

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for July 31st and August 3rd, 2014

Psalm 32:1-5

Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. 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.

Dear children of God

The *Dennis the Menace* comic strip, which first appeared in 1951, has been in syndication for over 60 years. Dennis is a mischievous, but lovable, freckle-faced five-and-a-half-year-old boy with a blond cowlick and a knack for getting into trouble. One of my favorite Dennis cartoon is one that pictures Dennis kneeling by his bed with bowed head and hands folded. The caption underneath reads: "Lord, I'm turning myself in."

We get a chuckle out of that, but how necessary it is for you and I to turn ourselves in to the LORD by confessing our sins to him. You've heard the expression that confession is good for the soul. How true that is! Our burden of guilt is too heavy to bear. If we try to bear it, or deal with it ourselves, it will crush us and eventually destroy our faith. We need to turn ourselves in and give our sin and guilt to the only one who can carry it, and did carry all of it. We need to give it to our God, our Savior, and our Brother, Jesus!

King David experienced soul crushing, faith suffocating guilt. His sins of murder and adultery are well documented in 2 Samuel chapters 11 & 12. For nearly a year David lived in a state of unconfessed sin. Psalm 32 is his confession. What a relief it was for David to finally face his sin and experience the weight of his guilt being lifted off his shoulders by the only One Who can deal with human sin and guilt effectively. Today we wish to explore how truly devastating unconfessed sin is, and discover once again that truly ...

Theme: Confession Is Good For The Soul!

- 1. Guilt will always crush us**
- 2. Forgiveness always lifts us up.**

1. Guilt will always crush us

David's guilt led to a near total collapse, spiritually, emotionally, and medically. David would have been almost pronounced clinically depressed if he were living in our day. He would probably be treated with medication. He would be placed into intensive therapy. Physically his strength was sapped, which indicates his health was very poor. Day and night God's hand was heavy upon him, which indicates that his conscience was so plagued by what he had done that he wasn't sleeping properly either. He felt his guilt right down to his bones. David was virtually a non-functioning human being. Above all, David, by refusing to admit his wrong and turn to the Lord for forgiveness, was destroying his faith and in danger of losing eternal life.

Unless properly treated, guilt can do these things to a person. In a wonderful book, written by a conservative Lutheran pastor, called *Counseling at the Cross*, the author, in speaking of the symptoms of unconfessed guilt, writes: "They may [appear to] be mild or dangerously severe. They may appear as medical problems. They may appear as depression. They may appear as some kind of -holism, alcoholism,

workaholism, obsession, compulsion and the like. For this reason many people confuse the symptom with the problem.”

Much that may be wrong in our lives ... be it anxiety, depression, a low sense of personal worth, substance abuse, strife in our relationships, is very often not the real issue. So much of it can be traced right back to guilt. From my experience as a pastor, guilt is very often the root cause of many if not most of our problems, many more than we may even realize. How did David deal with his guilt ... at first? Our text tells us he *kept silent*. In other words, he refused to face up to it. He didn't confess it.

How do we deal with guilt? Do we maybe at times give our guilt the silent treatment. Refuse to talk about it? Avoid confessing it? Isn't it true that the very last thing in the world our sinful human nature wants to do is to honestly admit its guilt before God and our fellowman. But my friends, if we don't confess it, either directly to God, or to our pastor or someone else, it will become like a cancer on our lives.

But you know we really can't ignore our sin and guilt. Guilt is so powerful and so consuming that one way or another we will deal with it. But, whether we deal with it in a healthy way, in the only way that works, in the only way that gives real peace, is quite another thing altogether.

As we've said, David dealt with it by remaining silent. As a result everything in his life was in a downward spiral. It wasn't until the LORD sent his Pastor, the prophet Nathan, to David that he finally turned himself in. If we were to go back and study chapter 12 of 2 Samuel one thing we would notice is that when Nathan spoke to David he didn't do so in a vague way. He didn't point out the fact that David was a sinner in general terms. Rather, he brought God's Law to David in a very pointed way. In other words, he addressed the specific sins that were crushing David and were manifesting themselves in such destructive ways.

In order to deal with unresolved guilt, we need to get at the particular sin or sins that are at the root of the problem. That sometimes is not so easy. We all have guilt. We have it as husbands and wives, as fathers and mothers, as pastors and church members. To one degree or another, our lives suffer from guilt. In one way or another, because of it, our relationships with loved ones, and especially with God, suffers. Our guilt doesn't change the way God feels about us. His love is constant. But it may change the way we feel about him. Satan wants to make us think that our sins are so many and so large that we can't possibly trust God to forgive us. Satan leads us to deal with our guilt in unhealthy ways that only make matters worse, and threatens the welfare of our eternal souls.

2. Forgiveness always lifts us up

Friends let us turn ourselves in ... and see what happens! What happens is that God leads us back in time to a lonely and dark hill. The Bible calls it the *Place of the Skull or Calvary*. What do you see! You see three crosses, with Jesus nailed to the middle one!

What is he doing? He's bleeding, suffering, dying. Why is he suffering so? He's suffering for you? For me? For all? He suffering for my sins and yours? What sins exactly? He's suffering for trying to control your life like our friend Bill. He's bleeding for the resentment and grudge you may hold for someone who has treated you badly. He's loaded down with all the ugly and unkind things you've said to your family members. For the lies you've told your teacher or your boss. He's dying for sins that haunt your past, such as King David committed.

Is there any sin you've ever committed for which He's not being punished in your place? No. None. Everyone is being paid for! Not one is left. All are being removed as far as east is from west. How do you know full payment has been made? Because Jesus said so! He said **IT IS FINISHED!** My sins deserve hellfire, and Jesus was cursed with the full punishment of hell when He died for me!

Is there any reason for you not to search your heart and life and honestly confess your sin? No reason at all. Jesus loves me! He takes away my sin and always leaves His love in its place! What about the many sins you commit of which you're not even aware? Do you have to remember everyone of your

sins in order to have them forgiven? No! Jesus even forgives the sins I don't know about. The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses me of **all** sin!

What happens when you confess your sins, either directly to God or to your pastor or to some fellow Christian? God takes the load away. He bore my sins in His own body. They're all gone! What about tomorrow and the day after? Can you really keep going back to His cross again and again? Yes! Jesus promise is true for everyday of my life. He says: **“Whoever comes to me I will never drive away”** - John 6:37.

What can you finally say as a redeemed child of God who daily turns himself in and honestly, with God's help, confesses your sin? I can say what David said: *Blessed (Happy) is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. AMEN!*