

Devotion

We live in a society that is filled with people who are looking for acceptance by their family, by their friends and or by their peers. It is amazing how much energy goes into the pursuit of this acceptance. This longing for acceptance, for significance is what fuels things like the fashion industry. It is what causes people to walk into a shop and pay the most outrageous price for a garment that has cost a few dollars to get into the country. It is what drives us to succeed, to seek that all-important promotion, to ascend the ladder of ambition. However, it is interesting to note how few people are interested in their acceptance before God. This is the motivation behind the writing of Psalm 32 by King David.

He had found himself in unfamiliar territory when at home resting he found himself looking at a beautiful woman and before he knew it he had committed adultery and followed it up with murder. For a whole year he tried to function as if everything was just fine but it didn't work out as he had hoped for. The breakthrough came via the prophet Nathan which brought David to the place of confession. Four things are worth noting from this psalm:

1. **The blessing of acceptance** verses 1-2. David opens the psalm with a series of beatitudes. We are blessed when our transgressions are forgiven. The word transgression means to cross the line separating obedience from disobedience. When David crossed the line he went through a process that every one of us go through when we sin. In 2 Samuel 11: 2-4 we read that David saw a woman bathing. Then we read that David inquired about the woman, which is a polite way of saying that he coveted her for himself. Lastly we read that he took her and lay with her. This is exactly what happens to us when we step across the line and transgress. David was declaring his relief at knowing God's forgiveness. His sins were covered which is another way of saying his sin was no longer counted against him. Sin is an archery term which means to miss the mark. Iniquity means to be twisted which is exactly what happens to our character when we step across the line.

2. **The cost of unforgiveness** verses 3-4. For a year David worked hard to try and pretend that his life was on track, when in reality it was a disaster, because sin is always costly. The fact is that sin is invariably much more costly than what was first anticipated. Charles Spurgeon puts it so well when he said; "God does not permit his children to sin successfully." John Donne wrote; "Sin is a serpent, and he who covers sin only keeps it warm, that it may sting more fiercely, and disperse the harm and venom more effectively."

The problem with unconfessed sin is that it haunts our minds and our bodies. I am sure that many of the illnesses that afflict so many people can be tracked back to them carrying a burden they were never meant to carry – the burden of unconfessed sin, the burden of guilt. This is why when someone comes into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus they will often describe their first response as if a great weight was lifted off their shoulders. That weight is the weight of unconfessed sin and its associated guilt.

This was the problem David faced and it played havoc with his spiritual, physical and emotional health. He had become a physical wreck underlined by the expression that his bones were growing old and groaning all the day long. Then we see that his vitality was turned into the drought of summer. When we are carrying unconfessed sin it saps our spiritual and physical vitality and we end up with lives that are cracked and marred. This is why God will chasten us to get us back into a right relationship with Him, because being out of fellowship with God is not only costly but hard.

3. **The way of deliverance** verses 5-7. The way of deliverance is not complex. We first of all need to be honest with ourselves, because unless we are we are never going to be honest with God, even though He already knows the truth. Then we need to confess our sin or sins specifically to God. Then we need to accept God's forgiveness, which includes forgiving ourselves, and move on. Once we do this the way is open to again enjoy fellowship with God. David began to once again know a communion with God through prayer and praise. It was as if he was trumpeting the chorus: I'm forgiven! This forgiveness is then marked by a trust in God for His ongoing victory in our walk with God, and for His care and protection.

There is something that we should note here in amongst all this elation at being forgiven. Forgiveness does not necessarily deliver us from the consequences of our sin. David's life after his sin with Bathsheba was marred by family upheaval and intrigue. I am sure there were times when David asked himself the question: "Was my sin really worth all the trouble and heartache that has come as a consequence of it?" I think we can all answer that one fairly quickly.

4. **The joy of obedience** verses 8-12. There were three things that happened as a result of David rejoicing in being right with God. He could know

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PLEASE TURN OVER

Devotion continued

God's instruction. One sure way to know if someone is in tune with God is if they are teachable or not. The Christian out of fellowship with God is often marked by an arrogance that is difficult to deal with. Then the obedient Christian can know God's guidance and will gladly follow. They are not like the mule who was marked by stubbornness. Then last but certainly not

least the obedient Christian will revel in the mercy of God. When we do we will be glad and shout for joy in the Lord.

If you have been drifting in the wilderness of unforgiveness then God is saying to you to come back into a right relationship with Him, come back into the joy of the Lord today!

POINTS TO PONDER

Praise

- We are rejoicing in the Lord for a tremendous Christmas edition of Challenge where we printed and distributed 102,000 newspapers.
- Praise the Lord for the opportunities we are gaining almost by the month to go into new countries. This coming March we are hopeful of moving into Nigeria with our first edition of Challenge.
- We continue to thank God for our third edition of Challenge subtitled Destiny newspaper for India where we have printed 100,000 in English We praise the Lord for the opportunity next edition in April to print 100,000 in English and 100,000 in Hindi.
- Praise God for new staff joining the Challenge team. In April this year John Palandri will be joining our team as our Impact Mission Team Director amongst other duties.
- We praise the Lord for some very encouraging and exciting gifts we have received via farmers putting wheat into the silo on our behalf for overseas projects. We have had three such gifts which have amounted close to \$30,000 for which we are enormously grateful.
- We praise the Lord for the churches, individuals and Christian business people who continue to support the work of Challenge faithfully throughout each year.
- We praise the Lord for our partners around the world in South Africa, Botswana, Malawi, Kenya, South and Central America, North America and New Zealand.



Prayer

- Please be much in prayer for the expansion of Challenge in Australia. We would love to see the Australian edition of Challenge increase to 75,000 plus per month. We have been praying for this goal now for some time and found it very difficult to see the numbers of paper increase.
- Pray for the upcoming Soccer World Cup edition of the paper as we are getting much interest but as always the challenge will be to fund the print run which will be substantial. At this stage we anticipate somewhere around 500,000 papers for the Southern African region and then probably another print run for Malawi and Kenya. We will also be doing a Spanish edition of South and Central America and at this stage we have not finalised exact numbers.
- Continue to pray for John Palandri as he raises personal support. We are endeavouring to raise about \$50,000 to cover his allowance plus other expenses that are tied up with that. We would really value prayer for John as he with his wife Jenny prepare to come into a faith ministry organisation from his secular work. This is never easy and the enemy will always do what he can to frustrate the task.
- Please continue to pray for the finances to cover all our needs for Southern and Central Africa, Southern and Central America, North America, India and also with Australia and New Zealand and the other various countries around the world we are working in.
- Please pray for Carl Carmody and Andrew Trezona as they head to New South Wales for a couple of weeks for promotion and development. The plan is to focus more clearly on the Eastern seaboard this year so we can see the paper increase significantly in those states.

MY RESPONSE

Post to: Challenge Literature Fellowship, PO Box 978, Cloverdale WA 6985 or Fax to **(08) 9453 3006**

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