CONFESSION; IT’S GOOD FOR THE SOUL  
PSALM 32

MAIN IDEA
Confession is a blessing available to us when we are suffering as a result of disobeying god’s will.

I. CONFESSION A BLESSING (VS 1-5)
*Sometimes God allows suffering to come our way as a way to remind us of the blessings we receive in confession.*

A. A STATE OF BLESSEDNESS (1-2)  
B. A STATE OF SUFFERING (3-4)  
C. A STATE OF RESTORATION (5)

II. REPENTANCE A BLESSING (VS 6-7)
*If we want to access the abundant life of Christ; we must keep short accounts with God.*

A. THE URGENCY OF REPENTANCE (6)  
B. THE POWER OF GRACE (7)

III. INSTRUCTION A BLESSING (VS 8-11)
*SINCE GOD HAS MADE HIS WILL KNOWN TO US; THE ONLY WAY TO ACCESS HIS BLESSINGS IS TO OBey.*

A. THE LORD TEACHES (8)  
B. POOR STUDENTS (9-10a)  
C. GOOD STUDENTS (10b-11)
Confession; It’s Good For The Soul
Psalm 32

This Psalm has an interesting place in the church calendar. For the Jews, this Psalm is read to conclude the worship services on The Day of Atonement. That holiday, Yom Kippur, is the highest holy day on their calendar. It is the day Jews confess all their sins and ask God to bless them for another year. Christians use this Psalm on Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday starts the period of time of personal reflection, confession, and repentance. It builds up to Good Friday when we remember the crucifixion of Jesus for our sins. The Psalm is considered to be one of the seven penitential psalms. Linguistically, this psalm is connected to the previous psalm; Psalm 31. The idea of a secret hiding place is mentioned in verse 7 in this psalm and verse 20 of Psalm 31. As I read and listened to the psalm, it sounded somber and depressing. However, when I took it apart and studied it, it seemed to be extremely hopeful. God gave us all a conscience. It is meant to inform us when we are doing wrong. There are people who have stopped listening to their consciences. Listen to this story Mark Twain told about himself;

“When I was a boy, I was walking along a street and happened to spy a cart full of watermelons. I was fond of watermelons, so I sneaked quietly up to the cart and snitched one. Then I ran into a nearby alley and sank my teeth into the melon. No sooner had I done so, however, than a strange feeling came over me. Without a moment’s hesitation, I made my decision. I walked back to the cart, replaced the melon – and took a ripe one.”

I’m pretty sure that’s not what the poet is talking about in this psalm. In fact, the main idea of this psalm is this. CONFESSION IS A BLESSING AVAILABLE TO US WHEN WE ARE SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF DISOBEYING GOD’S WILL. I don’t know if I thought much about this before but the feeling of guilt as a result of wrongdoing is a gift from God. It alerts us to the fact we have done something wrong and gives us an opportunity to make things right with God through confession.

That brings us to verses 1-5; confession is a blessing. SOMETIMES GOD ALLOWS SUFFERING TO COME OUR WAY AS A WAY TO REMIND US OF THE BLESSINGS WE RECEIVE IN CONFESSION. Let me remind us from the beginning that all suffering is not a direct of sin and all good things are not a result of being holy. However, this psalm reminds us that some suffering comes as a direct result of unconfessed sin.

I. CONFESSION A BLESSING (VS 1-5)

Verses 1-2 start out by describing a state of blessedness. This really describes the Hebrew definition of peace. For the Hebrew, peace meant being in a right relationship with God; and that was the greatest blessing anyone could have. If you take time to think about it; isn't that what all of us really long for? We want to know that things between God and us are right. As long as we know that our relationship with God is good; it doesn’t matter what kind of situation we find ourselves in; we’ll feel at peace. Sin is what disrupts our relationship with God.

