

SERMON NOTES
Psalm 32
“When You Sin”

Intro:

- If you are a Shaun White – you don’t need any second chances
- *His second-best run on the snowboarding half-pipe was better than anyone else’s best efforts – and his second run was even better – including a trick that no one else can do*
- When you are consistently near-perfect – and head-and-shoulders above your competition – you don’t need second chances
- *Not many of us can relate to Shaun White and his consistent near-perfection*

- Torah Bright of Australia – on the other hand – appreciates second chances
- *She completely messed up her first run down the half-pipe and was in last place among the 11 finalists*
- But in this event, you get a second chance – and your first run won’t count against you
- *Torah Bright took full advantage of her second chance – and she won the gold medal convincingly with a great run – going from last to first*
- Or take the case of Anja Paerson – who suffered a horrific fall in the downhill – *and then somehow came back the next day to win the bronze medal in the Super Combined*
- Many of us have felt like Torah Bright or Anja Paerson– seriously messing up in life and desperately needing a fresh start and second chance

- And then there’s Lindsey Jacobellis
- *For 4 long years she has been looking forward to redemption after blowing a gold medal in the Turino Olympics with a show-boating move at the end of her race*
- But in the semifinals of the Snowboard Cross Race this year, she went off course and clipped a gate after almost colliding mid-air with another racer
- *She was disqualified – later finishing 5th – with no medal*
- Sometimes even a second chance is not enough
- *Have you ever felt like Lindsey Jacobellis – still messing up – still awaiting redemption?*

- Of course, failing to medal in the Olympics is not a sin – it is just a disappointment

- *Sometimes we need fresh starts and second chances not just because of a mistake or a disappointing performance – but because of a devastating sin*
- *As in the case of Tiger Woods, for example – who publicly confessed his sins and adulterous affairs during a Friday morning press conference*
- *Actually, I don't think Tiger ever used the word sin to describe his – well, his... sins*
- *You see, the word “sin” implies guilt before God – and Tiger didn't go there*
- *He acknowledged that he hurt and disappointed a lot of people – principally his wife and children – but I didn't hear him acknowledge any guilt before God or any experience of God's forgiveness for his sins*

- ***What do you do when you sin and need forgiveness and a fresh start?***
- *Tiger did not exactly come clean and repent of his sin after his first affair*
- *It was not until he got caught and publicly humiliated that he admitted his infidelity and lack of integrity and selfishness and lack of self-control*
- *In that, he is perfectly human*
- *King David didn't come clean and repent right away either – it was not until his sin was exposed through the prophet Nathan that David finally confessed his sin to God and repented*
- *Most of us are no different*
- *We don't confess our sin and repent until we get caught or exposed or get in serious trouble or lose something of value – and even then, sometimes we don't humble ourselves and admit our need for help in overcoming our sin*

- ***What do you do when you sin?***

- *It's not a question we like to think about*
- *We would rather think about accomplishing great things for God and experiencing the blessings of living a godly life*
- *But the day will come – if it is not already here right now for you – when your spiritual destiny will hinge on this question: **What do you do when you sin? How do you handle moral or spiritual failure that could ruin your life?***

I. KEEPING SILENT AND COVERING UP SIN

- ***What do you do when you sin – or when you sin the same sin again and again?***
- *Do you immediately confess the sin to God and to any other persons you have harmed?*

- *Do you immediately repent of your sin and rely upon the power of the indwelling Spirit to overcome that sin?*
- *Do you draw near to God in confidence that His mercy and Christ's shed blood are sufficient to restore you to a close relationship with God?*
- *Probably not*
- *Instead, you probably do what David did:*

Psalm 32:3-4 ³There was a time when I wouldn't admit what a sinner I was. But my dishonesty made me miserable and filled my days with frustration. ⁴All day and all night Your hand was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water on a sunny day ⁵until I finally admitted all my sins to You and stopped trying to hide them.

