

From Tragedy To Triumph

Text: Psalm 32:1-11 & Psalm 51:1-19, cf. 2 Samuel 11 – 12

Series: The Psalms [#25]

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Theme: **God's Grace Triumphs Over Our Sin.**

Introduction

One spring evening a king looked out from the roof top of his hill top home. He saw a very beautiful woman. He asked his servants to find out who she was. She was the wife of one of his soldiers who was with his unit in battle. The king had the woman brought to the palace. He slept with her. In the morning this closely held secret sin closed with her going home.

But ... sometime later this woman sent word to the king that she was pregnant. His sharp mind developed a plan to cover up his sin. He ordered her husband home from the front so there would be no suspicion when the child was born.

But ... this soldier was a soldier's soldier. He came to the capital as ordered, but refused to go home while the rest of the troops were still risking their lives in battle.

So ... the king hastily came up with a new plan. He sent the soldier back to the front carrying orders to the commander to put this valiant soldier in the front line of the fiercest battle and quietly tell his fellow soldiers to retreat when the battle picked up so this soldier would be killed.

And so ... it happened.

And so ... the first secret sin was kept a secret.

But ... later God sent a prophet to confront the king. Then the sin was out in the full light of day, and has been for the last 3,000 years. The king was the second king of Israel, King David. King David, whom God chose to rule because he was "a man after His own heart."¹

We may shake our heads at the extent, the seriousness of these sins—lust, adultery, lying and murder. Yet then we read in Scripture that if we keep all of God's commands but stumble in one point we have become guilty of all the law.² We may breathe a sigh of relief that our sins aren't public like these sins of the king. Yet then we read in Scripture that nothing is hidden from God's sight, that all things are open and laid bare before Him who is our holy, righteous judge.³ Sin always is known to and an offense to holy God. Sin can be very appealing, but never is a pretty sight when it is brought out into the full light of day.

We are tempted and we sin. Sin is a tragedy—all the time, every time. Some people take sin lightly, thinking God *understands* that we are not perfect. Others are plagued by past as well as present sin, thinking that they never can be cleansed and fully accepted by God.

The two Psalms we are looking at today that came out of that experience of King David, help us. In Psalm 32 and Psalm 51 God shows us both the tragedy of sin and how to triumph over it. He shows us how to move from tragedy to triumph.

It's not by pulling up our bootstraps and trying harder. We know that doesn't do the job. The answer, the triumph is from and through God, from and through His grace. *God's grace triumphs over our sin.* As we explore this, we begin with our sin, with...

The Problem Or Our Sin.

The first thing to come to terms with here is that all of us came into the world with a sinful nature. Adam's first sin not only made him sinful, but all of his children, including us, inherited that flawed, sinful nature from him. So King David wrote here in Psalm 51:5, "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." The apostle Paul wrote that "in Adam all die,"⁴ that we are *dead* in our sins,⁵ or do not have any spiritual life with God.

Because of this makeup we cannot even clearly understand what we are really like on our own.⁶ This is true of all of us because, as Paul tells us, our minds and consciences are defiled,⁷ defiled by our sinful nature. Because this is who we are—imperfect and sinful—we cannot change this condition ourselves. As Job put it, "Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!"⁸

Yes, sinful people do many nice, good things. There are many people who, on their own, or following a code of morals or a man-made religion, have integrity, concern for others, and are self-sacrificing.

When Jesus taught His disciples about prayer in Matthew 7, he told them "If you then, *being evil*, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (11). Notice that Jesus told His disciples, those who believed in and followed Him, that they were *evil*. His point was that their basic nature was sinful and certainly a contrast to God, who is the "only One who is good."⁹ And so the first thing to come to terms with about our problem with sin is that all of us have a sinful nature.

And then, we see through David, that we choose to sin. Look at the language King David used here.

- Psalm 32:3, "my sin."
- Then Psalm 51, verses 1-4. Note the phrases,
- "My transgressions" (two times, verses 1 and 3);
- "my iniquity" (verse 2);
- "my sin" (two times, verses 2 and 3);
- "I have sinned" (verse 4);

- “[I have] done what is evil” (verse 4).

Nowhere does he say, “It’s not my fault, I’m just too weak.” Or, “It’s not my fault, she is just too beautiful.” Nor, “It’s not my fault, the Devil made me do it.” The record of these sins in 2 Samuel 11 shows that all along the way David made choices, bad choices, sinful choices. When Nathan the prophet confronted him with these sins, David’s immediate response was, “I have sinned against the LORD.”¹⁰

I don’t think we really need to be told or reminded that when we sin, we have chosen to think, say and do things that are not holy and good, but sinful. We know that it is because of our choices that we “have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”¹¹

And not only do we choose to sin we also, like David, choose to cover up our sin. There are all kinds of cover ups. From the countless alleged conspiracies such as the 9/11 attacks being planned or at least allowed by the U.S. government, to the real cover ups, such as the Watergate cover up.

