



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
On
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Summer Psalms."
(Pentecost, 2026)
"Confession." Text(s): *Psalms 32.1-11.*

☐ Day #1—Monday, June 29th. Read: Psalm 32.1. –Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?

If there is a common experience of collective humanity, it is the awareness, at times subtle and at times intense, that there is something "wrong" with us—we do not always do what is good and right, perhaps we even feel that we are not what we are created to be. Even for those for whom religious faith is not a value, if one is honest, they will tell you that they do not even meet their *own standard* of what is right, good, and proper!

From the very beginning of Scripture, we are told what our "dilemma" is: we were created to be in a relationship with God and each other, based on self-giving love. However, humankind disobeyed God's commanded limit when it comes to our relationship with God and sought (seeks) to seize life on humankind's own terms—apart from a relationship with God. Now, a self-focused, a self-willing attitude developed that causes alienation, fear, and shame, corrupting God's good world. The Bible calls this reality, sin (Small "s"...the actions we take) and Sin (Capital "S"), the power of death now loose in the world. We live, feel, and experience these "S/sin realities" every day! So, what do we do?

As we continue with the Biblical story, we witness that God still desires to be with His creatures. In doing so, He provides various ways and means to receive His forgiveness and the new life that flows from His forgiveness! However, we must admit to God that we do sin, that we are powerless over sin and need Him! The Bible calls this *Confession*. Confession is being honest, open, and vulnerable with God and each other! It is the first step toward being set free from guilt, shame, and fear.

David, having experienced divine chastening and forgiveness (possibly for the sin of adultery and murder recorded in 2 Sam. 11), encouraged others to seek the Lord who deals graciously with sinners. If they refuse submission they will endure chastening. This psalm may be a companion to Psalm 51, referring to David's sin with Bathsheba. At that time David refused for a year to acknowledge his sin. Psalm 51 was his prayer for pardon; Psalm 32 would then follow it, stressing God's forgiveness and the lesson David learned.¹

Consider/Reflect: "When sin is confessed and Absolution occurs for the sake of Christ, God does not hold that sin against the penitent sinner...Forgiven by God, the believer sincerely acknowledges his sin and does not try to excuse or cover it up. Augustine: 'Nor has he in his mouth boastings of righteousness, when his conscience is full of sins.'"²

☐ Day #2—Tuesday, June 30th. Read: Psalm 32.1-2. —Examine: The Text and its Message.

As a Psalm of thanksgiving coupled with instruction encouraging the reader not to resist the guidance of Yahweh but to trust fully in him, Psalm 32 is divided into five segments: a proclamation of blessing (32:1–2), the narrator's personal example (32:3–5), exhortation with personal testimony (32:6–7), admonition against resisting God's instruction (32:8–10), final call to praise (32:11)...Thematically Psalm 32 links back to Psalm 31 through the use of "hiding place" terminology in 32:7... and links forward to Psalm 33, which has no heading of its own...The primary focus of Psalm 32 is on the salutary effect of confession of sin that leads to divine forgiveness and restoration.³

1 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

2 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

3 *The NIV Application Commentary: Psalms Volume 1* (Zondervan. Kindle Edition).

The Psalm opens with a principle of wisdom: those who are forgiven are “blessed!” “The description presupposes throughout not a sinless person, but a person whose sins are forgiven; the psalmist views humans as sinning beings, whose possibility of happiness lies in the removal and forgiveness of that sin.”⁴

Three principal terms are employed to designate the dimensions of human evil: (1) *transgression* (פּשַׁע), namely acts reflecting rebellion against God; (2) *sin* (חַטָּה), the most general term, designating an offense, or turning away from the true path; (3) *iniquity* (עוֹן), indicating distortion, criminality, or the absence of respect for the divine will...the three terms as a whole specify the full dimensions of human evil, and hence the situation from which a person might be delivered through divine forgiveness, thus finding happiness.⁵

Verse 2 ends with the assurance that in the forgiven person there is no deceit. D. Williams and L.J. Ogilvie comment:

We cannot hide when we face our sin. The shame and deceit, the hypocrisy under which we have lived, like the false fronts on a Hollywood movie set, are all exposed. The grief over our sin and the gift of God’s righteousness then make us guileless. Thus David concludes verse 2 with the blessing of those “*in whose spirit there is no deceit.*” When God catches us, exposes us, and forgives us, He also frees us from pretense. At last we can be honest.⁶

Consider/Reflect: “Forgiveness was not a light thing to David. He regards himself as being ‘blessed’ in receiving it. By using the word ‘blessed’, he was essentially saying, ‘How very happy!’ David was happy to be forgiven. If we do not share his appreciation for forgiveness, it is most certainly because we do not share his understanding of sin. Wrongdoing presupposes an objective standard of right and wrong. The Bible insists that God’s law is that standard. David alludes to God’s standard of behavior by the words he uses for his sin. He calls it ‘transgression’, which indicates the stepping over a known boundary. He calls it ‘sin’, which refers to missing a mark or a target. He calls it ‘iniquity’, which carries the idea of twisting something.”⁷

□ Day #3—Wednesday, July 1st. Read: Psalm 32.3-4. —Explore: The background to this text(s).

