Text: Psalm 32:1-5
Title: "Starting Over"

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION – Last night the New England Patriots ended their quest for what has been called "the perfect season," by defeating the New York Giants to go 16-0 on the season. It was the first time in NFL history that a team won sixteen regular season games without a single defeat. That's an amazing season … to go with no defeats.

> Unfortunately, that's not the way it goes for us as human beings … not even for human beings who have been born again. No matter what season of life you may be in, the fact is that sooner or later there will be defeats … failures … setbacks … and sin.

Most of us are all too aware of that reality. And the ache that sin creates in us was captured by the poet long ago when he said:

> O, I wish there were some wonderful place,
> Called the Land of Beginning Again,
> Where all of our sins, and all of our mistakes,
> And all of our selfish grief's,
> Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door,
> And never put on again.

As we stand at the close of one year and the beginning of a new one, we are all aware that we need opportunities to begin again, to start over. Let's talk about that today. You see, how we are to handle those occasions when we fall to temptation … those days when we miss the mark … those seasons when we are repeatedly defeated is a major topic in the Bible. Open your Bibles to Psalm 32:1-5.

> The fact is that God in His Word does not shield us from the failures and sins of the great men and women of the Bible. Our Lord Jesus was perfect and sinless in every way. But everyone else described in the Bible was a sinner, including the great King David, who under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit composed this psalm. Read Psalm 32:1-5.

We're not sure how long it had been, but most scholars believe that David composed this psalm sometime after he had committed that awful series of sins that started by his committing adultery with a woman named Bathsheba. Then David had Bathsheba's husband Uriah killed. And all of that was followed by the deceitful cover-up of his sins.

> And later, after David was confronted about his sins by the prophet Nathan, he repented and returned to the Lord and experienced what we all need from time to time … a chance to start over.

Now when you look at Psalm 32, there are some interesting things about it. You may know that in many of David's psalms he sings the blues. That's not the case here. In fact, as you read the words

of the psalm, you get the feeling that David is celebrating. Celebrating what? The joy of being forgiven and of starting over.

And he's not just celebrating; David is educating us on how to start over. And we all need it, don't we. We all need a time and a place for starting over. Let's see what the Holy Spirit has to say to us in this psalm.

Starting over means we must …

1. FACE THE <u>REALITY</u> OF <u>SIN</u> IN EACH OF US

Now there is reasonable guilt, and there is unreasonable guilt. It's clear that David had a reason to feel guilty. He had done something terribly wrong, not just in the eyes of man, but in the eyes of God. And the Spirit of God had brought heavy conviction to David about the reality of sin.

In fact there are four words used here to describe the reality of sin in the human experience.

TRANSGRESSION

Psalm 32:1 (NIV) - Blessed is he whose <u>transgressions</u> are forgiven …

> The word means to step into forbidden territory. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he transgressed … he stepped into forbidden territory. He was outside the will of God. When he had Uriah killed, he stepped into forbidden territory. He was outside the will of God.

SINS

Psalm 32:1 (NIV) - Blessed is he whose <u>transgressions</u> are forgiven, whose <u>sins</u> are covered.

> We're familiar with this word. It involves not just doing what we shouldn't do, but also not doing what we should do.
>
> **James 4:17 (NIV) - Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.**

Now in v.2 there's another used to describe the reality of sin.

SIN (SINGULAR)

Psalm 32:2 (NIV) - Blessed is the man whose <u>sin</u> the LORD does not count against him …

> The word means "iniquity." Here is means the perversion of what is right … an inner crookedness. That's what happens when we sin … there's a crookedness in our soul … something is desperately wrong.

This reality gets even more graphic when speaks of

HYPOCRISY

Psalm 32:2 (NIV) - Blessed is the man whose <u>sin</u> the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is <u>no deceit</u>.

You see, this comes in the aftermath of sin when we become the actor or the actress who plays the part … who acts as though nothing was wrong. This is hypocrisy.

And this is the ugly picture that Christ took upon Himself when He died for our sins … when the One who knew no sin, became sin for us.

Starting over means we face the reality of sin in each of us.

2. RECOGNIZE THE HEAVY <u>TOLL</u> OF <u>GUILT</u>

Sin, and the guilt that follows, take a heavy toll on us.

Psalm 32:3-4 (NIV) - 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*

As long as David "kept silent" about his sins, as long as he kept his distance from God, in his whole being he felt the awful consequence of sin and guilt.

