

Disposing of Regrets

Psalm 32:1-7

Preface

Illus: Before Christmas we started a small remodeling project at my house. We were enlarging the living room by taking in part of the screened porch. Of course, the small project turned larger and more expensive as things went along. During the process, our garage became the central place for materials. It was a mess! With everything complete, last Saturday was my time to finally clean up the garage. As I began to throw out the waste from the remodeling project, I found even more trash from the past. I found old dried up paint cans and cans full of paint colors we no longer use. I just kept throwing out stuff that was old and should have been discarded long ago. Some things brought back good memories, some bad memories, and some brought back memories of good intentions that never developed. When I was finished, it felt good to dispose of all the junk and have a clean garage and clean workbench again.

Sometimes our lives are like my messy garage. They become cluttered with things that should've been disposed long ago. Very often our lives are cluttered with things from the past; regrets and shame that weigh us down.

God understands how the pain of guilt and regret can weigh us down and render us helpless. God knows there must be a way out of the emotions of guilt and regret if His children are to exist in a life of peace.

David speaks of the blessed joy of forgiveness in our text. David had plenty reason to feel the guilt of his actions and choices. David was guilty of sin in many ways. He allowed his lust to get the best of him. He abused his power as king. He lied and deceived to get what he wanted. Review 2 Samuel 11. *"But the thing David had done displeased the LORD. " 2 Samuel 11:27*

After David had what he wanted, the guilt set in. But he was king and really wasn't required to answer to anyone. He did not have to fear the law or retribution. Yet the guilt was overwhelming because he feared God. He knew in his heart his sin was observed by God. So, he sought forgiveness and wrote of the blessedness of forgiveness.

Scripture

¹ *Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*

² *Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.*

³ *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 sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah*

⁵ *Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"—and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah*

⁶ *Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.*

⁷ *You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Psalm 32:1-7 NIV*

Preface

Illus: In the movie "The Shawshank Redemption" Morgan Freeman plays a prisoner named Red. And there's a scene where Red is meeting with the parole board. He's been in jail for 40 years. He says, "Not a day goes by when I don't feel regret. For the families I hurt; for the people I let down. I wish I could go back and talk to that foolish boy I used to be. Talk some sense into him. Tell him how things really are. But I can't. And all that's left is this broken down old man. And I have to live with what I've done for the rest of my life."

Are you haunted by the mistakes of your past? Do you ever wonder, "How could I have been so stupid?" "What was I thinking?"

If you have ever felt that way, then you are simply human. As imperfect humans, we have all made mistakes and have done things for which we have great regrets.

We have all said things we wish we could take back. We have all made choices and done things that we wish dearly we could undo.

God does not want us to live haunted by the actions of our past. God has made provisions for our sin. God wants to give you new life in Him; life without the pain of guilt.

There three requirements for forgiveness.

Content

1. Forgiveness Requires Confession

In order for our sin to be forgiven, we must be willing to confess our sins. This is really the hard part.

Too often, we tend to do the wrong things in response to sin:

a. Rationalize - We rationalize that what we did really wasn't that bad. We look at other people and say, "Well what I did wasn't as bad as what they have done." If it really wasn't that bad, why do we still think about it? Why does it pop into our minds at the most awkward of moments?

b. Blame Others - We try to put the blame off on others. If my wife had not treated me so badly, it would not have happened. She drove me into the arms of another woman. Adam pulled that same stunt when God inquired about the eating of the forbidden fruit. Adam's response was that the woman God put there made him do it. Politicians are masters at blaming someone else for their own bad choices, but we can be pretty good at it also.

c. Retreat - Sometimes we let our past sin just cause us to give up and declare ourselves as hopeless. In other words, we give over to sin and say, "Why fight it?" I am working on a Father's Day sermon titled "Quitting is for Cowards." When we retreat and let sin win, we are cowards. Satan loves for us to get caught in the quicksand of guilt and shame.

But God doesn't want us to rationalize, blame others or retreat. He wants us to confess. Confession begins with admission. We must admit our guilt before God. We must confess what we did was wrong and we have absolutely no justification for it.

Confession is acknowledging to God what we really deserve for our actions. **We must deal with the dirtiness of confession in order to experience the cleanliness of forgiveness.**

Illus: Years ago, the governor of Texas visited one of the state prisons. After he spoke, he stayed around to allow prisoners to talk with him. Inmates formed a line and one by one, each one told the how they were wrongfully convicted. But one guy came up to the governor and said, "I'm guilty. I'm ashamed of my past. But the years I've been in here have helped me to become a better person. Someday when I get out, I hope that I can contribute something positive to society." That day, the governor pardoned the man who confessed his wrong doing.