- *David stubbornly and dishonestly refused to admit his sin*
- *"I kept silence"*
- *Not merely, "I was silent" – but "I kept silence" – this speaks of a knowing, willful, determined resolution to remain silent and to conceal his sins*
- *Some of you are involved in sins right now that your husband or wife knows nothing about // your best friends know nothing about – you are stubbornly and dishonestly keeping silent about those sins*
- *Not only that – you are actively – creatively – diligently seeking to hide those sins*
- *Instead of taking great pains to protect yourself from temptation – you are taking great pains to conceal your sinful activities so that you will not get caught by your wife or by your boss or by a co-worker or by your parents or by a friend or by another church member*
- *I know – I've been there and done that – as most of you know*
- *In fact, every now and then I have a dream – a recurring nightmare, actually - - that I am secretly investing in stocks again and am frantically trying to cover my losses without anyone finding out*
- *Hiding our sins can take an emotional, psychological and even physical toll on us*
- *We live in a constant state of anxiety / insecurity / fear / shame / stress*
- *We live in constant dread of being found out and exposed and condemned*
- *Our physical health suffers and our strength is sapped – like a plant withered by the scorching heat of a tropical sun*

- Yet there is something more than our conscience bothering us that is going on
- David says: ***For day and night God's hand was heavy upon me***

Very few people knew the extent of my troubles, failures and sins in 1994 – and of course, I was trying to keep it that way

--but God knew

--*I was avoiding accountability to anyone else – but God was calling me to account – and He would deal with me with a severe mercy*

God used financial failure, attacks on my character, personal rejection, loss of my ministry, and loss of nearly all material possessions – *as a severe mercy to tame my soul*

- If you are trying to hide or cover-up a sin in your life – I urge you to repent before you find out the hard way what it is like for God's hand of discipline to be heavy upon you
- *You see – when it is God's hand of discipline that is heavy upon you – there is no place to run // no place to hide // no refuge to flee to for safety*
- The alternative to keeping silent and hiding and covering up our sins is to confess our sins

II. CONFESSING SINS

Psalm 32:5 ⁵Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them.

I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD."

And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

- **Notice the three words for sin used here (and in verses 1-2):**
- **"Sin"** signifies to miss the mark – to turn away from the true path – to fall short of God's standards of righteous conduct – often referring to our sinful desires and inclinations toward disobedience
- **"Transgression" or "Rebellion"** signifies a willful trespassing or crossing over a boundary or doing what is prohibited
- **"Iniquity" or "Guilt"** indicates morally distorted actions worthy of judgment
- Far more is involved here than saying to God: *Sorry, I made a mistake*
- **To confess our sins is to acknowledge that we missed the mark because it is our nature to please ourselves rather than God – we willfully rebelled against**

God's laws and boundaries and authority – and thus we are guilty and deserving of punishment

- **And note: “I confessed ALL my sins to you”**
- **One of the most common mistakes – and indicators of a lack of true repentance – *Instead of confessing ALL our sins – we confess only what others already know or are likely to find out***
- **That is not true confession – that is merely a more devious form of hiding and covering up our sins**

Recovery begins with facing the truth – the whole truth -- about our sin -- and ourselves.

- I discovered in 1994 that there is a dark side to my human nature that I was not in touch with
- *I had been a Christian for most of my life and had been living a Spirit-filled life for many years – so my dark side didn't show itself very often*
- But it was there even though I was not aware of it
- **My failure forced me to acknowledge and face the truth about my dark side**
- **I denied it at first – I kept saying: *I don't know how this happened – it's so out of character for me***
- And – when walking in the Spirit – it was out of character
- *But when walking in the flesh rather than in the Spirit – I was quite capable of being deceitful // weak in faith // greedy // envious // impulsive*
- In fact – there was an addictive personality lurking in the darkness of my sinful nature that I needed to deal with by going through the 12 Steps of AA
- You have a dark side, too
- *No matter how long you have been a Christian*
- What is your dark side capable of doing during times of stress or conflict or crisis or fear or spiritual complacency?
- Our sinful actions proceed from our sinful nature which still has the potential to dominate our lives even after being born-again
- *If we do not face the truth about our dark side – and guard against it -- we are vulnerable to being blindsided by it*
- **Confessing our sins involves facing the truth about our dark side**
- *This requires humility and poverty of spirit*

- *One of the reasons why we keep silent about our sins and try to hide our sins is to save face*

We don't want people to know the worst about us while we are still at the bottom of the pit – we'll come clean after we dig ourselves out of the hole and make our life look a little more respectable

But the poor in spirit don't pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and then let God take care of their needs

--the poor in spirit come to God just as they are: destitute / empty / sinful / defeated / broken / powerless / hopeless

--the poor in spirit don't clean up their mess and then turn their life over to God – the poor in spirit turn their life over to God while it is still a mess

Some of you have never made a mess – but many of you have

--some of you are still stuck trying one thing after another to clean up your own mess before you turn your life over to God

--Give it up! Turn your life over to God TODAY – as is!

