

**“The Profit of Confession and the Pain of Chastening” Psalm 32, Sermon Notes**  
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**Morning Worship Service**

Last week we looked at Psalm 23 where we saw David express his absolute trust in His perfect shepherd Yahweh. Psalm 23 also gave us a picture of the ideal experience for a sheep in the flock of God

But, as we mentioned last week, even when sheep have a good and flawless shepherd, sometimes they get into trouble

Sometimes they wander, go astray, and become cast, upside down on the ground flailing their legs to and fro in what we called, “*self-inflicted frightened frustration*.” A fitting way to describe a stubborn believer who has wandered away from the Lord

So even though Psalm 23 is the ideal experience of a sheep, it’s what we all should experience with the Lord as our shepherd, perhaps you’ve noticed that Psalm 23 is not the only Psalm

If it were we might be tempted to discouragement and despair because there are times we don’t trust our shepherd the way we ought, we don’t respond to his instruction, and we don’t experience the great blessings of Psalm 23

And this was even true of David the writer of that Psalm. It’s interesting that the Psalm right before 23, Psalm 22, begins this way: “My God my God why have you forsaken me?”

So, beginning of Psalm 23, “the Lord is my shepherd, I lack no good thing.” Beginning of Psalm 22, “my God my God why have you forsaken me?”

Which is it David? Well, this is not indicating that the Scriptures are full of contradictions, it’s rather indicating that the Scriptures are *realistic*. The Scriptures were given to sinners as an all-sufficient guide for everything that has to do with life and godliness, every season of life, every kind of spiritual condition

Everything from the highest joys and the sweetest obedience to the pit of despair and stubborn unbelief

And therefore, we should expect to find Psalms that deal with how we respond when we have been that stubborn sheep who has wandered away from God’s instruction

This morning, we’re going to look at Psalm 32 and see the response God calls his people to when we have rebelled against our shepherd, when we have sinned. What does a wandering sheep’s repentance look like?

The title of the sermon is the profit or we could even say the pleasure of confession and the pain of chastening. Those are the 2 main ideas that are interwoven throughout this Psalm

For the context of this Psalm you can actually turn to 2 Samuel 11. Although we are confident Psalm 32 is penned by David, as is indicated in the superscript, there is no *inspired context* for this Psalm

So although we cannot authoritatively insist on the context, there is much agreement among scholars that the context of Psalm 32 has to do with David's response to his sinful actions in 2 Samuel 11

You're familiar with the story: David lusted after another man's wife, Bathsheba, he committed adultery with her. He thought he had gotten away with it but then she sent him a message that she was pregnant

What follows is a fitting illustration of the principle that if you are willing to lie, then you are willing to do *anything*. Because you know you can just lie to cover it up. Lying is the gateway sin, so to speak

When David is informed that Bathsheba is pregnant his options at that point are either to come clean or attempt to cover it up. As you know he attempts to cover it which includes having Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, killed in battle

So, it started with lust, which then led to adultery, which then led to conspiracy to commit murder

Nathan the prophet is then sent by the Lord to David to help expose David's sin

But what we can't overlook is that Nathan's confrontation with David didn't happen right away. There was a significant period of time from David's sin until Nathan comes to him

For instance, look at 2 Samuel 11:26 ff, "26 Now when the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba) heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27 When the time of mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house and she became his wife; then she bore him a son..."

Now skip down to 2 Samuel 12:1, "Then the Lord sent Nathan to David..."

So this means that David attempted to cover up his sin for a minimum of around 10 months, during the entire pregnancy, and even at least until right after the child was born

That is significant because it was this very 10-month period or so that many believe to be the backdrop of Psalm 32 as David describes his experience during that time period: Everything from the pleasure of experiencing forgiveness through confession, to the pain of chastening for unconfessed sin

Now, my Old Testament scholars in the room might be a little skeptical of this because they know there is another Psalm, Psalm 51, which talks about David's confession and restoration for these very same sins

And unlike Psalm 32, Psalm 51 *does* have an indicator as to the context, it clearly relates to David's confession and repentance after his sins in 2 Samuel 11

