

Psalm 32

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

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.

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. You are my hiding place; You will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or mule which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. Many are the woes of the wicked but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in Him.

Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

I want to look this morning particularly at verse 8.

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you."

Here God is saying not only to the psalmist but to each one of us, look I have a specific plan and purpose for each one of you and I want you to walk in that plan and purpose. And Oh by the way I (Your God) will instruct you in the way I want you to go, I'll help you to work out how to do it, and I'll watch over you while you do and, by implication, if there are any problems along the way I'll be there to help you sort them.

What's the condition that God puts on this? Well there's only one and it comes in verse 10 and it's one that should be obvious and one that we need to adhere to in order to fulfil God's purposes anyway, it says;

"the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in Him."

So the inference of all this is that God speaks to us and as we walk in His will He carries on speaking to us. It may not be in an audible voice, although there are several examples of this in the Bible, but as we trust in Him and walk His path He will speak to us. The Bible, His written word is our yardstick against which we should measure all other forms of guidance. If the guidance cannot be backed up by Scripture then we almost certainly should ignore it.

There are many ways in the Bible that God speaks to His people. Just a few (these are on the website so you don't need to try and write them all down or you can have a copy of my transcript later) are: promptings of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2) the counsel of godly people (2 Sam12: 1-14); words of knowledge, wisdom and prophecy (1 Sam9:19; Matt 22: 15-22; Acts 11:28) the voice of conscience(2 Cor:1:12); visions((Acts16:9) ; dreams (Gen 37:5-9); angels(Matt22:15-22); His audible voice(1 Sam3: 1-14) and confirming circumstances(1 Sam 14: 6-12).

Not surprisingly in order to discover God's will for us we need to get to know Him. This takes time as with all friendships and relationships they develop over months and years rather than days and weeks, although there are those who claim to have a new best friend after having spent two weeks in a holiday camp with them!, and the same is true of our relationship with God. We need to give Him our attention and study His word in depth so that we can discover more and more about Him. This is increasingly difficult in the busyness of modern life but if we truly want to serve him then we need to put the effort in. As we put the effort in at work or school or in a relationship with someone else in order to advance ourselves, then in order to advance our relationship with God we need to put in at least as much effort into building our relationship with Him, I would suggest probably more.

As I said before God can speak to us directly by His Spirit. We can easily test whether it's God's voice or not. God's voice will always acknowledge Jesus as Lord and align with the written word of God. If it doesn't be very careful.

Finally I want to give a few pointers on how to hear God's voice. Some of these were first published by Loren Cunningham, founder of YWAM, having heard God's voice in 1984 as I'm sure some of you know.

Again the Scripture quotes are on the web site or you can have them later rather than struggling to listen and write:

Submit to His Lordship. Ask Him to help you silence your own thoughts and desires; to silence the opinions of others that may fill your mind (2 Cor:10:5). God gave you a good mind to use but right now you want to hear His thoughts who has the best mind of all (Prov3: 5-6)

Resist the enemy: He doesn't want you listening to God. Use the authority Jesus has given you to silence him (Eph6:10-20; James4:7).

Expect your loving heavenly Father to speak to you. Wait for Him He will (Exodus33:11; Psalm 69:13; John 10:27)

God speaks in many different ways as we saw earlier. Don't expect Him to speak how you want Him to yield your heart to His will.

Keep a short account of your sins and confess them regularly. A clean heart is needed to hear God (Psalm 66:18)

Let God speak to you directly. He may use others to confirm what He says but acting on a word brought by others to you can be dangerous (1 Kings 13)

Let things happen in God's timing. Sometimes He will ask you to act immediately others to wait until He tells you the time is right. This waiting is usually to avoid one of four pitfalls:

Pride – because God has spoken to you.

Presumption – speaking before you have full understanding.

Missing God's timing and method

Bringing confusion to others – who also need prepared hearts as part of God's plan (Mark5:19; Luke9:36)

God will reveal your calling: Every follower of Jesus has a unique ministry (Rom12:1; Cor12; Eph 4:1; 1 Peter4: 10-11) The more you seek to hear god's voice in detail, the more effective you will be in your own calling. Guidance is not a game – it is serious business where we learn what God wants us to do and how He wants us to do it.

The will of God is doing and saying the right thing in the right place, with the right people at the right time and in the right sequence, under the right leadership, using the right method with the right attitude of heart

Let me say that again:

The will of God is doing and saying the right thing in the right place, with the right people at the right time and in the right sequence, under the right leadership, using the right method with the right attitude of heart

Sounds daunting doesn't it? But God is gracious, He very rarely expects us to take on huge tasks immediately and to return to the original verse we were looking at verse 8 there are huge reassurances there:

It says: **"I"** that's God, not you, not me, not someone else, however well meaning, who thinks God has spoken, but God himself; **" will instruct you"** not maybe, not perhaps, not possibly, **"will instruct you.** Having instructed us God then says not only will I, God instruct you but **also I, God, will teach you in the way you should go.**

God isn't about giving us instructions and then saying get on with it, He knows that we need teaching for some if not all of the things He instructs us to do and being the loving God He is HE undertakes to not only instruct us but also to teach us. Great!

You would have thought that would be enough really wouldn't you? But no. God goes on to say that **He, God, will counsel us.** What does that mean? Quite a lot, the dictionary tells us counsel means: advice, guidance, direction, instruction, information, enlightenment. God will do all that, and more.

Enough you say, I'm convinced! But no, God doesn't stop there, not only will He instruct you and teach you and counsel you but perhaps the most reassuring of all He tells **us He, God, will watch over you.** From other portions of Scripture we know that that means He will never leave us or forsake us, He will hold us firm in His hand and never let us go.

Enough now to convince you that God has a plan and a purpose for your life and He will guide and direct your steps in it if you will let Him?

And if we just trust Him, as it tells us in verse 10 “ the Lord’s unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in Him”

Note that word, unfailing, this isn’t some wishy - washy, here today gone tomorrow love we’re talking about; it’s God’s love and if He says it’s unfailing then we can know with a certainty that it is just that, unfailing because God’s promises are yes and amen.

With His unfailing love surrounding us why should we be daunted, why should we be concerned about what He asks us to do, let Him guide you and lead you and teach and instruct you and counsel you and watch over you and you won’t go wrong.

AMEN