

June 13, 2010

Day Four

Again, let's read Psalm 32:1-11.

What are the "book ends" of this psalm? What is the sense conveyed by both the opening verse and the closing verse?

What heart-response is David seeking to cultivate in himself and in others?

Given the journey David describes in this psalm, what hinders or overthrows the kind of heart-response he longs to have? Why?

In speaking of his sin, David uses different words in reflecting on what he did about his sin. Before he openly confessed his sin, what did he do?

Can you think of any reason why David would have sought to "keep silent" about his sin? (Why do you refrain from talking to God about your sin?)

The three words David uses in verse 5 are not exactly synonymous, although they work together to convey the idea. The first ("I acknowledged") conveys the sense of openly admitting; the second ("I did not cover") looks at it from the perspective of not dismissing or overlooking; the last ("I will confess") focuses on declaring what is true. Taken all together, how would you describe this open way David speaks about his sin before God?

What did David experience as a result of this openness with God?

Day Five

Tucked into this Psalm is a glimpse of the grounds of forgiveness that is further explained throughout the New Testament. Let's look again at Psalm 32. Read the psalm.

It is true that David did confess and acknowledge his sin. But are those things the *cause* and *grounds* for David's forgiveness or the *means* through which he experiences God's forgiveness?

Reflecting on David's experience as recorded here, upon what basis does David receive forgiveness? *Why* does God extend forgiveness to David?

Ultimately, God does not "count" David's sin against him. God "covers" David's sin. And the root of this amazing work of God is "the steadfast love" of Yahweh (32:10). Although David does not realize the full extent to which God's love will go to secure and procure his forgiveness, it is clear that forgiveness is not rooted in what David does but in what God does.

Paul helps us see this more clearly in his letter to the Ephesians. Read Ephesians 2:1-9.

What is the *cause* or *grounds* for God extending life and forgiveness to us?

The New Testament makes abundantly clear that the magnificent forgiveness that is extended to us is because of the work of Jesus who gave Himself as a substitute, suffering to pay the penalty for our sins. Realizing this, how much more should we *not* be "mule-like" but should we draw to God in prayer, openly acknowledging both our sin and our need. Drawing on the language of both Psalm 32 and Ephesians 2, spend some extended time in worship, celebrating the grace of this amazing God who, for Jesus Christ's sake, makes us alive and forgives us all our sins!

Psalms:

Turning Down the Noise

June 13, 2010

Day One

How do you respond when you hear a great piece of music or see a masterful painting? What kinds of personal responses to such artistic endeavors do you understand to be appropriate heart reactions?

Have you ever settled down and analyzed a piece of music? Evaluated its tempo and key, charted its intervals and rhythms? Although there can be a time for such endeavors, what might doing that do for your experience of the enjoyment of the music?

As we continue in our exploration of the Psalms, we must keep in mind that the Psalms are more like works of art or musical compositions than they are like expositions of lists of things to do or explanations of truths to master. It isn't that there is not some *content* to the each psalm (just like there is, obviously, *content* to a piece of art or an aria sung), but to engage in art or music is to appropriately connect emotionally and viscerally with the artistic piece, not merely to analyze. And that is what we want to do with the Psalms. We want to not merely understand the bare content. We want to engage our hearts and souls and be caught up with the music and art we find there.

Keep that in mind as you read Psalm 32.

What is the overall "feel" or sense that you get through reading this psalm? What emotions are evoked or stirred in you?

Weekly Devotional



Look over the psalm. Chart out who the psalmist is addressing (or, perhaps, who is pictured as speaking) in each of the verses:

32:1-2:

32:3-5:

32:6:

32:7:

32:8-9:

32:10-11:

Why is it important to notice that at times the psalmist is addressing himself, at times he is speaking to others, and at times he is addressing God? How does that aid you in connecting with the emotional element of the psalm?

Focus, for a moment, on the lines of the psalm that are addressed to the reader of the psalm or the hearer of these words. What does David really want those to whom he is speaking to “get”? What response does he hope to inspire or evoke? Why?

If you ended up with a brilliant analysis of the flow of this psalm and a clear outline of the development of thought, do you think David would affirm you for how you had engaged his writing? Why or why not?

Do you think the Spirit, who inspired David’s writing, would be satisfied if all you were left with after reflecting on Psalm 32 was a grasp of the basic content? Why or why not?

Day Two

As we have noticed earlier in our study, one of the things that

characterizes Hebrew poetry (like the Psalms) is *parallelism*. Ideas are emphasized in Hebrew poetry not through rhymes but through the creative repetition of ideas. Sometimes the ideas in adjacent verses are synonymous, sometimes they are near-opposites, and sometimes one idea overlaps and extends the idea of a previous verse.

As you read Psalm 32:1-5, notice the parallelism.

What are the various ways that David speaks of his sin? Why might he feel the need to be so variegated in speaking of his offense before God?

What are the various ways that David speaks of how he ultimately came to deal with his sin before God? What is the overall picture of what David does to “come clean” with God about his sin?

What are the various ways that David speaks of what God did for him when he finally did “confess” his sin? How does the variety of David’s language help underscore the magnitude of what David felt in God’s gracious dealings with him?

How does David describe the effect, in his own life, of keeping silent about his sin? What imagery does he use? What does the imagery convey?

Read again Psalm 31:1-5. What feelings arise as you enter into David’s description of his dealings with his own sin? How do you feel when you hear him describe the weight he felt in hiding? How do you feel when you read the relief that comes in his experiencing forgiveness?

How could David’s experience recorded here enrich your own personal exchange with God as you speak with Him about your own struggles with sin?

Day Three

In the middle of Psalm 32, there is a provocative image. Read Psalm 32: 6-9.

What is the picture being offered by the psalmist in verse 9? How do you imagine what he is describing?

Verse 9 contains one of the two imperatives (commands or calls) contained in this psalm. David says: “Do not be like . . .” The other imperative came earlier, in verse 6. What is the call or invitation in that earlier verse?

What is the connection between the call to “offer prayer” (verse 6) and the call to “don’t be mule-like” (in verse 9)? How do those thoughts relate?

Between these two imperatives, David tells us what he hears from God. In verse 8, we hear God’s voice. What does God say He intends to do?

Why does God’s declaration that He will counsel and guide rightly fall between David’s call to pray and not resist God?

Can you put into words the dynamic that is being pictured here in Psalm 32:6-9? How is David inviting you to respond to God?