It is fascinating how King David articulates the relationship between our spiritual condition with our physical condition! Just as stress and worry can manifest themselves bodily—ulcers, heart conditions, high blood pressure, etc., so can an unrepentant heart, a “silent heart” (נֶפֶשׁ) manifest itself physically—“bones wasting away” and the “groanings all day long.” While this can literally reflect physical manifestations of a spiritual malaise, some scholars suggest that David is using a more “poetic” description of an individual who is unwilling to confess his/her sins to God and thus receive His forgiveness and peace.

The consequences of unrepentant silence are poetically evoked in physical terms; indeed, the physical language has led some commentators to suggest that there is here a reflection of psychosomatic illness, a bodily reaction to the internally contained conflicts of guilt. But it is more likely that the words should be interpreted in a more general poetic sense. The “groaning” is a consequence of living with guilt and a stifled conscience; the “aging bones” portray the growing weakness of the spiritual life which follows the unhealthy practice of bottling up one’s evil within the soul, steadfastly retaining silence, rather than finding the emancipation of forgiveness through speech. The “heavy hand” of God, experienced within the mind and conscience, indicates an awareness of the need for repentance, but a stubborn refusal to yield to God. And the sinner’s silence, aggravated by the heavy hand of God, contributed to the dry curling of the tongue, as in one desperate for water in a desert; so long as the tongue refused to speak the words of repentance, it curled in speechless pain.⁸

Consider/Reflect: [Martin Luther]: “For one who keeps silent (that is, who does not confess), his bones quickly grow old, that is, his powers in which he formerly stood in good things are always reduced more and more by sins” ...[God]...presses us toward contrition, confession, and repentance (cf Rm 7)...Such confession of sin, which is made to God, is contrition in itself. When confession is made to God, it must be made with the heart, not only with the voice, like actors on the stage.”⁹

□ Day #4--Thursday, July 2nd. Read: Psalm 32.5-7.— Explore: The background to this text(s).

Contrary to a “silent heart” (נֶפֶשׁ) and its attendant consequences (vs. 3b-4), when we confess our sins, acknowledging that we are guilty before our Heavenly Father, we receive His forgiveness! The word “confession” is from the Greek, ὁμολογέω (*homologeō*)

4 P.C. Craigie. *Psalms 1–50* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004).

5 Ibid.

6 D. Williams and L.J. Ogilvie. *Psalms 1–72* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1986).

7 R. Ellsworth. *Opening up Psalms* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006).

8 Craigie, *Psalms*.

9 Quoted in, *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

which literally means “To agree with.” When we confess, we are “agreeing” with God that we have “missed the mark” (the Greek meaning of “to sin”). Again, we are being *honest* with God and ourselves; we stop denying and “covering up” (v.5) our sins.

In the words of confession (v 5), the psalmist uses the same three words that appeared in the wisdom introduction (*sin, iniquity, and transgression*) to indicate the comprehensiveness of his confession. And the confession of the first three lines (v 5a–c) immediately results in the divine forgiveness (v 5d). Confession is like opening the floodgate of a dam. When there is no confession, the waters pile up behind the dam, creating immense pressures on the wall, but as soon as the floodgate is opened, the waters subside and the pressures diminish.¹⁰

Verse 7 goes even one step further to reveal that, when we are forgiven and reconciled by God, God then *continues to care for us!* There is a sense in this verse that confession can also bring an inner healing; we can let go of the past and live in the love and mercy of Almighty God! We are set free! As Williams and Ogilvie note:

One of God’s gifts to the church today is the ministry of inner healing. A key element in this spiritual therapy is not only receiving forgiveness from God but also giving forgiveness to ourselves. The denial of sin, the repression of sin, and the suppression of sin are not answers. The infection continues to eat at us.¹¹

Consider/Reflect: (Commenting on King David in this Psalm)...“He shows that even saints ought to seek forgiveness of sins. They are more than blind who do not realize that wicked desires in the flesh are sins”...[Augustine]: “Let none think, when the end has come suddenly, as in the days of Noah, that there remains a place of confession, whereby he may draw nigh unto God”¹²

□ **Day #5— Friday, July 3rd. Read: Psalm 32.8-9.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

As we looked at yesterday, not only are we forgiven when we confess, we are promised God’s ongoing presence and direction in our lives! The text now transitions from David speaking to God to God now speaking to David. As God speaks directly to David, and consequently to us, God promises to teach us and lead us in His ways, and, incredibly, God promises that He will “keep my eye upon you.” Again, Williams and Ogilvie remind us that:

