

Psalm 32:1–11

MPS: God blesses the broken and gives them joy

OPEN

- Have you ever heard the saying, “stubborn as a mule”?
- It’s an old expression that goes back hundreds of years. Mules are known for being strong, smart, and incredibly hard-headed. Once a mule decides it doesn’t want to move — especially if it senses danger or doesn’t see a good reason to go forward — good luck trying to make it budge.
- There’s truth behind that old saying — because every one of us has seasons when we become stubborn as a mule toward the Lord. We dig in our heels and break away from His direction for all kinds of reasons:
 - Something devastating happened, and God didn’t stop it... so we stop trusting Him.
 - There’s something we want so badly — even though we know it’s wrong — that we convince ourselves “just this once.”
 - We think we know better than God, so we take control.
 - Doubt creeps in and we wonder if God is really good.
 - Or we get caught up in the wrong crowd — other “stubborn mules” persuading us to break away too.
- Whatever the reason, the result is the same: we end up lost in the wilderness, caught in the storms of life with no shelter — because we’ve run away from the only One who can truly protect and guide us.
- That’s exactly what happened to King David.
- Most Bible scholars connect Psalm 32 to one of the darkest chapters in David’s life — his adultery with Bathsheba, the murder of her husband Uriah, and the year-long cover-up that followed. As Charles Spurgeon, John Calvin, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones all noted, this psalm is David’s testimony after he finally stopped running from God and confessed his sin.
- For nearly a year he lived like a stubborn mule — breaking away — until the weight of his unconfessed sin nearly crushed him. But when he repented, he discovered the blessing, the brokenness, and the joy he writes about in this psalm.

1. Blessing of forgiveness

Vs 1-2 *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

- David doesn't start with his sin — he starts with the blessing of forgiveness. And the very first word he uses for sin is "transgression" — in Hebrew, *pesha'*, which means to break away or rebel. It's the picture of a mule yanking its head out of the bridle and running its own direction.
- So David is saying: "Blessed is the one whose breakaway has been forgiven."
- And here's the truth for every person in this room — we all need this blessing. None of us are exempt. We've all broken away from God in a thousand ways, big and small.
- Look again at verse 2: "and in whose spirit there is no deceit."
- That word "deceit" is powerful. It's self-deception — the lies we tell ourselves to stay in sin.
 - "It's not that bad."
 - "No one will get hurt."
 - "I deserve this."
 - "I'll repent later."
- We wear the mask. We hide. But the blessed person is the one who stops the deceit and comes clean before God.

Why is a forgiven person so blessed?

- Because the heavy burden is lifted. Guilt is gone. Relationship with God is restored. Instead of carrying the weight of rebellion, you walk in freedom and joy.
- But David remembers what it felt like when he refused to come clean:

Vs 3-4 *For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah*

- Charles Spurgeon said, "Unconfessed sin is like a fire in the bones — it consumes the very strength of a man."
- When we break away and stay in rebellion, conviction becomes crushing. Our minds are consumed with hiding, justifying, or shame. There's no room left to truly love others or enjoy life. Everything feels harder. The joy dries up.

But then comes the turning point:

Vs 5 *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*

- David's suffering finally forced him to confess. And the moment he did — the burden was replaced with bliss. The heavy hand of conviction became the gentle hand of forgiveness.

APPLICATION:

- This week, be mindful when you feel that "mule moment" — when your flesh wants to break away and do what you want more than what the Lord wants. In that moment, stop and say:
- "Lord, that was the mule me, not Your Spirit in me. I confess it. Forgive me and bring me back."

2. Brokenness over stubbornness

Vs 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. 7 You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah*

- God is found now — not when you feel like it, not when you get your life cleaned up, but now!
- A refuge is an amazing place to be — when the tsunami floods come, we need to be found in a safe place with God who is our refuge.
- This 'rush of great waters' is also pointing to the judgement of God on the last day — are you in the refuge of God? In a city with walls that protect you from the flood?
- David's brokenness took place of stubbornness which made way for God's deliverance.

