

Delighting in Confession & Forgiveness

Shaped by the Psalms / Psalm 32 / June 21, 2026

Introduction:

This summer, we will pause from our study of Acts to consider how the Psalms shape our responses to God. Over the next several weeks, we will cover six common types of psalms that hold Spirit-inspired words for our hearts to sing and pray in various seasons of life. Our passage today is a wisdom psalm that opens like Psalm 1, with a beatitude that draws us into its wisdom. Some other wisdom Psalms are Psalm 37, 112 and 119. Psalm 32 speaks to the need of confession and forgiveness in our relationship with the Lord. It is likely a companion to Psalm 51, where David shows his personal contrition over his sin with Bathsheba, possibly serving as the instruction David spoke of giving in Psalm 51:13-17, saying, “Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Knowing David’s own confession and the forgiveness he received increases the value of the wisdom in Psalm 32. We will observe this psalm in three stanzas, largely following the *Selah*s, serving as either a musical pause or place for Scripture reading. The first stanza, in verses 1-5, reveals how,

True Delight Comes from Confession & Forgiveness of Sin

One key to understanding Hebrew poetry is knowing how each parallel line forms one full thought. Look at verses 1-2, “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” The term “blessed” is a complex Hebrew word that refers to being in a state of complete well-being and happiness, in the rich, full sense of happiness. Note how David intensifies this state through his double use and centers this happiness on what takes place with our sin. He uses three synonymous words for sin to capture the depth of our struggle. “Transgression” speaks to sin’s rebellion against God. “Sin” speaks to straying from God’s ways, and “iniquity” to moral distortion or twisting the truth. Deep happiness, he says, comes first from the forgiveness of one’s transgression, which includes the covering of sin. The parallel lines show how sin cannot be covered without it also being forgiven. Likewise, forgiveness is impetus for sin’s covering. David also says this deep happiness comes from the Lord not counting iniquity against the one who has no deceit in their spirit. The rest of this psalm will focus on the idea of having no deceit and reveal why the Lord forgives, covers, and doesn’t count sin against this person. Before we continue, let this seep into your heart. True delight comes from how the Lord chooses to respond to our sin. It is not in the denial of sin’s existence, but an awareness of God’s solution for it. Continue in verses 3-4, “For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. *Selah* I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. *Selah*” Though verses 4 and 5 have a *Selah* between them, possibly for a Scripture reading on David’s story, I’m persuaded we should consider these verses together because of the unstated contrast of silence with confession. “For” indicates these are reasons for what he has just said, showing his silence is related to the deceit mentioned in verse 2. The deception in his own spirit resulted in this intense pressure described as wasting away in endless pain because the Lord was heavy on him like the summer sun sapping his strength. Yet, when he acknowledged his sin, no longer trying to conceal it, but confessing it, God forgave his sin and brought this state of blessedness. Note how he recognized the Lord was over his suffering because of his sin. This doesn’t mean all suffering is due to sin, but reminds us our sin turns the disciplining hand of God towards us at times. Note also how he speaks directly to God, repeating the same words for sin from verses 1-2. David didn’t go through a priest for his confession and owned every aspect of his sin. This reveals God responded to David with forgiving grace because David acknowledged and confessed his to the Lord.

Consider how this agrees with the testimony of Scripture. Proverbs 28:13 tells us, “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” 1 John 1:8-10 says, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” We must be ready and willing to confess our sins. But we need to ensure we understand this in light of the gospel. Confession is not a work that merits forgiveness. Confession springs forth from faith that knows God’s forgiveness in Christ. The apostle Paul speaks to this when quotes Psalm 32:1-2 as the grounds for justification by faith alone. Also, the apostle John follows the verses we just read by saying, “I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins.” Faith in Christ’s sufficient sacrifice for sin is what secures God’s forgiving mercy and grace. Confession is the product of understanding this. Family, we are a confessing people because we trust in God’s promise to forgive and cleanse. So, before we consider the rest of this Psalm, know that none of this is the means to forgiveness, but the product of trust in God’s forgiveness. And David says this is the way to true delight and happiness. The next stanza, in verses 6-7, calls us then to,

Know the Lord Can be Trusted with our Weakness

The “therefore” in verse 6 is a powerful transition to David’s conclusion about his path. Look at verses 6-7, “Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah” Turning to God’s people, David echoes the words of Isaiah 55:6 that encourage God’s people to call upon the Lord while He is near. These are implied prayers of confession, but we could apply this truth to all needs of prayer. Great waters either symbolize a common Ancient Near Eastern concept of chaos or the great waters of the flood. Either way, the point is that calling upon God ensures trouble will not fully overwhelm you. Why? Because God has shown himself to be a hiding place for David, preserving him from trouble and surrounding him with people rejoicing in God’s deliverance. And, by implication, the Lord will be the same for us. Consider how this calls us to trust God with our weakness. We turn to the Lord in prayer because we are weak and needy people. Family, the Scriptures never suggest we will remove weakness in this life. Rather, they tell us not to hide our weakness, or pretend it doesn’t exist, because the Lord is a refuge for the broken and needy. He is the strength of the faint and weary. And He is a giver to the lowly. When Jesus calls the disciples to pray in the garden, He says, “The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.” You don’t have to be ashamed of your weakness because the Lord can be trusted with it. Following this, the final stanza, in verses 8-11, calls for us to,

