hide it no longer. Though the ultimate consequence of sin, separation from God for eternity, has already been dealt with through God's love and grace, and "bought" by Jesus' atoning death on the cross, the mechanism of forgiveness is not quite that simple. A person of faith cannot continue to live in sin and expect the LORD to continue to bless them for it.⁹ In order to be restored to a proper relationship with the LORD and to be restored to the full measure of blessing that He provides, there are at least two deliberate choices that must be made:

1. **Confession.** One must first come to terms with the nature of their sin, and declare it for what it is: willful disobedience to the LORD. Such a declaration must be genuine and sincere, recognizing that the sin is an inappropriate behavior. If one will not acknowledge their own sin and confess it before the LORD, no restoration is possible.
2. **Repentance.** True repentance is characterized by the sincere, willful, and complete desire for the cessation of the sin as one turns from it and back to obedience to the LORD. Confession has no power without repentance, since confessing to a sin and remaining in it does not bring restoration. Repentance can be difficult when one has immersed themselves in a sin that has power over the individual, such as an addiction or repeating behavior. Consequently, repentance is not so much characterized as the cessation of the sin as it is turning away from it and seeking the LORD's help in completing the process of cessation.

THE PROMISE OF HIS PROTECTION

Psalm 32:6. *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.*

While one is immersed in sin, their relationship with the LORD is broken. This is as true for a person of faith as it is for the lost. The difference is that the person of faith has the resource of the Holy Spirit who can convict them of their sin and draw them back.

⁹ Romans 6:1.

Consequently, when are the times when the LORD “cannot be found.” David calls upon the faithful to continue to pray to the LORD while He is findable. Many people of faith have a poor or non-existent prayer life, and fail to engage in prayer until they are at the point in their experience where there is simply no other source of help. By then one may be immersed in their sin and, with their relationship with the LORD broken, it is far more difficult to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

David encourages people of faith to keep the avenue of prayer open, speaking to the LORD through thoughts and prayers at all times, both in good times and difficult ones. Such a prayer life serves to improve one’s relationship with God, and hold them more firmly within the hand of God’s protection. It is far easier to resist sin when one is immersed in prayer to the LORD. David notes some benefits to maintaining a prayer life:

When the waters rise. A continuous prayer life strengthens one’s faith in the LORD and diminishes the authority of the stressors of this world. A person of faith is not as easily injured by the “fiery darts” of this world when they are protected by the armor of God.¹⁰ When difficult times come, the avenue of prayer is already open, and one can turn to the LORD for help, for wisdom, and for His protection. We might be reminded of the words of Isaiah:

Isaiah 43:2-3a. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. ³For I am the LORD thy God.

There are two ways a person of faith can “walk through the waters,” a reference to experiences that have the power to overwhelm. One can walk through them alone, without the protecting and comforting influence of God, or one can walk through them with the LORD who blesses the faithful during the process. Isaiah notes that when you walk with the LORD the waters “they shall not overflow” you.

We recently learned of a young man who was notified that his wife and children were in a car accident, t-boned by a truck by a young man who was texting on his phone, and ran through a stop sign at full speed. The wife and two of his children were killed instantly, and his other two children suffered and died two days later. This man had the incredible experience of suffering through this tragedy as he managed the funerals and burials of his young and vibrant family. How does one survive such a seminal tragedy without the LORD? Often people

¹⁰ Ephesians 6:10, ff.

put blame on the LORD when such things happen, asking questions like, “Why did you allow this to happen?” The deaths were caused by sin, the sin of the young driver who took the lives of the family by his own act of negligence. The LORD is there to provide love, direction, wisdom, and comfort during the experience. As the prophet wrote, “I will be with you... for I am the LORD your God.” If this man is a man of faith who is living in relationship with the LORD, he has a resource that can serve to get him through it. If this man is not a man of faith, that resource simply does not exist.

Psalm 32:7. *You are my hiding place you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah*

The hiding place. Living a life of obedience to the LORD is literally a “hiding place” from this world. When one comes to true faith, they make the decision to repent of the sins of this world, embarking on a new path in life, a path that is “pressing toward the mark”¹¹ of the calling of God. Living a life of obedience to the LORD serves to separate them from much of the spiritual and physical dangers of this wicked and perverse world, and in this way, the LORD protects us from its influence, providing this form of a hiding place.

Living a life of obedience also surrounds us with “songs of deliverance,” as the promises of the LORD and the evidence of their fulfillment is evident in everything that we see. Before David committed the sins of adultery and murder, his life was filled with the songs of deliverance of the LORD as he witnessed a sequence of events where the LORD protected him and delivered him from his enemies. He was always filled with praise and songs for the LORD, and is credited with composing many of the Psalms that we use in singing praises to the LORD today. During his period of apostasy, those songs were quiet, and any words of praise were quite hidden from his lips. However, David wrote this Psalm to teach one more aspect of God’s deliverance: deliverance from sin itself.

After David confessed of his sin to the LORD, to Nathan, and to the people, David found his relationship with the LORD fully restored. David spent the remainder of his days celebrating the LORD and doing what he could to teach the message of salvation and deliverance to the people. Still, his sin did have a tremendous impact on his life, one that was never the same again after such a grievous act. The LORD promised that he would not profit from his sin, and indeed, the son who born to the union of David and Bathsheba died shortly after birth. As prophesied, violence would not leave his home. His son Absalom would die in battle in an attempt to seize his father’s throne. David was not freed

¹¹ Philippians 3:14.

of the consequences of his sin. However, confession and repentance placed himself in a position where his relationship to the LORD could be restored, and he could live the remainder of his days experiencing the blessings of the LORD.

We have all sinned and fallen short of God's purpose for our lives.¹² We all need forgiveness. Many times, we hear the testimony that "What I have done is too great, God cannot and will not forgive me." However, as we see from the experience of King David, God's grace is greater than our sin, period. There is no unforgivable sin other than to go to the grave without ever turning to the LORD in faith. David teaches us that there is a tremendous consequence to bear when we maintain unforgiven sin, but even the most grievous sin can be forgiven when we approach the LORD in true faith, confessing of our sin, and following that confession with a repentance that can rely on the help to the Holy Spirit to attain.

Let us not go through life missing out on the blessings of the LORD simply because we refuse to confess our sin, and repent of it. Also, let us not go through life burdened down with guilt for sin that has been forgiven. Like David, let us celebrate the forgiveness that the LORD has given to us, seek to live in obedience to Him as we experience his love and blessings for us, and seek to teach others of God's wonderful and amazing grace.

¹² Romans 3:23.