Here we are talking about real cover ups of real sin. In Psalm 32:3 David tells us he kept silent about his sin. The record in 2 Samuel 11 shows deliberate secrecy and cover up—even to the point of murder. King David was far the first to cover up his sins. It started with the first sin and sinners as Adam and Eve tried to hide from God in the garden.¹² Their son Cain killed his brother Abel and tried to cover it up.¹³ Moses killed an abusive Egyptian task masker and covered up his body in the sand.¹⁴ And so it has been and is.

Why do we do this when the Bible tells us that God has “placed our iniquities before [Him], our secret sins in the light of [His] presence”?¹⁵ And also that “... be sure your sin will find you out.”¹⁶ Why do we persist with these deceptive, ultimately useless and destructive attempts? Why do we not understand God’s word through Isaiah,

“Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD, and whose deeds are done in a dark place, and they say, ‘Who sees us?’ or ‘Who knows us?’”¹⁷

Why? The principle, the driving force of covering up our sin is ingrained in our sinful and self-focused nature. In John’s gospel, chapter 3 Jesus said, “... everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed” (20).

Our problem with sin is rooted in our nature, expressed as we choose to sin, and then the tendency to cover it up. All of this, as well as the end result of sin, is devastating. Look at the graphic description of the physical devastation David suffered as he covered up his sin from others and did not confess it to God. Psalm 32, beginning at verse 3,

“When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer” (3-4).

In the Psalm just before this one, Psalm 31, David gave another description, beginning at verse 9,

“Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body also. For my life is spent with sorrow and my years with sighing; my strength has failed *because of my iniquity*, and my body has wasted away.” (9-10).

Sometimes God afflicts us physically because of our sin. We see that here in David. We know from God’s Word that not all illnesses, indeed, most illnesses are not the result of personal sin. When Jesus and His disciples saw a man who was blind from birth, the disciples asked Jesus a typical question of the day, “... who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”¹⁸

Emotional distress is another devastating result of sin. Turn ahead to Psalm 38, verse 18, where David wrote, “For I confess my iniquity; I am *full of anxiety* because of my sin.”

The greatest devastation of sin is that it keeps people separated from God now and, unless it is faced and dealt with in God’s way, will keep them separated from Him and under judgment forever.¹⁹ All of this is part of the problem of our sin. But *God’s grace triumphs over our sin*. So, now let’s look at...

The Provision Of God’s Grace.

Think about God’s everlasting lovingkindness and grace. The Old Testament word lovingkindness and the New Testament word grace share the ideas of God giving us what we do not and cannot ever deserve; of God’s pure, unconditional love; of His powerful and steadfast love in action.

King David opens his prayer to God in Psalm 51 with

“Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.”

He knew full well he did not deserve and could not earn God’s forgiveness. He, like Job, ourselves and everyone else, could not, cannot change the unclean to clean.

God’s lovingkindness and grace flow from His character, and so are both great and everlasting. They are greater than our greatest needs. Psalm 33:5 gives this description, “the earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.” In other Psalms, it is described as extending to, as high as the heavens.²⁰ God, Psalm 103:8 tells us, abounds in lovingkindness. God’s grace is more than abundant, and is more than sufficient for you.²¹

It is great and it is everlasting. Psalm 136 is a call to give thanks to God. *Why?* Because His lovingkindness is everlasting. Each of the 26 verses ends with that reassuring, joyful shout, “His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

This truth is wonderful. The experience of it is more than wonderful, it is life changing, destiny changing as it triumphs over our sin. But it is not automatic to everyone. This triumph is a gift of God to only those who seek Him, who truly call on him in faith.

Look at King David in these Psalms. 32:5, “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’; and You forgave the guilt of my sin.” Then in Psalm 51. Verse 1, he asked God, according to His lovingkindness, to blot out his transgressions. Verse 2, he asked God to wash him thoroughly of his iniquity. Verse 14, he asked God to deliver him from “bloodguiltiness,” or the death penalty he deserved for the murder.

So it has been and is to receive God’s grace that triumphs over our sin. Back to Psalm 32. After his own testimony in verse 5, King David applies the principle to everyone in verse 6. “Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.” Then turn ahead to Psalm 86. David asks God to be gracious to him. On what grounds? Verse 5, “For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.” Circle, underline, highlight, memorize this verse!

“For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.”

Salvation from and triumph over sin has always been by God’s grace through faith. Paul stated this repeatedly in his letters. For example, in Romans 9, in verses 9-10,

“if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

No matter what you have done or have not done, no matter how many or few secret sins you still are hiding, no matter how much or little you think of yourself, God’s grace is available to you. It is more than abundant to you if you truly seek God through Jesus Christ.

And remember too that God is not only waiting for You with open arms, He is actively reaching out to you. As Jesus said, “the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”²² *This is the grace that God provides for you, Grace that triumphs over your sin.* For you who have never come to Him. For you who have wandered away from Him. For you who know Him but are weighed down by past or present sin.

The Power Of God's Grace.