But, I don't believe this means we are misguided when we say Psalm 32 has a similar context. Because if we examine closely the two Psalms, we recognize that rather than *replacing* one another or even *competing against* one another for this same context, they actually *supplement* one another

In other words, Psalm 32 is David recounting what happened leading up to, during, and as a result of what he prayed for in Psalm 51

This would mean that *chronologically*, David's confession and request for forgiveness in Psalm 51 came first

Psalm 32 on the other hand is *after* the Lord heard and granted his prayer in Psalm 51, and he is now reflecting on the entire process. The 10-month period he hid his sin, his time of confession, the joy of experiencing forgiveness, and the pain he experienced when God chastened him for not confessing his sin

In fact, there is an indicator in Psalm 51 (turn there) that suggests these two Psalms are linked together:

Take a look at Psalm 51:10ff, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit."

What's going to happen when you answer this prayer Lord? Verse 13, "*Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You. <sup>14</sup> Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; *Then* my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. <sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise."

I believe Psalm 32 is David coming through on these very intentions as a result of answered prayer. Lord if you listen to my plea and grant me forgiveness I will teach sinners your ways, I will joyfully declare my experience to the people of God

So, all that to say, Psalm 51 and 32 are not at odds with one another and therefore we don't need to pick one to be the context of 2 Samuel 11. They both flow from that context and are focusing on different vantage points

With that as the backdrop, let's look at Psalm 32: "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! <sup>2</sup> How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit! <sup>3</sup> When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. <sup>4</sup> For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away *as* with the fever heat of summer. *Selah*.

<sup>5</sup> I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him. <sup>7</sup> You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. *Selah*.

<sup>8</sup> I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. <sup>9</sup> Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, *otherwise* they will not come near to you.

<sup>10</sup> Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him. <sup>11</sup> Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart."

Now, you'll notice in the superscription before verse 1 there are the words, "A Psalm of David. A maskil."

A maskil still falls into the category of a song, but it is fashioned in such a way as to emphasize *principles of wisdom*

In other words, while some Psalms fall into the category of praise, a maskil on the other hand is didactic, its goal is to instruct us, teach us principles of wisdom through song

So based on the fact that this Psalm is a maskil, a teaching Psalm, I've outlined the text this way:

David instructs us about confession and forgiveness through 2 teaching methods:

The first teaching method is that of instruction by way of personal experience in verses 1-5.

The second teaching method is that of instruction by way of public exhortation in verses 6-11

So we'll begin with David's personal experience as he declares the pleasure of experiencing God's forgiveness in verses 1-2

Verse 1, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! 2 How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit."

You see that word "blessed" is repeated twice in these two verses. It means that whoever is in this category is in a state of maximum happiness, a state that cannot be improved on, an enviable state

Blessed means you aren't lacking in any category: you are fulfilled, happy, joyful, content, it's a state of maximum spiritual prosperity

But notice in verses 1 and 2 the prerequisite to experience this blessedness: transgression is forgiven, sin is covered, iniquity is not imputed

This is the first of several triplets David will use in this Psalm. The first set of triplets has to do with the categories of moral failure before God

The first is transgression (עָוָן) emphasizing rebellion against an authority, knowingly crossing the line with a disdain for the one who drew the line. It is high-handed, defiant rebellion

And it is significant that David uses this first term because while all transgression is sin, not all sin is transgression

In other words, some sins are committed without premeditation, or without a knowledge of God's will in a particular area, and therefore the offender, although still sinning, is not *knowingly* and *high-handedly* rebelling against God's authority

But David begins with the word transgression because *his* actions first and foremost clearly fell into this category. David knew what God's will was, after all, lust, adultery and murder are each specifically represented in the 10 commandments, and yet David willingly chose to disregard and defy God. That's transgression: "I know clearly what your will is, I just don't care."