--Spiritual victory begins with admitting defeat!

Let Jesus clean up your mess – that's why Jesus died on the Cross and rose again

--Jesus can only clean up messes that are surrendered to him

The last thing we will give up is control // The last thing we will give up is the prideful conviction that we can remain in control and fix things – that we can do something to save ourselves – and save face in doing so

If you are trying to overcome a serious sin problem by yourself – then you are not yet broken and fully repentant – you are still more concerned with saving face and retaining control than with becoming whole

When God sets out to break us of our prideful and stubborn independence, He does not worry too much about sparing our feelings or our self-image or our reputation

--there is no saving face in the process of spiritual brokenness and dying to self

--God is not concerned at that point with guarding our dignity or saving our pride

--When the Lord's hand is heavy upon us to tame our soul and break our self-will and crucify our pride – we need to give up trying to save face

--“What will others think? How will I save face? How can I fight for my rights? How can I vindicate myself? How can I control the outcome?”

--Vain questions – all of them

Our job during the process of brokenness and repentance is to submit to God, to repent thoroughly and deeply, and to seek His mercy and grace and power – so that our capacity for God’s grace may be enlarged

--God gives grace to the humble

- **And the humble ask for help**
- *The poor in spirit confess their sins to some other believers and make themselves accountable to some other believers for their repentance and recovery*
- **The proud try to go it alone**

- ***God opposes the proud – but give grace to the humble***

A common mistake made by many Christians is to stop with shallow repentance
*--they admit they’ve done wrong // they’re sorry for their sins // they confess their most obvious sins and ask for forgiveness // they claim I John 1:9 that their sins are forgiven, and then they move on – **with very little significant transformation taking place***

Sin often comes in layers like the layers of an onion

--shallow repentance consists of peeling away a couple of the top layers and then declaring ourselves ready to move on

--but deep cleansing and life transformation require us to dig deeper to peel away some of the underlying layers to get to the root of the problem

There is a quasi-repentance that confesses sins only when caught red-handed – *and sheds tears of regret only because of the trouble and negative consequences caused by the sins* – and confesses sins to God only to receive forgiveness and then to ask for help in getting out of trouble

--that kind of repentance may be good enough to preserve the appearance of righteousness and moral respectability in the sight of men – but it leads to spiritual mediocrity and to ongoing sin strongholds and to stunted spiritual growth

When God’s hand of discipline is heavy upon us – *we have a choice of how to respond: we can either allow God to break us and remake us – to wound us and to heal us – to put to death the sinful deeds of the flesh and to resurrect us unto newness and holiness of life – or we can go through the motions of superficial confession of sins and look for the least painful way out of trouble*

- *The spirit of rebellion and the spirit of repentance are contrasted in verses 8-9*

Psalm 32:8-9 The LORD says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.

⁹Do not be like a senseless horse or mule

that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.”

- *The unrepentant, rebellious sinner is like a mule or wild horse that needs a bit and bridle – God’s heavy hand – in order to keep it under control*
- But the repentant sinner is one who seeks the counsel and guidance of God and other spiritual leaders with a submissive attitude
- *One translation has it: **I will guide thee with mine eye***
- The one who has repented of his rebellious ways is passionate about seeking the face of the Lord and so attentive to the Lord that a mere glance of the divine eye is sufficient to guide in the paths of righteousness
- *Confession of sins and true Repentance are more than being sorry your sins are causing problems for you – repentance is craving righteousness as if your life depends on it*

III. THE JOY OF KNOWING YOU’RE FORGIVEN

Psalm 32:1-2 Oh, what joy for those
whose rebellion is forgiven,
whose sin is put out of sight!

²Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared of sin,
whose lives are lived in complete honesty!