Notice in verse 2, "²*Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.*" There is a qualifier to forgiveness, there must not be deceit. In other words, we must sincerely confess and take full blame without any excuses, lies or deceit.

Proverbs 28:13 says, "*Whoever conceals his sins will not prosper. But whoever confesses and forsakes them will find mercy.*"

Confession is a prerequisite to experiencing God's forgiveness.

2. Forgiveness Requires Grace

A key element to the forgiveness of our sin is coming to the full realization of what we deserve for our actions. For our lies, we deserve to be exposed as a liar. For cheating, we deserve to be exposed as a cheat and swindler. For adultery, we deserve to be left behind, unloved and never to be trusted again.

This is where God's grace becomes so awesome. This is where the cross makes no sense and yet makes all the sense in the world. The only "Perfect One" paid for the sins of all of us who are so imperfect. **This is God's grace; His plan of forgiveness.**

It is always good to receive forgiveness from others and from the people we have wronged. However, only forgiveness from God will take away the guilt and provide the freedom we all seek.

Only the forgiveness from God through Jesus Christ can truly set you free from the guilt and pain of your past. Only the blood of Christ can wash away the sin to the point that we say as David said, "¹*Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*"

God's grace is more than sufficient. God's forgiveness is immediate. God's forgiveness is complete. God's forgiveness is permanent.

There is no forgiveness like forgiveness from God. When we sin, no matter who we wrong, we sin against God. The pain and scars of our actions will never be healed until we realize the importance of God's forgiveness.

In Jeremiah 31:34, God says, "I will remember your sins no more!"

God is eager to pour out His compassion on us if we are willing to confess and accept His forgiveness.

3. Forgiveness Requires Acceptance

And this brings us to the final condition of forgiveness – Acceptance.

David said, ³ *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 sapped as in the heat of summer.* ⁵ *Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"— and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

David reached the point that his sin was killing him inside. It was eating him up from the inside out. Notice it was the power of God that was sapping his soul with guilt. He had to confess his sins and accept the forgiveness from God.

Notice that God forgave not only the sins of David but the guilt of his sin. Too often we confess our sin and we acknowledge it before God, but we never really accept the fullness of forgiveness.

Illus: Back to the illustration used earlier when the Texas Governor pardoned the prisoner. What good would come if the prisoner said thanks but chose to remain in prison? None!

For many of you, deep down, there is a part of you that says "Thanks but I can't accept forgiveness." "I'm not good enough; my past behavior was too reprehensible."

We conclude we must earn our forgiveness and nothing could be further from the truth. It's impossible to earn forgiveness; it must be accepted as a gift from God.

If we don't fully accept God's forgiveness, then every time something bad happens to us, we think God is punishing us again for sins He has already forgiven. When we have car trouble or we get sick, we think, "See! The Lord is disciplining me again! He's paying me back for my sins!"

In reality, God is saying, "What sin?" God is eager to move forward and do His work in our lives.

Too often we beat ourselves up for years over something God doesn't even remember. Isaiah 43:18 tells us "*Forget the former things. Do not dwell on the past.*"

Accept His gift of forgiveness and enjoy the relief.

Conclusion

In order to experience forgiveness, we must confess our sin, recognize that real forgiveness comes only from God's grace and accept the gift of forgiveness.

Back in 1929, Georgia Tech played the University of California in the Rose Bowl. Just before halftime, a man named Roy Riegels recovered a fumble for California. Somehow, he became confused and he ran 65 yards in the wrong direction. A teammate tackled him at his own two yard line. When California attempted to punt, Georgia Tech blocked the punt and scored a safety.

The team headed off the field and went into the dressing room. As they sat on the benches, Riegels put a blanket on his shoulders, sat down in a corner, put his face in his hands and cried like a baby.

Right before the second half started, Coach Price said, "Men, the same team that played the first half will start the second." The players all got up and headed back to the field. Except for Roy Riegels. The coach called for Roy. But he didn't budge. So the coach said, "Did you hear me Roy? The same team starts the second half."

Riegels looked up. And with tears in his eyes, he said, "Coach, I can't go back out there. I hurt the team. I'm so embarrassed. I can't go back out there and face the crowd."

Coach Price simply put his hand on Roy's shoulder. And said, "Roy, the game is only half over. Get up and get back out there."

Roy Riegels went back and played the greatest game of his life in the second half.

Like Roy Riegels, some of you have been running in the wrong direction. You've made mistakes. You have regrets. But life is not over. God has got His arm around you and He is saying to you right now, "Get up and get on back out there! The game's only half over! What's in the past is in the past. I have great plans for you."

"Don't spend the rest of your life regretting your past. Follow David's example, confess and accept the forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ.