

TEXT: *Ps. 51; Ps. 32; 2Samuel 12.1- 25; 1John 1.5-2.2 **DATE:** January 20th, 2002

SERMON TITLE: Lesson From a Mountain Top.

CHILDREN'S SERMON: When The Going Gets Tough.... (2Tim. 1:7)

Psalm 51:1-19

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
4 Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.
5 Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.
6 You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.
11 Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.
13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.
14 Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.
15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.
16 For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.
17 The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
19 then you will delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;

then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Psalm 32:1-11

1 Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
2 Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
3 While I kept silence, my body 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. 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
6 Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.
7 You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.
8 I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
9 Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.
10 Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD.
11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart. 1

1*The New Revised Standard Version,*
(Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers)
1989.

Introduction:

When Linda and I were much younger, we spent a summer on a fire lookout in the Rocky Mountains of Southeastern British Columbia.

That particular summer we were posted by the B.C. Forest Service to Graves Mountain Lookout, which was on a peak very close to the Royal Group of mountains near the continental divide between British Columbia and Alberta.

It was a stiff climb of about 3 miles up the side of the mountain to get to the Lookout from the trailhead at the end of a 4-wheel drive road.

For that reason, our supplies for the summer was to be slung up to the mountaintop by helicopter.

We would have had a ride up as well, except that we had just acquired a lovely young pup, an Airedale terrier named Basil.

I did not want to risk messing with an exuberant pup in the cramped quarters of a helicopter cockpit, so it was decided that I would ride up in the chopper with our supplies and the next day I would walk down the trail to meet my father and young wife and we would walk up together with the pup.

My last words before leaving Linda the morning of the flight in were: "Now you're absolutely sure we have every thing packed for the summer Hon.

We don't want to have any heavy packs to deal with for the long hike up the mountain."

Linda assured me that we had packed everything for the flight in by chopper.

I looked at the Forest Service 4 wheel drive pickup with our mountain of supplies crammed in its box, its axles swayed and its tires half flat.

I felt sure we must have everything.

And so, I blissfully left with all our all our stuff, drunk with anticipation for the day's adventure of helicopter flying in the Rock Mountains and setting up a fire lookout for the summer.

The day was long and hard with several trips up the mountain by helicopter, our supplies slung below in a net.

When the pilot finally left he quipped, "Did you leave anything behind son? Maybe we should see if we can sling the 4X4 truck up too?"

My face reddened but I didn't really care what he thought.

I wouldn't see him again.

We wouldn't see anybody for at least two months, and when we finally came down from the mountain having converted our mountain of supplies into outhouse compost, we would simply walk out.

The sweat poured off me all day long as I packed things away in the lookout and removed shutters from its wall to wall windows.

It was tough work, and I did not sleep well that night either.

Ten thousand feet of elevation is no laughing matter until you acclimatize to it.

The next morning I was up early and off down the trail to meet Linda, Dad and Basil.

I expected to meet them about half way up the trail enjoying a leisurely and unencumbered walk.

Instead I met them almost at the trailhead.

Dad had a pack the size of a truck on his back and Linda had a large heavy shopping bag in each arm.

The only one who was having an enjoyable time was Basil our pup.

Before I learned the marital art of verbal sparing, at times like this I used to resort to yelling and making complete ass of myself.

“I thought you said we had it all packed for the chopper,” I bellowed.

“Where did all this stuff come from?”

It’s going to take us hours to make it up the mountain with this stuff.

You can’t pack heavy shopping bags in your arms, three miles straight up a 10,000 ft mountain Linda.”

At my outburst, Linda just cried, like she used to do before she learned the marital art of verbal sparing, which I must admit, she has now learned very well after 32 years of practice.

Dad just puffed on by us with the huge pack and I huffed and puffed and angrily took the two heavy shopping bags from Linda.

Several hours and gallons of sweat later, not to mention more huffing and puffing and assundrey shouting, we topped out on the mountain.

I was exhausted.

Not only were the shopping bags extremely heavy but they were a tremendously awkward burden to carry that far up a steep mountain trail at extreme elevation.

I ached everywhere.

Linda unpacked the bags as soon as I flopped them down on the floor of the Lookout.

They contained pots of dirt in which Linda’s mom had started radishes, lettuce and other garden vegetables, ‘just incase we sort of ran short of supplies and began to starve on the mountain.’

I screamed, “You mean I just packed fifty pounds of dirt in my arms up a ten thousand foot mountain?”

“Well no, not just dirt” Linda said defensively.

“There was also these.”

She reached into one of the bags and pulled out the dog’s frisbee, ball and security blanket.

I screamed.

Linda cried.

Dad made himself scarce.

Basil hid under the bed.

And still today, from my perspective, it was the single worst moment, of 32 otherwise pretty good years of moments of marriage.

That day I graphically and metaphorically learned the destructive power of heavy, awkward and useless burdens carried through rough terrain.

Since that day I have learned that there is no more destructive, heavy, awkward and useless burden than sin, carried through human life, which is often very rough terrain.

No one learned this lesson better than the man after God’s own heart, the Psalmist, King David of Israel.

And his learning of this great lesson is transparently displayed in the 32nd and 51st Psalm in the Bible.

The Text: PSALMS 32 AND 51

The background for these two psalms is 2Samuel 11&12.

David lusted after his neighbor’s wife, committed adultery, made the husband drunk, had him killed, and then covered the whole affair for at least a year.

He was not a youth when he fell into these sins; he was a mature man, ruling over a great kingdom: *“Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12, NKJV).*

Psalm 51 is David’s prayer of confession.

Psalm 32 is his song of forgiveness.

A. Psalm 51

First of all let's take a brief look at Psalm 51.

Psalm 51 is a very personal prayer.

Note how often David uses “*me*” and “*my sin.*” throughout it.

His eyes are not on someone else; his eyes are on himself, on his tremendous burden of sin and on his Lord.

The first thing that stands out in this prayer, which is Psalm 51, is the cost of committing sin.

Falling into lust and adultery seemed momentary acts, but what a tremendous price David paid for it.

As we shall see in Ps. 32:3–4, David paid for his sins physically and became ill.

But the spiritual cost was also great.

He lost the purity of his heart (vs. 1–2) and therefore needed to be washed and cleansed (vs. 7).

Note the words used for sin here: “**transgressions**” means acts of rebellion, defying God by crossing over the line God has drawn; “**iniquity**” means inward crookedness, perversity; “**sin**” means missing the mark completely, failing to meet God’s standard.

Verse 17 suggests that David’s heart not only became defiled by his transgression, iniquity and sin, but it also became hard.

When we harbor sin, carrying it around like a heavy burden, it hardens the heart.

David’s eyes were also affected; all he could see were his sins before him (vs. 3).

People whose conscience is heavily and awkwardly laden with sin are usually on the defensive, wondering what other people may know.

Sin also affected his ears, for he lost the sound of joy and gladness (vs. 8).

Nothing sounds good to a person whose burden of sin puts him out of fellowship with God.

Even David's lips were affected, for he could no longer testify or witness, or even sing God's praises (vs. 13–15).
Nothing shuts a Christian's mouth like sin not confessed, packed through life like useless heavy shopping bags up a mountain.
His mind was affected, for he begged for wisdom (vs. 6).
The inner person (heart and spirit, vs. 10) was out of fellowship with God (vs. 11), and there was no joy.

May we never forget the high cost of committing sin!

Do any of those symptoms sound familiar?

Are you suffering the cost of committing sin?

Is your sin like a terrible heavy and awkward burden carried through the rough terrain of life sucking the very life out of you.

Do you need to get rid of that burden?

Do you need to deal with God and confess your Sin?

You do not need to pay the horrible cost of sin forever, cost that has not only eternal significance but also significance in your life as you experience it right now.

After looking at the cost of committing sin, Psalm 51 makes clear the cost of confessing sin.

True confession of sin involves repentance, a sincere change of mind.