Welcome the Lord’s Instruction & Counsel

This stanza reminds us not to simply give in to our weakness but turn to the Lord to overcome it. Look at verses 8-9, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.” The you is singular in verse 8 and plural in verse 9, which may mean verse 8 is God’s instruction to David and verse 9, David’s instruction to God’s people. Whether this is the case or not, both verses are wisdom for us to embrace. Note how God speaks of His care in providing instruction, teaching, and counsel. The imagery of “with my eye upon you” beautifully points to God’s commitment to be near to His people. Yet, verse 9 speaks to our temptation towards our stubbornness in following the Lord’s instruction. Untrained horses and mules need to be compelled to obey with a bit and bridle. Sometimes, we need the same. Mark Futato comments, “The Lord is committed to having his people near to him, so they will be kept near to him in the long run. There is a hard way to be kept near, the way of denial and discipline. But there is also an easy way, the way of confession and forgiveness” (Mark D. Futato, *The Book of Psalms & The Book of Proverbs*, p. 129). Family, never believe the lie that God loves you too much to put His heavy hand of discipline upon you.

It is because of love that He brings us back into close communion with Him through discipline. Verse 9 reminds us that it is far better to confess our sin and heed the Lord's instruction than to wait for God to expose it. Notice how David ends in verses 10-11, "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" Most wisdom literature contrasts the state of the wicked with the righteous, so it is fitting for David to close this way. The wicked, who deceive themselves in sin, experience compounding sorrows. We may not see it on the surface, but it is the reality of their state. Yet, those who trust God in their weakness, confess their sin, and lean into His instruction are surrounded by His steadfast love. When David ends by calling the righteous and upright in heart to rejoice and shout for joy, he isn't expressing a need to be righteous and upright but showing these things come from acknowledging sin, confessing it, and being counted as righteous by God because of our trust in His forgiveness. Family, this is not a call to trust in any righteous or upright works of our own, but to recognize the cleansing power of God available to us. I agree with Michael Wilcock's summation of this psalm, saying, "[Psalm 32] says, in effect, 'Happy are those who recognize that they are not righteous, and who know what to do about it.'" (Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God*, V1, p. 109). Faith never denies that we are sinners. Faith freely acknowledges that truth, alongside the truth that God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love to those who fear Him. This is the way to true delight and happiness. So, how are we shaped by the wisdom of Psalm 32? First,

1) We Freely Confess our Sin

David's goal is to move our hearts to confession because of the rewards he found in it. James 4:8-10 tells us, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." The life of faith involves regular humble confession because of our ongoing battle with sin. It's when we try to hide in the darkness that we struggle the most. God's mercy and grace in Christ should move us to regular confession because we know we are always met with mercy and cleansing power. One way we wage war against sin is by freely confessing it. Yet, there's more to confession. James 5:16 says, "confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." There are times when confession needs to take place before others so their prayers will bring healing. Weeks ago, the Spirit pressed me to confess my sin before you, not because I was doubting the Lord's forgiveness but because I needed your prayers for strength. And it was through that confession and your prayers that the Lord completed His work of bringing delight again to my heart. I hope this is not a testimony to anything in me, but to how God's instruction on confession can be trusted. Let me give a special encouragement to every father here today in this. Be an example to your children of one who freely confesses their sin. Have you ever confessed your sin in front of your kids? Have you confessed when you sin against them? I think this can be one of the most fruitful forms of parenting. It teaches your kids to acknowledge weakness, magnifies God's forgiving nature, and models what a healthy life of confession looks like. Let this psalm shape how you freely confess your sin. Second,

2) We Run to Jesus for Instruction

I wonder if we subconsciously avoid going deep in relationship with Jesus because we know He demands full allegiance of our hearts. Deep down, we understand the commands of the Lord are applicable to our lives, and we subconsciously think it may be best to try and remain ignorant of them. Yet, listen carefully to the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30. He says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Jesus doesn't say come to Him and find rest because He places no yoke upon you. He says come to Him and take His yoke upon you. He says come and learn from Him, because that is how you will truly find rest for your souls. True rest is found in following the Lord's instruction and counsel. Let this psalm shape how you run to Jesus for instruction.

Conclusion:

To end our time together, I want to invite you to lean into the wisdom of Psalm 32 today. During our time of response, I want to encourage you to offer prayers of confession while the Lord is near, running to Jesus for instruction and rest today. Expose your sin to the Lord and let the light of Christ shine upon the darkness of your heart. If you have yet to acknowledge your sin, repent of it, and turn to Christ for salvation, do so today. The Son of God was slain for our pardon. He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God. Trust in God's mercy flowing from the cross and discover the delight of God's forgiving grace this morning. If you've been trying to hide your sin from the Lord, confess it freely during this time, knowing He will forgive and cleanse you from it. Then partake of communion as the reminder of the delight you have in that confession and forgiveness. Respond as the Lord leads, whether you stand to sing, raise hands in adoration, give as an act of thankful worship, come kneel before the Lord or come to receive prayer from our prayer team on the front rows. Let the Spirit guide you. Today, we are going to begin our time of response in a unique way. We will have Psalm 51:1-17 read as our closing prayer and I want to share a song with you that spoke to me this week in light of the truths of Psalm 32. My prayer is these things will encourage us to confess our sin and find the delight of God's forgiving and cleansing power in this time. Would bow your heads with us as we pray alongside David's words from Psalm 51?