God is our triumphant King and God is our teacher. When the Lord brings Israel out of Egypt He gives His people the Law. Redemption is for obedience. We are “saved to serve.” God promises instruction and teaching to David. This teaching is for living, walking in the Lord’s ways. But God not only shows us the way, He also guides us in it. His “*eye*” is upon us as a watchful Father. We always live and walk before Him. He looks upon us and does not turn His face from us.¹³ The only way we could forfeit God’s direction and care is to stubbornly reject them! This is the warning of *verse 9*. “We are not to be like a “*horse*” or “*mule*” who needs a “*bit*” and “*bridle*” for control. We are to be responsive to God, obedient to His word, and anxious to walk in His ways.”¹⁴

The simile of v 9 develops in more detail the wisdom of Proverbs: “the whip for a horse, the bridle for an ass, the rod for the fool’s back” (Prov 26:3). The godly one is advised not to be stubborn, like a mulish horse...that constantly requires restraint lest it gallop away by itself. While it is possible that the psalmist is referring to stubborn sinfulness in general, the more immediate implication of the words is to be found in the stubborn resistance to confession of sin, already stated in vv 3–4. Such stubborn resistance brings only grief, whereas the one whose trust in the Lord leads to confession of sin may know God’s loving kindness.¹⁵

Consider/Reflect: “David’s ending exhortation speaks of the ‘*righteous*,’ the ‘*upright in heart*,’ namely those who have repented and have been renewed. They are now called to worship. They are to ‘*be glad in the Lord*,’ in Yahweh, who provides *provision* for sin (vv. 1–5), *protection* from enemies (vv. 5–7), and His *presence* through life (vv. 8–9). Israel’s ‘*joy*’ is to be expressed in shouting; it is to be vocal and verbal. It is the cry of delight from those who stand in the presence of the God of their salvation. It is the only valid expression of those who see the Lord: ‘*Shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*’”¹⁶

10 Craigie, *Psalms*.

11 Williams and Ogilvie. *Psalms*.

12 Quoted in, *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

13 Williams and Ogilvie. *Psalms*.

14 Ibid.

15 Craigie, *Psalms*.

16 Williams and Ogilvie. *Psalms*.

□ **Day #6-Saturday, July 4th. Read: Psalm 32.10-11.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

The psalm progresses smoothly from the statement of principle (*vs. 1–2*) to the illustration of the principle (*vs. 3–5*); from the invitation to pray (*v.6*) to the admonition not to be stubborn (*vs. 9–10*); concluding on a mighty note of praise. “It is a fundamental psalm, illustrating powerfully the prerequisite of spiritual health, namely, a self-conscious awareness of one’s sinful life and of the necessity of acting upon that awareness in confession before God.”¹⁷

The Gospel (good news) of Scripture is that God, in grace and love, has come to us through Jesus to bear the curse of our sin and its death-dealing consequences. When we confess that we sin and are powerless to free ourselves from sin and death, God answers this confession with His absolution: We are forgiven on account of Christ; we are justified (made right) with God and given Jesus’ very righteousness! The Holy Spirit draws us into Jesus’ divine life so that we can live lives of freedom, joy, and peace! Our only response to these realities can only be grateful praise (*v.11*). Clearly, Psalm 32 is “central to the gospel and points out the path of true happiness to sinners aware of their need for forgiveness.”¹⁸

Today is Independence Day, the birthday of our Country! Today, thank God for our freedom and for those who in their commitment to freedom, fought, (and still fight), for that freedom. After Pentecost, the early church expanded beyond the border of Palestine, into Rome, and eventually into the rest of Europe. One day, a group of courageous, English Pilgrims, seeking religious freedom, will land on Plymouth Rock, and begin the great “American Experiment.”

Decades later, another group of courageous leaders, two-hundred and fifty years ago, would gather in Philadelphia to seek political *and* spiritual freedom, declaring the American colonies independent from Great Britain. Because of these courageous and prayerful actions (and many others in the years to come), we live in a country where we are free to worship and to gather as disciples of Jesus!

Consider/Reflect: [Martin Luther]: “The beginning of this psalm teaches two things: first, that all are in sins [no one is righteous] and no one is blessed; second, that no one is capable of meriting the forgiveness of sin, but it is the Lord alone who forgives freely by not imputing [guilt]...Ps 32 also shows the physical, mental, and spiritual implications of being silent in sin. God calls us to confess our sins quickly with contrite hearts in order to receive Absolution. Only He can relieve the troubled heart. ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (1Jn 1:9).” [Pray]: Lord Jesus Christ, grant me the honesty to examine my life according to Your Ten Commandments. Show me my sin, to know and feel it in my heart and disdain it. Most of all, grant forgiveness by Your gracious hand. Amen.”¹⁹

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...

“Summer Psalms”

Scripture Texts:

Psalm 150

Romans 7.14-25a

Luke 5.1-11

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 *The Lutheran Study Bible.*