Sin (חַטָּאת) is the second word David uses, and it means “missing the mark,” as in a failure to hit God’s target of morality, whether intentional or unintentional. This is the broadest category for moral failure in the Scriptures

And lastly, he uses the term iniquity (עֲוֹן), emphasizing the crookedness, the perversion of man’s deeds, his twisted and corrupt behavior, commonly also used in association with guilt

So you can see this is quite a comprehensive picture he is drawing for us when he uses these terms. He is stressing totality and absolute wickedness of his sin

And he is also using this set of comprehensive terms so that he can magnify the grace and forgiveness of the Lord. In other words, no class of moral failure, whether it be transgression, sin, iniquity, no class puts you beyond the reach of God’s forgiveness

This is what we see next as David counteracts the 3 terms for man’s sin with 3 terms for God’s gracious dealings with us in verses 1-2. This is the second set of triplets he employs. Notice these terms: forgiven, covered, does not impute

This word for Forgiven (אָשַׁן) refers to the lifting of a weight and burden from our shoulders. The heavy burden of guilt, knowing that I had willingly and defiantly acted against God, the burden of this transgression has been lifted off of me so that I bear it no longer

The next word you see in verse 1 there is covered (הִסְכִּיחַ). My sin is hidden or concealed from God’s sight. It’s no longer in his view as He is holding it against me. He has covered over it with his mercy

And then lastly the word impute (בִּשְׂאוֹן) there in verse 2. This is accounting terminology, a crediting to someone’s account.

If the Lord does not impute iniquity that means he does not credit my iniquity to my account, he does not consider or reckon me guilty. My moral bank account, even though it should be stacked full of guilt, is wiped clean

Now we have to spend a minute on this word “impute” because it is a pretty significant theological term, showing up in passages that have to do with our justification and relationship with the Lord

Interestingly, this same word for impute is used in Genesis 15:6, speaking of Abraham, “<sup>6</sup>Then he believed in the LORD; and He *reckoned* it to him as righteousness.”

There’s the positive side of imputation. What we call God’s alien (foreign, not your own) God’s alien righteousness credited to your account through faith

We should note that Psalm 32 on the other hand is not primarily dealing with the positive side of imputation, rather, it is dealing with the negative side of imputation, your sin not being credited to your account

However, these two ideas, the positive and negative side of imputation, are two sides of the same coin of justification

When we are justified, when we are declared righteous in the courtroom of heaven, we are not only forgiven of all sin, (there’s the negative side, our sin is not credited to our account), but we are also given God’s righteousness, the righteousness of Christ (there’s the positive side of imputation)

In fact, Paul uses these both of these verses, Genesis 15:6 and Psalm 32:1-2, in Romans 4 to support the doctrine of justification by faith alone

Justification meets our two greatest needs as sinners. Forgiveness and righteousness. When one happens, the other happens. Two sides of the same coin of justification

By the way, because justification is timeless, all the way back to Genesis 15:6, we, like David, need to keep on confessing our sins after our conversion

You can't come along and say the reason David was confessing his sin after he had become a believer is because God dealt with sin and justification differently than he does with us

No, David, like Abraham before him, was declared righteous when he trusted in the Lord

We confess sin today the same reason David will go on to talk about confessing his sin here in Psalm 32

My sin has separated me from the Lord and I need to confess that sin to him and have that relationship and intimacy restored

And secondly, like David, we confess our sin to be reminded of and experience anew, the joy of *already having been justified* in the courtroom of God

So, back to the bigger picture here of verses 1-2, we've seen two sets of triplets. The first three, transgression, sin, iniquity, emphasizing man's absolute and comprehensive wickedness

The second three, forgiven, covered, not imputing, emphasizing God's absolute and comprehensive forgiveness

But what about this phrase that comes next in verse 2, notice, "and in whose spirit there is no deceit." Deceit = concealing, misleading, duplicity

Why add this little phrase right at end of these glorious reminders of God's forgiveness and blessing?

Because how we experience the blessing of forgiveness, namely, through confession, is prone to abuse. One abuse we just mentioned, neglecting the practice altogether. Just assuming that once I'm in Christ I don't ever have to confess my sin. A view that is very appealing to the flesh by the way

This deceit may also take the form of *redefining* my sin in other terms that don't imply culpability

Maybe you take your cue from the world and redefine your sin as just personality differences, cultural difference, or mistakes, or a psychological disorder, or chemical imbalances, or I'm a victim of my environment or upbringing

If you're justifying sin in your life by appealing to those categories that's deceit in your spirit because you're not being honest with your sin. You are not owning your sin and calling it what God calls it

Another way we have deceit in our spirit when it comes to our sin before God is assuming that a mere confession of sin in the sense of repeating and admitting to God what we've done is *necessarily* biblical confession

Proverbs 28:13 is helpful here: "he who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, (now what's the contrast, what's the way to not conceal your sin?) but he who confesses *and forsakes* them will obtain mercy."

Confession hasn't actually occurred unless it was accompanied by a desire to forsake the sin. In other words, if you confess to God with your lips, but in your heart you have no intention of repenting, you still love it, then you aren't really confessing your sin

And you say, "well what I am doing then? It sure seems like I'm confessing to the Lord." Well, maybe you are confessing to *yourself* and granting *yourself* forgiveness so that you will feel better. One way to tell that is if you can quickly and easily "confess" your sin to God but you are terrified at the thought of anyone else knowing your sin

In other words, you'll expose quickly and freely before the Lord, but you'll conceal it before others. That's a sign that you aren't really confessing to the Lord. Why? Because any sin that we try to conceal hasn't been covered

The very fact that you won't expose yourself to others proves that you haven't really experienced forgiveness for that sin from God

Because when sin is truly confessed and repented from, there's no need to hide or be deceitful

So that statement there in verse 2 is significant: The blessedness does not come to those who *through deceit* go through the superficial motions of confession while still cherishing or redefining sin in some way

It comes to those who are genuinely dealing with their sin before the Lord, and others when appropriate

Now, David is going to give a personal example of this very deceit when it comes to dealing with sin. When there is the absence of confession there is the presence of deceit

Notice verses 3-4, "When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. <sup>4</sup> For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away *as with the fever heat of summer*."

Here we see a biblical principle that is littered throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Namely, spiritual rebellion is often made manifest in physiological effects

In other words, it is not uncommon for spiritual problems to cause physical problems in our bodies

And when we talk about this topic there are two errors we must avoid: the first is the error of assuming that all sickness is a result of individual sin

The error of assuming that if someone gets cancer that automatically means they must have unconfessed sin in their life. That simply can't be supported in the Scriptures

One of many places we could go to support this is the first few verses of John 9 where the disciples were committing this very error in assuming that this individual was born blind because his parents must have sinned in some egregious way

But Jesus clearly gives us this category when he responds; “it wasn’t that his parents sinned, it was because God had a purpose, so that the works of God might be displayed in his life when he is healed.”

Furthermore, the book of Job is very helpful in preventing this error. Job was a righteous man with no hidden, unconfessed sin in his life, and yet he experienced very significant and painful things in his body

And sure enough his friends came by and said, “you must have done something. Confess your sin to God Job.” And they were wrong, they only amplified his troubles with poor counsel

So, not all sickness or bodily problems are a result of individual sin. But the other error we must avoid is assuming that no sickness, no problems in the body are a result of individual sin

Let alone this text in Psalm 32, one passage worth noting is in 1 Corinthians where we see that the church in Corinth was partaking of the Lord’s supper in an worthy manner and Paul says, “This is why some of you are weak and ill and some have fallen asleep.” 1 Cor. 11:30

What’s this epidemic going on here at our church? Why are so many of us getting this unexplained illness, and why have even some of dear brothers and sisters died?

Paul says, the Lord is chastening you. You are experiencing physiological effects because of your spiritual rebellion

So, with those two errors in mind, when it comes to verses 3-4 in Psalm 32, David clearly falls into this second category. He is experiencing significant emotional and physical pain as a result of a spiritual problem, unconfessed sin in his life

Notice verse 3, “When I kept silent about my sin.” I was unwilling to come clean and acknowledge to God my sin

As a result, something happened to my body: Middle of verse 3, “my body wasted away.” Literally, it became old and worn out.

We use the phrase when we go through something difficult, “that took years off of my life.” David is saying, this time period accelerated the aging process. My body feels old and worn out

And notice verse 3, this was “through my groaning all day long.” This is the same word used of Job after his suffering in the first few chapters of that book. Job 3:24, “For my sighing comes instead of my bread, and my groanings are poured out like water.”

This is cry of anguish in response to significant physical and/or emotional distress

What was contributing to this agony? Notice verse 4, “for day and night your hand was heavy upon me.” God’s chastening hand

Notice the similarity with the previous verse: *My groanings all day long. Day and night your heavy hand upon me*

What's this stressing? No relief and the Lord relentlessly keeps dialing up the pressure. Burdening his conscience, disciplining him with trials, not blessing his labors, whatever form this chastening took

It felt like this: "the Lord is against me." Your heavy hand is upon me

Notice the rest of verse 4, "my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer." It's a picture of exhaustion and weariness

We can handle being out in the summer heat with the sun's full rays for a limited time and we won't become weary or exhausted

But what happens when we are out in the summer heat under the full strength of the sun and it only gets hotter and hotter and we don't have any water or shade?

We become weary and exhausted. That's the process here. David's vitality, his energy, was continually drained away as the Lord progressively turned up the heat in David's life

Now, remember the time period we are in here: If our context is correct, this would be referring to that minimum 10 month period during Bathsheba's pregnancy

During that period, we see here that David was absolutely miserable. And by the way, a pregnant Bathsheba probably wasn't at her best for a lot of the time either so you can imagine the misery they experienced their first year together as a married couple.

Do you think David was pleasant to be around during these 10 months? Lack of confession equates to the weight of guilt upon our shoulders

Combine that with the Lord's relentless discipline of us and we are going to be prone to irritability and anger

An angry and irritable person is often a guilty person. Their trying to bear the weight and carry the weight of their sin and guilt and no matter how hard they try, their little self-atonement project isn't working. The guilt isn't going away

And therefore this nagging guilt becomes very frustrating. When a person is guilty and frustrated, they will be angry and irritable

And David couldn't get relief. He didn't have the pharmaceutical industry to turn to make his guilt go away

If he was alive today, he would experience what many experience when they go to a medical doctor to solve spiritual problems. Tests are run, the doctor gives the results: "Everything came back negative, we can't find any medical issue with you."

The patient responds, "There's gotta be something wrong, I can't stand feeling this way, this can't be normal. Numb my pain doc, make it go away." And the doctor prescribes pills to treat the symptoms

David surely attempted the ancient versions of numbing his guilt and the ancient versions of escape, but these things accomplish no more than our modern versions: they're just a temporary bandaid on the internal agony

You know this agony, to some degree, if you're a genuine believer. The spiritual weariness and exhaustion as a result of not confessing and dealing with your sin. Taking the foot off of the sanctification pedal and feeding your flesh for a season

It may not have happened to you to this degree, but nonetheless, you know the seasons of your life when this happened to you

You know the signs in your life when you're not battling and confessing: you start to get lazy in the spiritual disciplines, the Word of God and prayer

You lack motivation to serve the church. Maybe you stop going to women's study or men's group because there's a convenient excuse you have

You're not really in a position to disciple anyone and certainly aren't going to approach anyone else to speak into your life

Your burden for the lost dwindles, you stop caring so much about evangelizing

And then over time you'll even start to try to discredit more mature Christians in your life so that you can feel more comfortable in your sin

And have you noticed that the longer it goes the more petty things start to really bother you? Things that wouldn't normally bother you, things that don't matter at all, but because in your heart you aren't dealing with sin you start to become bitter towards others for these petty differences

We can all recognize the patterns when we become lazy in dealing with our sin. But another reason to mention this is to highlight that there is no such thing as sin which only affects you

Your unconfessed idolatry, no matter how private, will cause you to isolate, to stop serving, God's people are robbed of your gifts and influence

Your unconfessed private idolatry will cause your burden for the lost to dwindle, so you stop evangelizing. So the lost are robbed of your witness

Undealt with private sin effects much more than just you

One more item to cover before we leave verses 3-4 is how to think about my life if I'm sick. In other words, if some sickness, if some physical ailments are caused by unconfessed sin, how do I know if my physical problems are a result of that?

