

The Joy of Forgiveness

Introduction

Jordan Peterson is a Canadian clinical psychologist and a professor of psychology at the University of Toronto. Author of bestselling book 12 Rules for Life. He was referred to as “the most influential public intellectual in the Western world,” by the New York Times a few months ago.

Picture of Moses giving the 10 commandments → *sin: mistakes, veering off the path, twisting the fabric of society*

The law of God and sin: “If you make a mistake things will go seriously wrong with you... Stay awake, speak properly, be honest, or watch the hell out... I've never in all my years as clinical psychologist ^{cause} this is something that really does terrify me ... I have never seen anyone ever get away with anything, at all, even once... maybe you disagree, maybe you think people get away with things all the time. I tell you I've never seen it... What I see instead is that... someone twists the fabric of reality [sins]... something unravels... and they get walloped... you can't twist the fabric of reality without having it snap back... it doesn't work that way... One of the things that really tempts people is the idea that well I can get away with it... you get away with nothing... if you're not existentially terrified about the consequences of wavering off that [line] you are truly not awake. Look out man. Cuz there are rules, and if you break them, God help you.”

Peterson correctly perceives that when we sin, we get walloped. And we should be terrified of sinning because sin is misery. Peterson's solution to this reality of life is to live virtuous life, a morally clean life. But we all will sin and the misery of that sin is the punishment we will get.

→ *a route that surprises and perplexes even the wisest of the world's thinkers*

The Bible prescribes a different route. Psalm 32 is God's remedy for sin, for twisting the fabric of reality, for deviating from the path of God's law. *And it is all about FORGIVENESS!*

Psalm 32 ESV

A Maskil of David.

- ¹ *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.*
- ² *Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*
- ³ *For 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 dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah*
- ⁵ *I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah*
- ⁶ *Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.*
- ⁷ *You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah*
- ⁸ *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*
- ⁹ *Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.*
- ¹⁰ *Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.*
- ¹¹ *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*

MAIN IDEA

BEING FORGIVEN, THROUGH SINCERE CONFESSION OF SIN TO GOD, BRINGS GREAT JOY. (BEING UNFORGIVEN, THE RESULT OF UNCONFESSED SIN, BRINGS GREAT MISERY.) THEREFORE, WE SHOULD CONFESS OUR SIN AND REJOICE IN OUR FORGIVENESS.

Verses 1-2: The Joy of Forgiveness

¹ *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.*

² *Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

These opening verse indicate the theme of the psalm by introducing 3 key ideas:
sin, forgiveness, the state of being blessed.

Sin

3 WORDS

- Transgression = open rebellion against God, willful disregard of our Sovereign Ruler
- Sin = missing the mark, losing the way, not meeting the divine standard
- Iniquity = twisting and perverting of God's will
- All 3 = the totality of sin

Forgiveness

- Sin is forgiven/covered = sin has been removed, lifted away (power out refrigerator) – *don't just cover the scent, but totally remove it*
- Not counted or "the LORD does not charge with iniquity" (CSB) = not recorded, no record, forgotten – *accident with Mazda*

↳ no record of accident

– not just symptoms dealt with...

Blessed are those whose acts of rebellion against God, whose falling short of God's standards, whose perverting of God's will are removed and not recorded!
What is this state of being blessed?

Being blessed

- To be blessed is to experience true and deep happiness and rigorous and extensive flourishing within the gracious covenant God has given.
- The Psalms offer the promise of flourishing and happiness, in general, through faithfulness to the Lord, but Psalm 32 gets specific about one aspect of the faithfulness that brings the state of blessedness: forgiveness of sins.
- True joyful, peaceful, happy, flourishing existence where one is healthy, prosperous, and safe, comes through the forgiveness of sins.

There is great joy in forgiveness.

Verses 3-6: The Misery of Sin

³ *For 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 dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah*

⁵ *I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

⁶ *Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.*

In verses 3 through 6 the psalmist builds on the joy of forgiveness by demonstrating that unconfessed, and thus unforgiven, sin brings misery. This misery can be relieved or remedied because God will forgive if we confess our sins.

Misery

- One way of considering the ill-effects of sin is the fourfold consequence of sin as described in Trent Hunter in *Christ from Beginning to End: How the Full Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ*:
 - Vertically, sinners experience alienation and condemnation from God.
 - Horizontally, sinners experienced alienation from each other.
 - Cosmically, sinners experienced alienation in the world they were created to rule.
 - Internally sinners experienced alienation within themselves.

- The misery of inner alienation resulting from sin is the consequence the psalmist hones in on:

- ➔ • Bones wasting away indicating that all of his internal being is dying
- ➔ • Groaning in the painful suffering of the inner life
- ➔ • The burden of God's hand of judgment on his soul
- ➔ • The "life juices" of the mind, will, and affection dried up and evaporated
- This is a striking picture of the pathetic, wretched, and miserable existence of a life lived with unconfessed, unforgiven sin

WHY ARE CHRISTIANS CONTENT TO LIVE THIS WAY? WHY ARE PEOPLE RELUCTANT TO REMEDY THIS? WHY DO PEOPLE REFUSE FORGIVENESS? THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THEY ARE SINNING.

① THEY DO NOT WANT TO STOP SINNING NOW. DO YOU CALL GOD A LIAR BY REFUSING TO ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR ACTIONS ARE SIN? ARE YOU CONTINUING TO ACT OUT YOUR REBELLION AGAINST GOD BECAUSE YOU ARE ENJOYING YOUR SIN?

②

catabolic - destructive metabolism involving release of energy and resulting in the breakdown of complex material within the organism

In the next verse the psalmist indicates the process by which sin and its misery are remedied: confession. And confession addresses the reasons we hesitate or outright refuse to seek forgiveness.

Confession

- “I acknowledged my sin” and “I confess my transgression”
- To acknowledge your sin is to agree with God. This deals with people who do not believe they are sinning.
- David did not confess his sin & to confess your sin is to LORD forgive him * to confess is to acknowledge their sin + make it public
↳ this addresses the desire to keep on sinning
- God WILL forgive you!
 - **Proverbs 28:13 ESV** Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.
 - **1 John 1:9 ESV** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **GOSPEL**

Confess Now

- “Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found”
- The psalmist prompts us to acknowledge our sin and confess it...now!
- We see it Scripture that though God, by His Spirit, is convicting of us of sin and prompting us to seek forgiveness, there is no guarantee that this gracious mercy will continue: *(conviction, and even misery, in grace!!)*
 - **Genesis 6:3 NASB** Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”
 - **Nehemiah 9:30 ESV** Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.
 - **2 Corinthians 6:1-2 ESV** Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

↳ this happens through Christ

↓
one benefit of salvation forgiveness
↓
we are saved by repenting and faith

There is great joy in forgiveness and great misery in unforgiven sin. Therefore, confess your sin to God and find forgiveness. In verses 7-9 the psalmist focuses on the forgiveness of God

Verses 7-9: The Forgiveness of God

⁷*You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah*

⁸*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*

⁹*Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.*

*FORGIVENESS IS A TYPE OF
Deliverance*

- Hiding place, preservation, surrounded with shouts of deliverance = spiritual security and protection that comes with forgiveness
 - Other psalms speak to refuge from physical enemies, but this psalm is clearly focused on the inner life. God delivers us from sin through forgiveness of confessed sin.

Don't Be Stubborn

- What is the psalmist's instruction and counsel? Don't stubbornly remain under your sin, but seek forgiveness.
- Sin drives us away from God:
- Humanity was created to be in a relationship with God
 - When Adam and Eve sinned, they hid. They knew they had alienated themselves from God and they took cover fearing the consequences. Sin continues to have this effect. It causes us to hide from God, to remove ourselves from his presence.

- God can use a bit and bridle—a metaphor of his judgment—to bring us to confess our sins and seek forgiveness. But a wise person will not hold on to their sin, ignore their sin, excuse their sin; they will not be stubborn and unwise like horses and mules.
- Stubborn and stupid in regards to sin is no way to go through life!

Verses 10-11: The Joy of Forgiveness.

¹⁰ *Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.*

¹¹ *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*

- Verse 10 and 11 reiterate verse 1 and 2.
- Unconfessed and unforgiven sin is misery: many are the sorrows associated with it.
- Love surrounds the one who trusts God by confessing sin and finding forgiveness.
- So, we should be glad, and rejoice, and lift our voices for joy...so that is what we are going to do.

(applications)

Recall the admonitions in this psalm: seek forgiveness through prayerful confession; do it now; do not be stubborn, do it; rejoice in your forgiveness.

I'll lead us in a prayer of confession. Then the band will lead us in glad rejoicing for our forgiveness.

Barbara Duguid, *Prone to Wander: Prayers of Confession and Celebration:*

O Lord, our helper,

We are people who often run toward sin instead of running away from it. We fix our eyes on our own desires and pursue them recklessly with no thought of danger to our souls. We are overconfident, thinking that we can resist sin, only to discover that we are far weaker than we ever imagined. Sometimes we want to do good and are unable to carry it out, and other times we do not even want to do what we know is good. We love your law in theory, but in practice we wage war against your perfect law and sin against you often in our thoughts and deeds. We know that we are free from the bondage of sin, yet we choose to live as slaves to sin, addicted to our destructive habits and the things that make us feel good.
Father, forgive us.

Holy Father, our love of sin also astounds us. Whether we have known you for many years or are babies in faith, it is still our nature to sin. Our affections are turned away from you, and none of our desires or motivations is pure. Though we have died to the eternal consequences of sin, we often choose to live as slaves to lust and selfishness, doing things we know we should not, and failing to do things we should. We medicate ourselves against pain in many sinful ways, and our minds are full of dark and dangerous imaginings. ~~We despise our weakness and inability to change ourselves, so we continue to try to reform, to prove to you that we are worth loving, worth having, worth keeping.~~ Father, have mercy on us;
Father, forgive us.

Jesus, though our sins are vast in number, you are more than adequate for our relief. As our re-Creator, you have provided all that is necessary for our salvation. Though our guilt rises to condemn us, your righteousness soars above it to plead on our behalf. Each sin is paid for—past, present, and future—and your perfect record of holiness is credited to us. We are so thankful for your sacrificial love.

Jesus, thank you for faithfully choosing the freedom of obedience over the slavery of sin. You cherished sinners without ever joining them in their disobedience, and you loved and kept your Father's law perfectly in our place. Your sacrificial death has broken the power of sin in us, and the power of the law over us, and we are deeply grateful. Our sinful souls are counted free because of your righteous life and ransoming death, and now we are truly free to approach you with joy and confidence. Thank you for your amazing grace that draws us irresistibly before your throne to worship you, not as slaves but as children of the living God.

Holy Spirit, renew our minds with the truth of the gospel, and melt our hearts with the reality of how we have been cherished in Christ. Help us not to use grace as an excuse to sin. Delight and ravish us by the love of our Savior until our hearts change and we desire obedience to him above everything else. May the joy of the gospel free us to put off sin and put on obedience. We praise you that your sanctifying work cannot be stopped or delayed, by us, by others, or by Satan himself. Your plan is to make all things new, and although in this world we will only make small beginnings, a day is coming when we will be new creations, inside and out, and stand before you in sinless perfection. Until that day, may the sweet rest we have in the work of Christ give us fresh courage and strength to engage the daily battle with our sinful hearts with gratitude and joy.

Holy Spirit, free us increasingly from our voluntary slavery to sin. Melt our hearts with the overwhelming kindness and love of God, until we long to obey your law with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Help us to believe that you effectively love desperate sinners like us, and that you will never let us go. Cause us to rest in the perfect goodness of Jesus Christ as our only hope, and grant us growing obedience that springs from deep gratitude for all you have done for us. May we hear the words, "no condemnation," and know in our hearts that we have been freed from the bondage of sin, that our chains are gone, and that our hearts are free to worship you forever. Amen.