- <u>Physically</u>, his bones wasted away. You know, researchers have proven this fact, that unresolved guilt in a person's life takes its toll upon them physically.
- <u>Emotionally</u>, David speaks of "groaning all day long." The word for "groaning" here is also used to describe the roaring of a lion. Awfully true to life!
- <u>Spiritually</u>, David felt God's heavy hand on him day and night.

  Note: For believers, sin doesn't alter our position in God's eyes. But it changes what *we think* is our position in God's eyes. And ultimately we stand back from God … we stop praying and reading His precious Word to us … we look for excuses not to come to church.

So we need to learn to deal with guilt in the proper way. Let me just quickly show you some ways we should and should not handle guilt.

DEALING WITH GUILT…

- **<u>REFUSE</u> IT**

  Some times we just refuse delivery. There was a time when David tried to cover up his sin. Sometimes we refuse guilt.

- **<u>ABUSE</u> IT**

This happens when we condemn ourselves for everything that goes wrong in our lives, even the things that we had no way of changing … a bad investment … a career change that didn't turn out like we hoped … a painful divorce … rebellious children.

And we whip ourselves over and over. But that's not what we are to do with guilt.

- **<u>EXCUSE</u> IT**

  This happens when we blame others for our sin or failures, and refuse to take responsibility for it. It's like Eve when God confronted her about eating the forbidden fruit: "The snake made me do it."

  We can refuse guilt, abuse it, and excuse it. But God wants us to …

- **<u>USE</u> IT**

  Use it the way He intends to by His Holy Spirit.

Psalm 32:5 (NIV) - Then <u>I acknowledged my sin</u> to you and <u>did not cover up</u> my iniquity. I said, "<u>I will confess</u> my transgressions to the LORD"— and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*

And when we do that, we can …

3. EXPERIENCE <u>FREEDOM</u> THROUGH <u>FORGIVENESS</u>

That's what God is after when we experience guilt. It is supposed to drive us to God, not away from Him. And when we acknowledge our sin … and not try to cover it up … when we confess, here's what happens.

- **My sins are put away.**

  Psalm 32:1 (NIV) - Blessed is he whose transgressions are <u>forgiven</u> …

  The word means "put away."

  Example: In the OT there is something called the "scapegoat." The priests would select a goat. They would lay their hands on the head of the goat, confessing the sins of the people … symbolically they were putting the burden of sin and guilt on the goat. Then they sent that goat off into the wilderness. Imagine what a vivid message it sent to Israel as the watched the scapegoat being led away.

  The Bible says that God separates our sins from us as far as the east is from the west.

- **My sins are covered over.**

Psalm 32:1 (NIV) - Blessed is he whose ... sins are <u>covered</u>.

Listen, if we cover our sin, God will uncover it. But if we uncover our sin, God covers it.

- **There is no charge against us.**

Psalm 32:2 (NIV) - Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does <u>not count against him</u>…

What a wonderful thing to hear … no charge.

Now listen! Don't make the mistake of thinking that God is just a sloppy bookkeeper … that He just winks at stuff and waves His hand … no charge.

God puts our sins away because someone else carried our sin … God covers our sin because someone else took our sins upon himself … God doesn't charge our sins against us … because someone else paid the price. And that someone is Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

ILLUSTRATION – A few weeks ago I read a powerful story. There was a little boy visiting his grandparents on their farm. He was given a slingshot to play with out in the woods. He practiced in the woods, but he could never hit the target. Getting a little discouraged, he headed back for dinner. As he was walking back he saw Grandma's pet duck. Just out of impulse, he let the slingshot fly, hit the duck square in the head, and killed it. He was shocked and grieved.

In a panic, he hid the dead duck in the wood pile, only to see his sister watching! Sally had seen it all, but she said nothing.

After lunch the next day Grandma said, "Sally, let's wash the dishes." But Sally said, "Grandma, Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen. Then she whispered to him, "Remember the duck? So Johnny did the dishes.

Later that day, Grandpa asked if the children wanted to go fishing and Grandma said, "I'm sorry but I need Sally to help make supper." Sally just smiled and said," Well that's all right because Johnny told me he wanted to help." She whispered again, "Remember the duck?" So Sally went fishing and Johnny stayed to help.

After several days of Johnny doing both his chores and Sally's he finally couldn't stand it any longer. He came to Grandma and confessed that he had killed the duck. Grandma knelt down, gave him a hug, and said, "Sweetheart, I know. You see, I was standing at the window and I saw the whole thing, but because I love you, I forgave you. I was just wondering how long you would let Sally make a slave of you."

You need to know that God is standing at the window and He sees the whole thing. He sees your whole life; He wants you to know that He loves you and that you are forgiven. He's just wondering how long you will let the devil make a slave of you.