In these two verses the songwriter lists three types of sin. The first is transgressions. This type of sin is rebellion. In other words, this type of sin is crossing the line intentionally. The second type is simply called sin. The meaning of this word is to miss the mark. This is the kind of sin we
commit unintentionally. The third type is mentioned in the second line of verse three. It is also called sin. This type is usually called iniquity. It means to twist, pervert, or distort what is right. These are things that harm our relationship with God. These are things that make us unhappy and cause us anxiety.

The way to solve the problem is to confess and repent. Look at the last line in verse 2. The person who stays connected to God has a heart that makes no excuses for sin. There is no deceit in his or her spirit. If they sin, they immediately confess and repent. If we want to be happy and blessed, we need to practice living honestly and openly before God.

If we don’t then we will find ourselves in a state of suffering as described in verses 3-4. In this particular case described by the psalmist; unconfessed sin results in some real illness. The person described here is covering up their sins, refusing to take responsibility for them, refusing to confess them, and avoiding God.

Look at the description in these two verses. The person is suffering physically. Their very bones ache and they are totally weak; they have no strength. Add to that they are anxious and depressed. The songwriter describes it as if God’s heavy hand is on this person. It as if the weight of God is crushing the person.

Look, there are times in our lives when we will be physically, spiritually, or emotionally ill. In fact we could be experiencing illness in all three areas. Even though all illness is not directly related to sin; prolonged illness presents an opportunity for us to ask the Holy Spirit to search us and point out our sin. Suffering presents us with opportunities to check out where we stand with God.

Verse 5 shows how we can experience a state of restoration. In the first half of the verse, the poet takes personal responsibility for his sin and acknowledges it before God. He makes no excuses and confesses his sin to God. This is a case when genuine sorrow caused by the suffering leads to genuine repentance.

The second half of the verse seems to indicate that the psalmist received immediate release from the physical, emotional, and spiritual pain.

What I’m about to say to you is going to sound strange; but hear me out. Sufferings of all kinds can sometimes actually be blessings from God. If God just stood by and did nothing when we sinned and refused to repent; we could just keep on sinning, our consciences would become dull, and there is no telling how much evil we could end up doing. Suffering can be a blessing. Even if the suffering doesn’t come directly from God, we can use it as a blessing. Too many times we become lazy in our Christian life. We start to accept things and let things slide.

Suffering has a way of waking us up. Don’t let any suffering go to waste. When suffering hits, let’s take that time to examine our hearts and ask God the Holy Spirit to point out anything us that is sinful. When we discover it; let’s take responsibility, confess our sins, and repent. Asking for forgiveness and resolving not to commit that sin again brings restoration with God and brings peace. SOMETIMES GOD ALLOWS SUFFERING TO COME OUR WAY AS A WAY TO REMIND US OF THE BLESSINGS WE RECEIVE IN CONFESSION.
I know this sounds like a strange sermon. Suffering is a blessing. Confession is a blessing. And now, we embrace repentance as a blessing in verses 6-7. IF WE WANT TO ACCESS THE ABUNDANT LIFE OF CHRIST; WE MUST KEEP SHORT ACCOUNTS WITH GOD. All throughout the Bible, confession is always connected with repentance. Let me give you an example. Let’s say I did something wrong to you. Let’s say I lied about you and gossiped about you. God convicts me of that sin and I confess to Him. As we said earlier, genuine sorrow leads to genuine repentance. Repentance is the actions that demonstrate our real sorrow in confession. Repentance would look like this. First of all, I would need to humble myself, go to you directly and tell you what I did. I would explain it in detail, apologize, and ask for your forgiveness. Then I would need to go and tell each person I told the lie to that I lied and what I said about you was a lie. That’s what genuine repentance is. Unless I repent in that kind of way, there is no way our relationship can be restored.

I have forgiven all the people who have done me wrong and you may have forgiven people who have done you wrong. However, unless they personally come to me, or in your case until they personally come to you, confess what they did and ask for forgiveness, there can be no restored relationship.

I think as your pastor, I have tried to model this. If I have wronged any of you, or even if I think I have wronged you; I have come to you, confessed to you, and asked for your forgiveness.