Great question. It's not a question that should consume you if you are sick, but it's also not a question you should ignore if you are sick

For starters, it shouldn't take too long to know if you have significant, unconfessed sin in your life. David knew he had committed adultery and conspired to commit murder. David knew he was trying to cover up his sin. And David knew that the Lord was dialing up the pressure in his life until he confessed

In other words, there wasn't a guessing game between he and the Lord. And sometimes that's how we think about this issue. You get sick, maybe it's a chronic illness and you start to play guessing games with the Lord

"ok, Lord what is it? Am I watching too much tv, am I not evangelizing enough, am I not serving the church the way I should?" what is it, what's the cause of this illness?"

Probably the fact that you live in a fallen world. Why? Because what loving Father disciplines a child without ever revealing to the child why he's being disciplined?

With that in mind, the response to sickness in the life of a Christian doesn't change either way, no matter what caused the sickness

In other words, everyone who has any bodily issue or sickness, whether it was caused by unconfessed sin or not, *should respond the same way*: Confess and repent of all known sin in your life. And if you're doing that, you will receive clarity

Now as we come to verse 5, again you can see the two themes interweaving throughout this text as David will now go from the pain of chastening back to the profit and pleasure of confession

Notice verse 5, "I acknowledged my sin to you and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

"I acknowledged my sin to you." I made it known. I owned it and admitted it

"my iniquity I did not hide." I came clean, no deceit. I was finally honest before you Lord. Full disclosure

"I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." I will declare all the known ways I willingly and defiantly went against your authority

And notice that little phrase that comes before this last one: "*I said* I will confess my transgressions to the Lord."

I resolved to do this. I came to the Lord deliberately for this very purpose. In other words, this wasn't an accident where I was watching tv and my sin happened to come to my mind so I quickly confessed it to get it off of my conscience

No, this was intentional. Before I came to the Lord to confess, I decided I was going to confess. And I thought about what I was going to confess. I came to the Lord for this very purpose

What is the Lord's response when we deal openly and honestly before Him? End of verse 5, "and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

You lifted away my guilt. Guilt is often misunderstood today. Guilt has become nothing more than the *feelings* of guilt and shame which may or may not be associated with *actual* guilt

But guilt is a fact not a feeling. Guilt often produces those feelings of guilt and shame within us, but those are merely the symptoms of guilt

Guilt is the fact of having committed an offense against God. And therefore, we can try to make the feelings of guilt go away all we want, but actual guilt can only be removed by the one we have offended

David says, "You forgave me, you lifted it so that I am no longer guilty before You."

And we should also take note of the interesting play on words, if we want to call it that, in this verse and verse 1

You'll notice that the same word "cover" is used in both verses. Verse 1 to refer to God's actions, "sin is covered."

But here in verse 5 it is used of David's actions, rendered in the NASB as "my iniquity I did not hide" My iniquity I did not cover." Same word as in verse 1

This is no mistake. It's giving us a clear principle: For God to cover our sin, we must uncover our sin. We must be open and honest

And the principle works the other way as well. What we cover over and conceal, he eventually uncovers through painful discipline

Verses 3-4 were unnecessary. We could call that category self-inflicted trials, trials that we invited into our lives because of our stubbornness

In this case, it's the irrationality in our hearts where we won't take our sin to the God of mercy who through Jesus Christ covers us, but rather we attempt to cover over our sin so that God must take us through the pain of uncovering it

One of the most humbling thoughts with the Lord when it comes our sin is that he is more ready and willing to forgive, than we are ready and willing to confess  
Notice, here, there's no indication of a delay in God's response. There's no indication that the Lord said to David, "ok, you waited 10 months to confess, now that you've confessed I'm going to wait 10 months to forgive and lift the discipline."