What does this grace accomplish? Let's focus on the power of God's grace in three critical, wonderful realities. First, forgiveness. Forgiveness of your sins, of all your sins. Let's go to our text. Psalm 32:1, "How blessed [how happy, how joyful] is he whose transgression is *forgiven*, whose sin is covered!" Verse 2 expands the picture,

"How blessed [how happy, how joyful] is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity [or, does not charge iniquity against him], and in whose spirit there is no deceit!"

Drop down to verse 5, "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'; and You *forgave* the guilt of my sin."

This word *forgive* is a beautiful word. The basic meaning is to lift, to carry, to take or take away. How blessed, how happy, how joyful is the person who has his sin and its guilt lifted up and taken away. This is what God does by His grace for everyone who comes to Him through faith in Jesus Christ.

One of the most beautiful pictures of forgiveness is found in Psalm 103, also by King David, in verse 12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He [God] removed [picked up, carried away] our transgressions from us." We turn to the New Testament. Colossians 2:13-14 tells us,

"When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He [God] made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

And in 1 John 1, verse 9, "If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

When we really let this truth take hold of us, we can understand and join the shout of praise with the hymn writer,

"My sin—O, the bliss of this glorious thought, My sin—not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!"

Then along with forgiveness, our sins being lifted up and taken off of and away from us, the power of God's grace brings cleansing. David wanted to know with certainty that he was cleansed from his sin, and to feel that he was cleansed. Look at his prayer again. Psalm 51:2, "*Wash me thoroughly* from my iniquity and *cleanse* me from my sin." Now verse 7, "*Purify* me with hyssop, and I shall be *clean*; *wash me*, and I shall be whiter than snow." Verse 10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God ..."

You see, he not only felt the weight and the filth of his sin, he felt the loss of intimacy with God. He knew that only those with clean hands and a pure heart could stand in God's presence.²³ In the first days of the church the apostle Peter called to, begged people to "repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."²⁴

For believers the reality of being cleansed of all our sins gives us confidence. Even though Satan's forces try to place lies and doubts about being cleansed of our sins, the power of God's grace *cleanses* us from *all* sin. So we can, as Hebrews 10:22 tells us

"draw near [to God] with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts *sprinkled clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

God's grace is powerful to forgive, to cleanse and also to restore us. Let's return to David's prayer for restoration. Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, *and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*" Skip to verse 12, "*Restore* to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit." He wanted to be forgiven and cleansed, but also to get back on track, to then stay on the track of a life of obedience and faith.

He sees, He knows this will lead him, and all who are restored, to, 32:11, "be glad in the LORD... and shout for joy"; to, 51:8, "hear joy and gladness"; to, as we see in both Psalms, teach others God's way and see sinners converted to God.

For those who have not received God's forgiveness and cleansing, this means to be restored, to be brought into the relationship that God designed us to have with Him. For believers it means, as with David here, being restored, brought back into full, open fellowship with God. There is experience and process here. Paul addressed the process in Romans 12:2,

"do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

In Ephesians 4 he put it this way,

"...lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." (22b-24)

Yes, God's abundant, powerful grace brings forgiveness, cleansing and restoration to you as you reach out to Him and receive it.

Conclusion.

God's grace triumphs over our sin! If you have never reached out to God, admitted your sinfulness, asked Him to forgive, cleanse and restore you by His grace through Jesus Christ, talk with me, Pastor Tyler, one of our Elders or someone you know has received this wonderful, amazing grace of God. And do that today. His grace will triumph over your sin.

If you are a child of God, if you have known His grace, but have wandered off on your own, come back to Him now. His grace will triumph over your sin. If you have believed Satan's lies that some of the sins of your past or present are too big, too serious for you to get back to feeling forgiven, cleansed, renewed and joyful in God, reject those lies as you talk with God. His grace will triumph over your sin. If you are living faithfully and with integrity before God, thank and praise Him that yes, His grace has been and will continue to be triumphing over your sin.

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- ¹ 1 Samuel 13:14.
- ² James 2:10.
- ³ Hebrews 4:13.
- ⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:22.
- ⁵ Ephesians 2:1-3.
- ⁶ Jeremiah 17:9.
- ⁷ Titus 1:15.
- ⁸ Job 14:4.
- ⁹ Matthew 19:17.
- ¹⁰ 2 Samuel 11:13.
- ¹¹ Romans 3:23; cf. Psalm 14:2-3; Isaiah 53:6; Ephesians 2:1-2, etc.
- ¹² Genesis 3:8-10.
- ¹³ Genesis 4:8-12.
- ¹⁴ Exodus 2:11-15.
- ¹⁵ Psalm 90:8.
- ¹⁶ Numbers 32:23.
- ¹⁷ Isaiah 29:15.
- ¹⁸ John 9:1-2.
- ¹⁹ e.g., John 3:18; Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:11-15, etc.
- ²⁰ Psalm 36:5; 57:10; 103:11.
- ²¹ 2 Corinthians 12:9; 1 Timothy 1:14.
- ²² Luke 19:10.
- ²³ Psalm 24:3-4.
- ²⁴ Acts 3:19.

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