II. REPENTANCE A BLESSING (VS 6-7)

Verse 6 describes the urgency of repentance. God expects not only confession; but repentance and restoration. We act as if time is unlimited and repentance is an option. However, God’s timing and God’s patience will run out. There will come a time when He allows our consciences to become dull and He will turn us over to our own evil and our own lusts. The psalmist makes this sound urgent. He says, “Therefore let all the faithful pray to You while You may be found.” In the poet’s mind he reasons, “Why would anyone want to go on suffering if she doesn’t have to? Why would anyone continue to remain separated from God if he doesn’t have to? Why would anyone want to go on estranged from one of God’s children if they don’t have to?”

The Bible makes it clear; if we don’t judge ourselves and take responsibility for our sins, then God will judge us. Look, God gives us all these opportunities to make things right between Him and us; and between one another. It is imperative that we take hold of these blessings as soon as possible.

The power of grace is laid out in verse 7. Here we come across the phrase, “You are my hiding place.” There is freedom, release, and healing in confession and repentance. Sure it takes humility; but look at the incredible rewards that come. God gathers us up into His arms, He wraps us up, and folds us up in His love. He will surround us with songs of deliverance. Confession and repentance are the way to run into the safety and love of God. They bring us into that very special place where we can feel the love of God. Let’s think in terms of risk/reward. Whatever humiliation I will have to face to come and apologize to you for a wrong I committed against you, ask for your forgiveness, and promise never to do that again; is nothing compared to the love and comfort I will receive from God for doing so. I hope we are starting to see what blessings suffering, confession and repentance are. IF WE WANT TO ACCESS THE ABUNDANT LIFE OF CHRIST; WE MUST KEEP SHORT ACCOUNTS WITH GOD.
III. INSTRUCTION A BLESSING (VS 8-11)

The last blessing described in this psalm describes God’s instruction as a blessing in verses 8-11. SINCE GOD HAS MADE HIS WILL KNOWN TO US; THE ONLY WAY TO ACCESS HIS BLESSINGS IS TO OBEY HIM. We have talked about revelation in our study through previous psalms. We described Natural Revelation as God revealing Himself through the grandeur, the beauty, and the power of nature. God also revealed Himself through the incarnate Jesus. If we want to know what God is like, all we need to do is look at Jesus.

We read about Jesus in the Gospels and they are part of Special Revelation. God has revealed Himself to us through the Bible. We are lucky that we don’t have to walk around in fear trying to figure out what God expects of us. From the very first verse in Genesis through the very last verse in the Book of Revelation; God has shown us Who He is, Who we are, what we can expect of Him, and what He expects of us. In verse 8 we are informed that the Lord teaches. This psalm takes a little twist here.

There is some debate as to who is talking in verses 8-9. Since David is the author of the psalm, he has clearly been talking in the first person. So many scholars feel that these verses are the words of David. But look at the second line in verse 8. This seems to fit God’s situation better. In other words, God teaches us, counsels us, and keeps His loving eye on us. Many scholars believe this is God talking in these two verses. I’m not sure because there are good arguments on both sides.

I would like to suggest a third option that combines both of the previous options. I haven’t read this anywhere so take what I’m about to say with a great deal of skepticism. Remember, these psalms are actually poems and songs and they are inspired by God. In songs, we often switch between God speaking and us speaking without making much distinction. Let me give you an example. We often sing a song titled Matthew 11:28. Here is the Chorus:

“Come unto me, all who are weak

Weary and heavy laden

Gentle am I, humble in heart

And you shall find rest for your soul.”

You will recognize that those are words that Jesus spoke. That is God speaking directly to us. But then each verse is spoken from our human perspective. I’ll just read through the first verse:

“All things are given unto those who believe

Princes and lowly ones His blessings receive

And just when I think that means everyone but me

Jesus comes beckoning to me.”

So oftentimes in songs we sing the words of God and human words without making direct distinction between the speakers. However, we know who is speaking. Even though David is the
author, I think we can safely say that even though the words are being sung by David, he is describing the words and thoughts of God here. David could be saying, “I’ll instruct you as to God’s desire in this song,” or “these are God’s very words in this song.”

Either way, there are some issues we need to deal with in this verse. God the Holy Spirit spoke through the writers of the Bible. These may be the vocabulary and experiences of each individual writer; but each was inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit. That is why we can refer to the Bible as The Word of God. Since the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible, we need the Holy Spirit to help us interpret the Bible.

Look at the second line. He says, “I will counsel you.” One of the words used in the Greek New Testament to describe the Holy Spirit is Paraclete. It describes a layer, an advocate, a guidance counselor. It is someone who comes alongside another to help them, guide them, and counsel them. If we are Christians, then we have the Holy Spirit Who will interpret Scripture for us, show us how to apply it in our lives, and empower us to do what it says.

All this is done under the loving and watchful eye of God. How much more of a blessing could we want? Yet, as verse 9 and the first half of verse 10 point out, there will be bad students. In other words, there are many people who just refuse to listen to the wonderful message of God. People who continue to live in sin are described as wild as horses and dumb as mules. It is part of our sinful nature to be stubborn and stupid towards the things of God. We would rather run wild and do our own thing. In order to make a horse or mule useful, they have to first be broken.

Is that really what we want from God; to force Him to bring us to a place where we are totally broken? Look at the first line in verse 10. It says, “Many are the woes of the wicked.” This doesn’t just refer to murderers and drug dealers; it refers to all of us who refuse to submit to God and humble ourselves before Him. We are all born into this world sinful with a natural bent towards evil. We are wild, dumb, and stubborn. Only giving our lives to Jesus in faith can rectify that. I hope that we can learn these lessons relatively quickly and not force God into breaking us badly.

Why would we even want to go through that or force God into that when there are incredible blessings and happiness waiting for the good students in the second half of verse 10 through 11. Being a good student here has nothing to do with being smart, being cultured, or being wealthy. Being a good student here means that we accept the truth that we have all sinned and have fallen short of God’s standards. None of us deserve to go to heaven no matter how good we think we are. Look how a good student is described in the second half of verse 10, “one who trusts in the Lord.” If we believe that Jesus came to die for our sins and to restore our relationship with God, ask Him to forgive us of our sins, and ask Him into our life as Lord; we will be forgiven of all our sins, our relationship with God will have been restored, we can be sure we will go to heaven after we die, and we can enjoy the blessings of God in this life. To me, that’s the most wonderful news I have ever heard. No wonder they refer to the Gospels as Good News.

But let’s not miss this Hebrew word Ḥesed making its appearance again. Here it’s described as God’s unfailing love. God’s desire is to wrap us up in His giant, incredible, infinite, and passionate love. Who doesn’t want that? Do we really need to be geniuses to understand and accept that?

Let’s just assume that we are all believers here or that we just made a commitment to become a believer. We know that we all sin intentionally or unintentionally. We know that we have hurt
others. However, God has given us the blessings of His instructions and promises in the Bible. He has blessed us with the gifts of suffering, confession, repentance, and restoration. We can make things right with Him at any time. We can get things right with one another at any time. And to top it all off; He wraps us up in His loving arms. It is a personal hiding place we can run to any time. What’s our response to that?

Look at verse 11. We can sing to one another, “Rejoice in the LORD and be glad and sing.” When I read this psalm, I just want to stand up and shout, “Hallelujah!” How about you? SINCE GOD HAS MADE HIS WILL KNOWN TO US; THE ONLY WAY TO ACCESS HIS BLESSINGS IS TO OBEY HIM.

Believe me, I know how strange this all sounds that suffering, confession, repentance, and instruction are all blessings from God. Nevertheless it’s true. CONFESSION IS A BLESSING AVAILABLE TO US WHEN WE ARE SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF DISOBEYING GOD’S WILL.

**Lectio Divina -- Psalm 32**