No, the forgiveness was immediate. As soon as I stopped covering my sin, the Lord covered it

I also love where David's focus is here in verse 5. Notice the text says, "you forgave the guilt of my sin" not, "you removed all problems and consequences as a result of my sin."

Even though the implication is that David's health and emotional turmoil would have been restored, that's not the focus of the repentant. The focus of a repentant sinner is on my sin being dealt with and God forgiving me. Pleasing God, not escaping the consequences of my sin

And that's important to note because if someone is still complaining about the consequences of their own self-inflicted trials, they haven't confessed your sin, they're still covering it. True

confession leads to blessedness, the happiness of knowing you are forgiven and restored in your relationship with the Lord

And if that's true, you will joyfully embrace whatever scars you have from stubbornly not coming to God sooner

So David has now taught us about confession and forgiveness through the instruction of personal experience

The second teaching method is that of public exhortation, this will be in verses 6-11, which will go much quicker

Notice verse 6, "Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him."

So it begins with an inference: "Therefore" as if David is saying, listen up, no one needs to go through what I went through."

"Therefore, based on the blessedness of forgiveness through confession, and based on the fact that only pain awaits you if you don't confess, therefore, seek the Lord now. Deal with your sin now."

Do not foolishly invite the chastening hand of God in your life. Yes, He is exceedingly gracious and merciful, but these things are not extended to people *indefinitely*. There is a day of salvation, and there is a day of judgment. Seek the Lord in the day of salvation

This "flood of greater waters" we can think about in a couple of senses. One, the waters of God's wrath will not reach us if we have been forgiven and declared righteous in God's sight

Christ drank the cup of God's wrath, he bore those waters for us. So, the Lord's punitive flood waters of wrath will not reach the one who has been forgiven and declared righteous in Christ. And we can also think about the flood of great waters in sanctification. The Lord's corrective flood waters of chastening will not reach the one who is godly and confesses to the Lord without procrastination

How will they not reach the godly? Verse 7, "You are my hiding place." My refuge and fortress. If I deal with my sin in a timely manner I don't have to fear you as my enemy, I don't have to fear divine displeasure

"you preserve me from trouble." The trouble of eternal wrath, or the trouble of self-inflicted scars for the believer

When I stay near to you and I confess my sin, you protect me from self-inflicted scars in my life. You preserve me from those things

And notice that last phrase there in verse 7, "you surround me with songs of deliverance."

I'll be surrounded by salvation and deliverance, not surrounded by stories about how the Lord had to discipline me because I wouldn't draw near to him with my sin

If I'm consistently confessing my sin, you're going to bless me by reminding me often that you are a forgiving God. Your praise, songs of deliverance, *instead of my groanings*, will be on my lips

Now, as David continues his public exhortation he recounts a promise that the Lord made to him, notice verse 8, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you."

The reason I take this as the Lord speaking to David is twofold – One, I don't think it makes too much sense if David is telling the people: "I will counsel you with my eye upon you."

David is not omniscient nor omnipresent so I'm not sure how he could make this claim

But there's also a textual reason why I believe this is the Lord speaking in verse 8. In these verses every time you see the word "you" it is singular. It's not an address to the public assembly, it's an address to an individual

However, that changes to plural forms of the verbs when we get to verse 9

So I believe this is indicating that David is repeating the instruction the Lord gave to him for our benefit and then gives warning to all of God's people in verse 9 when he switches to the plural

So the Lord says, "I will instruct you, teach you, and counsel you." This is yet another set of triplets where 3 terms are employed by David to stress the all-sufficiency of the Lord's guidance and instruction

In other words, the Lord is *entirely devoted to your spiritual success*. And all of this wouldn't be worth much if the Lord didn't care enough to be involved, but notice, all of this is "with my eye upon you."

Omniscience. Intimately acquainted with all of your ways. I know your heart, I know your circumstances, I know your trials and troubles, I know your end from the beginning

Before I chose you to be saved, I knew exactly how your heart would respond to everything currently in your life

This is infinitely wise and knowledgeable instruction. And we can't help but think, only a stubborn fool wouldn't submit to this Lord

And yet, *to our shame*, there is a stubborn fool in each of our hearts so verse 9 is necessary: "Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you."

