

Getting Things Off Your Chest

Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. (Psalm 32:9)

This verse is among a trio of verses in which David tells of God's instruction and counsel. The horse and mule are used to illustrate the wicked individual who stubbornly refuses to listen. For all the good in horses and mules, they are beasts that have no desire to transport a rider or work. To be useful, they must be controlled by bit and bridle.

Can you see how this is an accurate description of those in rebellion to God? We exist in a world in which many people simply want to do things their own way by throwing off all restraints. The result is a removal of any sense of right and wrong. As this philosophy of life is played out, people are hurt and lives are destroyed. Like the horse and mule the only way to control someone with such an unrestrained lifestyle is imprisonment, a type of bit and bridle for humans.

In contrast David began this Psalm:

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. (v. 1)

He told how he had wasted away because of the ever-present sin in his life. He described feeling the heavy hand of God at all times. Even his physical strength was sapped from his body. This description sounds like the symptoms of severe depression.

Have you ever felt the pressure of sin like David? Sin is oppressive; it ruins lives. Oh sure, we recognize the effects of the big sins: capital crimes, repulsive sexual immorality, bold rebellious sins. Yet other sins are more private and do not seem to be as serious; no one else knows. So we believe that we can just move on; it will all fade into the past.

In reality sin, even private sin, weighs us down. We feel guilt. It is as if we have lost control. In truth sin has its own bit and bridle. It will literally take control of you and rule your life.

Our society believes in "getting things off your chest." That is, at least in part, the function of much of the counseling that goes on today. Undoubtedly that seems to help. It does feel better to be able to talk to someone; to share your burdens. But let me ask you a very serious question. Be completely honest.

What good does it really do? Does it really help?

Perhaps you answered, "Yes."

Why, then, is it only temporary? Why is there another counseling session to be scheduled? Why does the weight of the burden return?

When there is sin in one's life, the *hand of God* is the source of that weighty burden. There is no man that can "take that off your chest." Listen to David's words:

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. (v. 5)

When sin has control of your life you will feel its effect. You may discover times when sin causes you to feel depressed. That weight is *the hand of God*.

The only real and lasting solution is to throw yourself at the feet of God with an open heart confessing your sin. He will forgive your sins and remove his heavy hand. What a relief it is to "get things off your chest" by going to God in prayer.

Mark Stinnett