Vs 8 *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*

- Verses 1–7, David is testifying to the readers about his own experience of sin, conviction, confession, and forgiveness.
- Now David changes his tone. He turns to us — the listeners — and says, 'I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.'

- Having been the stubborn mule himself, David now wants to be a guide. He's saying, 'Learn from my mistake. Don't make me force you with the bit and bridle. Let God lead you gently.'

Vs 9 *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.*

Proverbs 26:3 (ESV) *3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools.*

- Mule or wild horse without a bit describes so many of us today. We want to be free with no restrictions, but hail and lightning storms are coming... we need to be in shelter, close to our Master.

- Mules can't reproduce – don't be a mule... go multiply disciples.

Where are you being stubborn right now?

- Where is God gently saying, "Come this way," but you're digging in your heels? Don't wait for the bit and bridle. Don't wait for the storm to overwhelm you. Right now, in this moment, surrender. Say, "Lord, I don't want to be the mule anymore. Guide me with Your eye."
- When we choose brokenness over stubbornness, we move from misery to mercy — and we prepare our hearts for the joy waiting in Point 3.

3. Basking in Joy

Vs 10-11 *Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. 11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*

- In these final two verses, David draws a sharp line. There are only two kinds of people — no third category.
- One group lives with many sorrows.
- The other group is surrounded by God's steadfast love.
- The difference?
- One keeps breaking away. The other trusts and surrenders.

- Look at the contrast:
- The person who stays stubborn and unrepentant piles up sorrow upon sorrow. But the one who trusts in the Lord is encircled by His unfailing love — like being wrapped in a warm, protective shield even in the middle of the storm.
- Then David ends with a loud, joyful command:
- “Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice... shout for joy!”
- This is not a quiet, polite suggestion. This is a celebration! After the misery of hidden sin and the pain of brokenness, the forgiven person is invited to bask in joy.
- Here’s the beautiful truth:
- Confessing our sins, repenting, and surrendering to God feels completely counter-intuitive to surviving in this world. Everything in us wants to hide, justify, or keep control. But that is exactly the way of the Lord.
- Our good and kind Father is willing to:
 - Forgive us completely,
 - Bless us richly,
 - Bring us into safe shelter,
 - And fill us with real, lasting joy.
- He doesn’t break us to destroy us. He breaks our stubbornness so He can bless us and let us bask in the joy of being close to Him.

APPLICATION:

- Today is the day to stop being the stubborn mule.
Stop breaking away. Come home. Confess. Trust. Surrender.
- And when you do, you will discover what David discovered:
- The same God who convicts you is the same God who surrounds you with love and calls you to shout for joy.

CONCLUSION

when you may be found;

- David gives us one urgent warning in verse 6: “offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found.”
- There is a window.
Right now, while God is near, while His voice is calling, while mercy is available — come.
- The same Lord who convicted David, who broke his stubbornness, and who surrounded him with steadfast love is here today. He is not a harsh master waiting to whip you with the bit and bridle. He is a good and kind Father who is ready to forgive, to lift your burden, and to let you bask in the joy of being His.
- So don’t wait.
Don’t keep breaking away.
Don’t stay in the misery of hidden sin.
- Come to Jesus — the One who took your transgression, your deceit, and your guilt on the cross so you could be fully forgiven.
- If the Holy Spirit is speaking to you right now, don’t harden your heart.
Confess. Repent. Trust Him.
- And you will hear the same words David heard:
“You are forgiven... Be glad in the LORD and shout for joy!”

QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS:

David warns us not to be like a stubborn mule that needs the bit and bridle (v. 9), and he urges us to come to God “while He may be found” (v. 6).

Where in your life right now are you most tempted to “break away” or stay stubborn? What would it look like this week to stop running, confess, and move toward the joy David describes in verses 10–11?