There are two types of submission. You can submit to an authority willingly and joyfully, or you can submit to authority begrudgingly, stubbornly, under compulsion, like a stubborn beast

Verse 9 is an illustration of David in verses 3-4. I won't draw near to you and confess my sin *without compulsion*

In other words, when I'm a horse or mule, I won't confess *simply because you tell me to Lord*. I will only do it when you cause me to confess by dialing up the pressure in my life until I get so miserable I realize I can't win this battle, I need to confess

Brute beasts refuse gentle guidance from their masters, so their masters must resort to harsh and forcible means in order to get them to submit

Solomon said in Proverbs 26:3, "A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools."

What do those three have in common? *Words* of their masters are not enough. Like a brute beast that insists on his way and his timing, a fool will not respond to the Lord's gentle and sweet instruction

A fool needs extra motivation, more motivation than just the Scriptures. That's one sure way to if you are a figurative mule. Is the Word of God not enough to compel your obedience?

Does it have to make perfect sense to you before you will believe a certain doctrine? Or, will you only respond in obedience if you feel like it?

Those are indicators that unnecessary trouble is coming your way. When you profess Christ but you but won't accept or respond to things in the Word of God

Isn't that exactly what happened with Israel and Judah. You won't listen to my word, you won't listen to my prophets, warning after warning after warning, ok, I know what you will listen to, I know what you will respond to. Pain

Assyrian invasion and exile for Israel. Babylonian invasion and exile for Judah

God's people can attempt to be mules. We can try to ignore the Word of God. We can try to shun our conscience. We can try to isolate ourselves from God's people

But we are absolutely powerless to prevent the chastening hand of God to come into our lives. He knows what it takes to get us to pay attention. I'll counsel you with my eye upon you. A comforting thought for the godly, and a terrifying thought for the stubborn

And the beginning of verse 10 completes this idea: "many are the sorrows of the wicked..."

What sorrows? The consequences of digging your heels in when the Lord is speaking to you through His Word

Stiffening your neck and as a result experiencing the sorrows of self-inflicted trials

All of God's people will experience sorrow and trials. But *some* of God's people experience sorrow and trials that could have been avoided if they would have responded to the Lord

But we're never left without hope. For every warning, there's always a precious promise, notice middle of verse 10, "but he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him."

This is the blessed state of verses 1-2. You're in a position of maximum divine blessing. If any trouble is in your life, any trials, it is not corrective discipline. You are as joyful and happy and as blessed as you could possibly be this side of eternity

This is reserved for those who trust in the Lord. In the context this means what? Taking him at his word, responding to his instruction, not leaning on my own wisdom. Confessing sin in a timely manner

And this specific promise and really the entire Psalm warrants a particular response from God's people. Notice verse 11, "be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for you, all you who are upright in heart."

I like the way this ends because it prevents us from responding to this instruction with incomplete obedience

It might sound something like this: Well, I don't like the feeling of being a mule, it's rather miserable, I don't like unnecessary trials in my life, I certainly don't want to go to hell and face God's judgment, so ok, I guess my only response is that I'll follow the Lord and be teachable, I'll try harder, and respond to His word the way I ought

That's not a picture of joyful submission, that's a picture of reluctant surrender. I still prefer my way and my wisdom, but I'll follow the Lord because I know I can't win

Solomon said something interesting about this in Proverbs 3:11-12 which the writer of Hebrews quotes in Hebrews 12, "my son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord or loathe His reproof, 2 For whom the Lord loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights"

Don't resist God's instruction and discipline. Welcome it! That's why I love verse 11. Your response to Psalm 32 is to be glad and rejoice

Rejoice when you experience forgiveness. Be glad and rejoice when you have been a mule and the Lord loves you enough to show you that and bring you back

Rejoice in the Lord and his ways, delight in the fact that He is a loving Father who won't leave you in your sin

Delight in the fact that you can be forgiven and declared righteous in His sight

Be glad and rejoice and shout for joy all you who are upright in heart