During that year when David just tried to hide his sins, he thought he would "get away" with something.

But when Nathan confronted him with his sins, David's heart smote him and he repented.

There is a huge difference between admitting sins and confessing sins.

Confession (1 John 1:9) literally means, "to say the same thing."

If we say the same thing about our sins that God says about them, and we truly mean it, then we are confessing sin.

David even went so far as to admit his sinful nature, born in sin (vs. 5).

Beware of “cheap confession.” Merely admitting with the lips, “Lord, I have sinned, please forgive me!” is not confession. True confession costs something—a broken spirit and a contrite heart (vs. 17).

This does not mean that we do penance and earn forgiveness, but it does mean that we feel so broken by our sins that we hide nothing from God.

True repentance means doing more than saying you’re sorry. It is no mere, ‘oops, please forgive me.’

There is a deep feeling of regret involved, for you feel the pain that you have caused the one sinned against ... and all sin in the end is against God.

As well, there is a resolve and promise in repentance to not commit the sin again.

The cost of confessing sin is feeling the sins effect on the one sinned against.

I suppose it is ultimately, in some way and at some level, feeling the nails driven into Christ’s limbs.

A cheap I’m sorry is no confession.

A heart felt awareness of the consequence of your sin and an earnest desire to change your ways, is what is necessary.

There is a sense in which you have to become aware of the burden of sin, the weight of the thing, the awkwardness of its burden and who is carrying it ... the one sinned against, you and Christ.

There is a sense in which you have to become aware of how much you need to be release from sin’s burden to live.

(Give the example from the award winning movie The Mission)

If there is a real human cost in committing sin and then in confessing sin, there is also a very real cost in cleansing from sin.

Good works cannot cleanse sin, not even religious works and sacrifices as David says (vs. 16–17).

Only the blood of Jesus Christ can wash away sins (Heb. 10:1–18; 1 John 1:7–2:2).

Forgiveness is not a cheap thing; it cost Jesus Christ His life. We receive forgiveness because of what He has done, not because of our prayers or tears or grief.

God is willing to blot out sins (vs. 1, 9; and see Isa. 43:25) and purge us completely.

The high cost of cleansing alone ought to make us hate sin and want to turn from it.

B. Psalm 31

Psalm 51 is David's personal confession of sin but Psalm 32 is his public praise for God's cleansing.

It is called a *MASCHIL* as are thirteen Psalms (32, 42, 44, etc.).

A Maschil denotes a song enforcing some lesson of wisdom or piety.

Psalm 51 is David's personal prayer for pardon.

Psalm 32 is David's teaching or a didactic song, so let's see what he can teach us.²

The first two verses of psalm 32 are quoted by Paul in his epistle to the Romans 4:7–8, where Paul is dealing with the whole concept of forgiveness as a free gift of God received by faith.

Literally, David sang: *“Oh, the happiness of the man whose rebellion has been forgiven, whose failure to hit the mark has been covered. How happy is the man on whose account the Lord does not put his crookedness, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.”*

David had been guilty of all of this.

He had rebelled against the Law and failed to meet God's righteous standard.

He had allowed his crooked nature to control him.

He had deceitfully covered the whole matter up for a year.

²Easton, M. G., M. A. D. D., *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996.

But when forgiveness came, it was all by God's hand.
God forgave his rebellion.
God covered his sin.
God settled the accounts of his crookedness.
God had cleansed his spirit.
Forgiveness is by grace through faith.
Verses 1&2 are sheer praise for grace.
It teaches us the appropriate response to forgiveness by God.
Praise of God is crucial in the forgiveness process, an act of
grasping hold of it and giving thanks for it.
It is crucial.

The next thing David teaches us is in this Maschil comes out in
verses 3&4.

I suppose we could summarize it with the title; the silence of conviction.

What happened to David when he refused to confess his sins?
He suffered.

He suffered spiritually (as we saw in Ps. 51), but he also suffered
physically.

