

Psalm 32

- ¹ Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
- ² Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- ³ While I kept silence, my body 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.
- ⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD',
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
- ⁶ Therefore let all who are faithful
offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters
shall not reach them.
- ⁷ You are a hiding-place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.

Traditionally, we have read this psalm like many parts of scripture, in the following way: guilt and forgiveness have physical and tangible consequences. The psalmist refers to physical illness (“my body wasted away through my groaning all day long”), of which God is the cause (“For night and day your hand was heavy upon me”), and this is a consequence of sin (“The Lord” has “imputed iniquity” upon the psalmist). Once the psalmist “acknowledges his sin” and “does not hide his iniquity”, he is forgiven the guilt of his sin. He experiences deliverance and offers glad cries over it. In fact, the opening verses put it this way: “Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered...” and “Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit.”

The traditional reading is that God is in control and God is a judge, and unless we repent and acknowledge our sin we will not be forgiven, and if we are not forgiven we will never be happy because we will suffer for our sin which, in this case, includes physical ailment. But what if we read this psalm out of a faith that God is love and the energy flow of love flowing in and through us when we are properly aligned with love in our lives? We feel most “happy” or “blessed” (Remember the beatitudes Matthew 5:1-12?) when we are aligned with love. If we have done harm to another or have been deceitful (vs.2), love must meet us as forgiveness. We need to be forgiven and we need to forgive ourselves.

Biblical language also describes inner states of being and emotional joy or distress using physical descriptors. My body wasting away and groaning is an expression of

total misalignment with God/Love in my life, and until I get myself re-aligned (the experience and working out of forgiveness) I will never experience full-person wholeness. When I feel the flow of deliverance in my soul I will then offer "glad cries" of joy. Does this make sense?

There are many ways to read scripture, and sometimes, the traditional reading is an obstacle to a deeper connection to a God of love who then opens our heart to love, and this is most critical when our lives are turned upside down with contrary currents of anger, distress and despair. We need, oh so urgently, to become aligned and re-aligned with the ground of being who is love and who is the ground of our being when love flows through us.

PRAYER: O Ground of being, ground of our being, the mystery and energy flow of genuine love... meet us where we are, heal us, mould us, transform us.... Some of us are hurting right now, O God... Some of us feel lost... some of us are tired and bored and lonely... some of us are caught up in petty conflicts and irritations... some of us can't let go the resentments, the wounds, the despairing and hopeless thoughts... Some of us are happy and content, but are afraid this can change... we are all feeling vulnerable in some way these days, O God... Grant us the stability of your love... the courage and tenacity of your love... the spaciousness of your love which can absorb the shocks and the slights... the healing streams of your love which can transfigure our hurts into richer compassion and understanding for others... Meet us where we are, O Ground of our being, and flow through us... Amen.