

Sermon Title: How to Have a Clear Conscience

Sermon by Rev. Bill Gaethke
Week of October 31, 2010

Sermon Based Small Group Discussion Guide

Big Idea: A guilty conscience negatively impacts every facet of your life. Repentance is the sole remedy.

Icebreaker

Sermon Text:

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

Learning more about the lesson

The Psalms are Israel's hymnbook. In the Psalms there are many voices from various times and places, from Joshua to Ezra, and from Jerusalem to Babylon. The psalms were used in ancient worship in the Temple, and they continue to live in both synagogue and church. Two recurrent words often appear, "Amen," and "Selah." The meaning of *Selah* (after verses 4 and 5 of our text) is unclear, but it may have referred to an instrumental interlude. There are several different types of psalms, including Laments (the most common), Thanksgiving Psalms, Hymns, and Salvation History Psalms. Psalm 32 is a Thanksgiving Psalm offered by one who experienced forgiveness and recovery from illness.

1. Proverbs 28:13 says, *He who conceals his sins does not prosper,
but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

The sermon identified several reasons why it is difficult for people to confess their sins to God even when they are troubled by a guilty conscience. Which of those reasons aligns best with your own experience? What rationale did you have for those times when you "concealed your sins" and hesitated to 'come clean,' admit guilt, and confess your sins to God?

Psalm 32:9 says, *Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.*

Why do you think the psalmist compares the person who

stubbornly refuses to acknowledge his or her guilt to a mule?

2. There are consequences in all of life for those who refuse to admit guilt, confess their sins, and receive forgiveness. What are some of those consequences?
3. Unconfessed sin sapped the psalmist's strength like stifling summer heat (v. 4). When we do not acknowledge our own sins, how is our spiritual strength affected? Be as specific as possible.
4. What do you think the psalmist means by the phrase, "in whose spirit is no deceit"(Psalm 32:2)?
5. 1 John 1:9 says, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* How is the Cross of Jesus Christ related to this assurance of forgiveness?
6. Is there a hymn, chorus, or song you like to sing when you feel blessed? How did that song become dear to you? When do you last recall singing it?

Taking it Home

1. Is there a sin in your life that, until now, you have been

stubbornly refusing to acknowledge?

2. What specific step might you take to acknowledge your sin and receive God's forgiveness?
3. Some Christians find that celebrating the Lord's Supper is a good time to come before God confessing one's sins in order to be renewed by a fresh experience of God's forgiving grace. Is the Lord's Supper such a time for you?

What other experiences, if any, have enabled you to be renewed by a fresh experience of God's grace?

Prayer Requests and Praises:

Pray together as a group for the courage to acknowledge and confess your sins in order to receive the cleansing of God's forgiveness.