According to his own words here, he became like an old man.
God's hand of conviction was heavy upon him day and night.
He "dried up" like a brook in a drought.

Some people who go to the doctor to take care of their symptoms
ought to go to the Lord to take care of their sins.

This does not mean that all sickness is caused by sin, but it does
mean that sin not confessed can cause real physical
affliction, as Paul attests to in 1 Cor. 11:29–32.

Holding your sin inside and trying to hide it can literally make you
ill and consume you.

Silence, when it comes to sin leads to one place, conviction.
The conscience is a powerful mechanism that must be dealt with.

The third thing that David teaches us in Psalm 32 is in Verse 5
and could best be entitled the sob of confession

David confessed his sin.

Literally he says to God, *“I began to make known to You my sin.”*

David immediately confessed that he had sinned when Nathan spoke to him about it, as we saw in 2 Samuel 12:13.

But that was not all.

He did not merely leave it at, “ya I done it.”

Privately, David allowed the Spirit of God to uncover his sins one by one.

And one by one he confessed them.

David’s prayer was no “general confession”.

He named his sins specifically as God showed them to him in his conscience.

Because he confessed so completely this way, God forgave equally completely.

One writer has said, “The less you spare yourself, the more God will spare you.”

Paul said, *“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged”* (1 Cor. 11:31).

God does not forgive us because we feel sorry, or because we pray, as important and crucial as these are;

He forgives us when we confess our sins because He is “faithful and just”—faithful to His promise, and just with reference to the Cross or Christ.

When we cry out in our sin and bare them completely, God will not make us pay for sins that Christ has already paid for.

David makes that clear in Vs 5b; *I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*³

Paul also makes that very clear in Romans. 8:31–39.

The fourth thing that David teaches us in Psalm 32 is all about cleansing.

David’s *song of cleansing* comes in verses 6&7).

David’s sighing has been replaced by singing.

³The New Revised Standard Version, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

He is surrounded by “songs of deliverance”; and wherever he turns, he discovers something to sing about.

It used to be that wherever he turned, he saw his sins (51:3).

He warns us that we should pray to God for *forgiveness* “*in a time of finding.*” (vs.6a)

This may have two meanings: ... in a time when we find out our sins ...and in a time when God may be found as in Isaiah 55.

If a believer allows sins to accumulate, God will have to step in and chasten (Heb. 12).

Chastening by God is something to fear.

David is no longer afraid, for he is no longer hiding his sin.

God is his hiding place now.

Let troubles come; he is not afraid.

The fifth thing David seeks to teach us in Psalm 32 could be entitled the shout of confidence.

In verses 8 to10 God speaks through David and makes it clear He wants to guide us, not with a heavy rod, but with His eye.

An obedient child watches his parents’ eyes, to see what their will is.

The Christian must constantly stay under the Father’s eye and live to please Him.

In v. 9 God talks to us through David about two extremes: the horse that rushes ahead impulsively, and the mule that lags behind stubbornly.

Christians should avoid both of these patterns of behavior.

We should walk with the Lord a step at a time in loving obedience.

Horses and mules must be controlled by bits and bridles “else they will not come near you.”

Alas, some Christians must have “bits and bridles” before God can control them.

But the normal way is for God to guide us with His eye upon us.

Dumb animals have no understanding, but God’s people can understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:15–17).

After we as Christians have sinned and been restored, Satan tries to undermine our peace and confidence.

We begin to worry about the past and the consequences of our foolishness.

Yes, there are bitter fruits from disobedience (and how David found that out!), but vv. 10–11 assure us that God protects and upholds those who belong to Him.

The wicked have many sorrows, and sorrows come to the lives of disobedient saints, but the cleansed Christian experiences the loving-kindness and mercy of the Lord.

No wonder David ends by shouting.

The past is forgiven—the present is joyful—and the future is secure in the hands of God.⁴

Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.⁵ (Ps.32.11)

⁴Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*, (Victor Books: Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament) Wheaton, Illinois.

⁵*The New Revised Standard Version*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.