- *What can match the joy of knowing your rebellion is forgiven and your sins are put out of sight and your guilty record has been cleared?*
- **Show Iowa Hawkeyes picture**
- *No, even the joy of watching Brandon Wegher running for a 4th-quarter touchdown in the Orange Bowl cannot match the joy of being forgiven*
- **Show pictures of Jack - # 2774, # 2787, # 0187, # 2807**
- (In that order – for about 3 seconds each)
- *Now – that comes close – the joy of a new life entering the world comes close to matching the joy of a new life in Christ complete with the forgiveness of sins and total acceptance by God*
- ***This is the kind of joy that awaits those who are honest before God about their sins and then experience the fullness of His grace***

- **Stop showing pictures**
- This joy is for those in whom there is no guile or deceit
- *Those who confess all their sins completely and openly*
- Those who quit trying to appear more righteous than they actually are
- *Those who confess their sins with sincere repentance rather than merely saying the right words and then continuing in their rebellion*
- **The blessing of verses 1-2 is bestowed upon those repentant sinners in whose spirit there is no deceit**
- Notice what God does with the three kinds of sin that are confessed:
 - **“Rebellion” or “Transgressions” are forgiven**
 - **“Sins” are covered or put out of sight**
 - **And “Iniquity” or “Guilt” is not imputed or reckoned or counted against us**
- Here is the irony: *We try so hard to conceal and hide and cover up our sins – all to no avail – an act of utter futility in light of the fact that God clearly sees all the wrongs that we have done – and His hand remains heavy upon us while we continue in a state of deceit and rebellion*
- **Why does God want us to confess our sins – to bring them into the light – to be honest before Him about our rebellion and sinful deeds?**
- *So that He can shame us? So that He can humiliate us? So that He can condemn us? So that He can cast us away from His Presence?*
- **NO – God invites us to confess our sins so that He can cover them with His mercy and with the blood of Christ and put them out of sight – as far as the East is from the West – to remember them no more – out of sight, out of mind – removed from us once and for all**
- **God wants to do for us what we cannot do ourselves – namely – completely remove our sins from us and make us clean**
- **God wants to draw us into His Presence so that we can experience the fullness of His grace**
- This is how New Covenant Christians live – *we boldly enter the holy Presence of God through the blood of Jesus which cleanses us of all our sins*
- **We draw near to God – even when we have sinned – confident that the throne of grace is open to all who come to God through the blood of Jesus**

- When our minds are set on the Truth of the Gospel – then we are more conscious of our forgiveness and righteousness in Christ than we are of our sins
- **Our primary mindset is NOT – I am a sinner deserving of condemnation and punishment – a mindset that will lead to spiritual defeat and further sin**
- **Rather our primary mindset is: I am totally accepted, fully pleasing, deeply loved, completely forgiven, and empowered to live a new life in Christ – because of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus – a mindset that will lead to freedom and victory and righteousness through the blood of Christ and the power of the Spirit**
- Some of you are struggling with sin issues and bad habits
- When you look in the mirror, Satan whispers to you: *You are a loser // you are unclean // you are a failure as a Christian // God is disgusted with you // you deserve condemnation and punishment // You'd better hide your sins // something bad will probably happen to you today because of your filthy sins*
- **Those are all lies because they reflect life as though Jesus had never shed his blood on the Cross**
- Instead, when you look at yourself in the mirror, tell yourself the truth: *the blood of Jesus cleanses me of all my sins // All my sins have already been punished at the Cross // There is NO condemnation for me because I am in Christ // I am righteous in God's sight because of Jesus and his blood and his righteousness // Sin shall not be my master because I am under grace, not under law // God's grace is greater than my sin // Good things happen to those who believe that God loves them – and I believe that God loves me*
- **Believe the Good News:**

Romans 4:5-8 ⁵But people are declared righteous because of their faith, not because of their work.

⁶King David spoke of this, describing the happiness of an undeserving sinner who is declared to be righteous:

⁷“Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight.

⁸ Yes, what joy for those whose sin is no longer counted against them by the Lord.”

- **This is the Good News of the Gospel: When the believer sins, his sin is not reckoned – not imputed – not counted against him**

- **Instead – the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to us – credited to our account – on the sole basis of faith in the finished work of Christ on the Cross**
- ***Christ took upon Himself our sin and guilt – and suffered our just punishment in our place – and then gave to us – credited to our account – His perfect righteousness***
- **So we are not only forgiven – but actually righteous in the sight of God**
- *So what do you do when you sin?*
- *If you withdraw from God and try to conceal your sin – you are acting in unbelief – you are acting as though you do not believe the Gospel – you are acting as though Christ never died on the Cross for your sins*
- **When we sin – the way we show we believe the Gospel is by drawing near to God and honestly confessing all our sins to Him – confident that He loves us and accepts us and forgives us because of the Cross of Christ**
- **And when we draw near to God through the blood of Jesus – the Holy Spirit Himself testifies to us: *You are God’s beloved child – Your sins are forgiven, covered and put out of sight – You are righteous and welcome in the Father’s Presence***

IV. THE COST OF FORGIVENESS

- **Everybody wants to believe in the idea of forgiveness – it is good to forgive those who have sinned against us – *and we certainly like the idea of God being a merciful and forgiving God who forgives all our sins***
- **But how can God forgive the guilty and still be Just?**
- ***Most world religions teach that repentance is the basis for God extending mercy and forgiveness: God forgives us on the basis of our repentance***
- **Let’s try that our for size in a human court of law:**
- ***A man rapes your wife or your daughter – or a drunk driver kills your son – or an identity thief steals all the money in your savings or retirement account***
- ***And they plead guilty in a court of law – with much remorse and sincere repentance – they are very sorry for what they have done and promise never to do something like that again***
- ***And the Judge announces to the guilty defendant: On the basis of your repentant attitude, you are forgiven and set free without any punishment or prison sentence***

- How would you feel about that if you were the victim of the crime?
- **Is repentance an adequate basis for letting the guilty go free?**
- *Shouldn't someone have to bear the cost of the wrongdoing?*
- *Shouldn't there be some kind of punishment to fit the crime?*
- **Only Christianity has an answer to the dilemma: *How can a Just God forgive and justify the guilty?***
- The answer is hinted at in Psalm 32– and is fleshed out in the NT
- **The Hebrew word translated “forgiven” in verses 1 & 5 literally means “to lift away” or “to carry away” or “to bear responsibility for”**
- The picture here is of sin & guilt being a heavy burden – a crushing weight – that is lifted away by Someone else bearing the burden
- *The idea behind the word for forgiveness is that Someone else is bearing responsibility for the guilt of the sins committed by the guilty party*
- **When God forgives our sin & rebellion & guilt – He Himself is bearing responsibility for our wrong actions**
- **This is exactly what God accomplished at the Cross when His Son, Jesus, was sacrificed to lift or take away our sins by himself bearing the guilt and suffering the death sentence we deserved**

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV) ²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- *How can a Just God forgive the guilty?*
- ***By placing on His own sinless and righteous Son the iniquity and guilt of us all***
- **Since Jesus has borne the full responsibility for our sin and guilt – God can justly lift up and carry away the crushing burden of guilt that had us pinned down and condemned**
- ***Because Jesus bore the full guilt of all our sin on the Cross – even our worst sins – even our habitual sins – therefore God is both merciful and just when He forgives us and declares us righteous and acceptable in His sight***
- *What do we do when we sin?*
- If we believe the Gospel – then we will draw near to God // honestly and openly confessing all our sins to Him with a spirit of repentance // *and then*

we will rejoice in His unfailing love and grace and experience the fullness of joy that comes from knowing that our sins are forgiven and our slate is clean

(Conclusion):

- As we conclude our service – before our closing song – we’re going to watch a couple of minutes of *The Passion of the Christ*
- I avoided the goriest and bloodiest scenes – but even with the darkened sun, it is still a very graphic and uncomfortable portrayal of Christ’s suffering
- **The blood you will see is the blood that cleanses us from all our sins**
- ***The suffering and death you will see is the just punishment for our sins***
- **Let this scene remind you of the gravity of sin – this is what was required to provide forgiveness for our sins**
- **Let this scene remind you of the uniqueness of the Gospel – the message of the Cross – *there is salvation in no one else – if there were any other way to God and to heaven – then Jesus suffered and died in vain***
- **Let this scene remind you of the sufficiency of the Cross to provide forgiveness and cleansing for all your sins – *Jesus suffered enough – It is finished means it is finished!– there is nothing more you can do or need to do to atone for your sins – Jesus paid it all – all you need to do is to believe and receive what He has done for you***

(After the DVD clip, the worship team will come as we observe two minutes of silence)

- **Show the clip from *The Passion of the Christ***

“Amazing Love”