

Are You a Man or a Mule?

Favorite Psalms Part 17

Psalm 32:3-5, 8-10

8-4-2013

If there is some sin that your heart keeps clinging to and you're reluctant to give up, this message will motivate you to repent and will show you how to learn the easy way instead of the hard way (like a mule). You will learn how to know when you are experiencing God's rod and what to do when it happens. This message destroys once for all the insanity that says, "I've already blown it for today—might as well get it out of my system and start fresh tomorrow." When you find yourself saying that, ask, "Would God agree? Would Satan?" If you cut off your finger with your table saw, would you say, "I've already blown it, might as well cut off the rest?"

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Psalms 32:1A Maskil of David. 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!

Review

It is good to be forgiven, amen? That was our topic in the last sermon - how good it is to be forgiven. Today we find out how serious God is about getting us there. The first two verses are about how blessed it is to be forgiven, the rest of the psalm is all about the two different pathways to get forgiveness. Actually there is only one pathway to forgiveness - and that is repentance. But there are two different pathways to get to repentance. Two different ways to break that love affair your heart has with sin so you will be able to reject the sin in your heart and turn back to God.

Sin does massive harm to the soul. It is poison. How could God claim to love us if He just let it remain in us? Our dog ate some chocolate not long ago, and chocolate is toxic for dogs. The vet told us that if we did not induce vomiting the dog would die. Our sin is like that. As long as we keep it in us, it destroys us. It is so tasty going down, but once it gets into the system, it kills. And the only rescue from that is if our soul rejects it and expels it from the soul like the body expelling poison from the stomach. It is an unpleasant process, and so sometimes we think, "I don't want to go through the discomfort of throwing up, so I'll just keep it in my stomach and hope it digests." It won't. The sin must be expelled from the heart through confession. And there are two ways to do that - two ways to "induce vomiting" - two ways to get from loving a sin enough to commit it, to hating that sin enough to repent of it.

Repentance By Way Of The Rod

Training Wheels For Contrition

The first is repentance by way of the rod. God will use discipline to bring us to break our love affair with the sin so we can repent. It is absolutely essential that we repent, and so if necessary God will bring hardship into our lives to make it happen.

That is a very important principle to understand, because very often people disparage repentance that comes only after painful consequences. They say, "You're not sorry that you sinned. You're just sorry you got caught. You have all these crocodile tears now that you're suffering consequences - where were the tears before the sin was exposed?" People who say that fail to understand that the tears that come from getting caught, and the sorrow and brokenness that come from the painful consequences and embarrassment of exposure, are designed by God to teach us how to become sorrowful and broken and contrite over the sin itself. The earthly, temporal consequences for the sin are designed by God to serve as training wheels for contrition. Just like the pleasures of life are supposed to serve as training wheels to teach us how to have joy in God, so the pain of getting caught and all that goes along with that is designed to help our hearts along. We need to weep over having offended God. But sometimes when we just are not there yet, it can really help if God sends some other pain into our lives to get the ball rolling with the tears, and once the tears are flowing over the consequences, it is much easier to weep over the fact of having displeased God. That is exactly how God brought David to repentance. God exposed David's sin to Nathan, God brought horrific consequences - even taking David's child, and the agony of those things made David weep. And it was not long before that weeping was not just weeping over the pain, but weeping over the sin. And you can see that clearly in Psalm 51. And you can see it here in Psalm 32 as well. What was David's response to all the pain?

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.

And what was the result of all that suffering?

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.

Just as a father spans a child hoping that the tears from the pain will turn into tears of sorrow over the sin, so it is with God's rod of discipline. Does that automatically work? No. There are some people who weep over consequences but never do weep over offending God. And those people are not genuinely repentant, and will not be forgiven. All they care about is the consequences. That happens all the time. However, just because the tears didn't start until some consequences hit does not automatically mean that the repentance is invalid. God designed it to work that way.

Look at the end of v.5. David says **you forgave the iniquity of my sin**. That phrase **the iniquity of my sin** refers to the thoroughness of the forgiveness. God totally forgave every last trace of the guilt. Even though David's repentance did not come until he was caught and the consequences hit him, still, that suffering brought him to true repentance, which became thorough repentance, and God was just as thorough in His forgiveness. He forgave every last bit. And David's joy returned - even though the painful consequences were still in place. And that is how you know when the repentance is real. You can tell it is real repentance over having offended God when your joy returns when God forgives you, even if the painful consequences are still there. If you cannot be joyful until the consequences go away, that means your sorrow is only over the consequences and it is not real repentance. The training wheels didn't work. But if you find your joy returning when you are forgiven even though painful consequences remain, that means it did work and your repentance is genuine.

Joy Comes From Forgiveness, Not Just Confession

It is crucial to understand that the joy comes from being forgiven, not just confession. The confession is not what brings the joy. There are a million armchair psychologists who read about David's agony in verses 3-4 and say, "Oh, I know what that is - repression. You repress your emotions, repress your feelings of guilt, they build up, and they cause all kinds of emotional and psychological and psychosomatic problems." And so the consensus in the psychology world is that the solution to that is to just let your feelings out. Just open your mouth and talk about them with someone, and then you will feel better. Once you get over the denial, and come to grips with reality, you will feel better.

Is that true? Just admit your sin and talk about how you feel and that will make you feel better? How did that work for Judas? He admitted he had sinned horribly. He talked about it. He made restitution the best he could. Then he killed himself.

It is not the confession or the talking or the admitting that restores joy. The only thing that can restore joy is being forgiven - a restoration of relational closeness with God. You know you are forgiven when you are back to being able to enjoy God's presence, and that is when the joy of your salvation returns.

Every believer is accepted and loved by God the Father as His own child, because of our association with the Lord Jesus Christ. A good father always loves his child, but a good father is not always smiling at his child. And there are some times when even though God loves us as His own dear children, He is not smiling at us. Scripture speaks about various forms of displeasure God sometimes has with His children. When we rebel against Him we can grieve Him, displease Him, and provoke Him to turn His face away from us. And that is why we ask forgiveness for our sins. Even though our sin does not cancel out our salvation - we are still saved, still justified, still on our way to heaven - what it does do is displease the Lord and create distance between us and him. So then when we repent, God turns His face back toward us and smiles upon us again, and our joy in Him and closeness to Him are restored.

The Agony of the Rod

That is why it is so important that we repent. We do not get the joy until God forgives us, and He will not forgive unless we repent. And so God will use the rod to bring us to repentance. And when He does, it hurts.

Hebrews 12:11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.

When he kept silent about his sin - refusing to confess, God turned His face away, and David's life became *unbearable*.

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.

David says his bones wasted away (literally, they melted). When you want to talk about something being deep down inside you, you say, "I feel it in my bones." It is a way of describing the deepest part of your being. It felt to David like his very core was disintegrating. Bones also point to strength. He felt like the strongest part of him that upheld the structural integrity of his whole self was just melting away. If your bones melted you would just collapse on the ground like a wet noodle. That is the way David felt on the inside. His whole inner man had collapsed.

4 ...my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

His life juices dried up. He could no longer function.

Soul and Body

And it affected him physically. Whatever happens to your soul will also affect your body. When your soul is full of joy it gives energy and strength to your body. When your soul is worried and anxious, or crushed with sorrow, it drains strength from your body.

Psalm 38:3 Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin.

There is a very close connection between your soul and body. Don't think of it like your soul being some separate entity inside the shell of your body. Soul and body are woven together with such unity that when this happens to the soul, it racks the body. It will cause fatigue, sickness, disease - even death in some cases.

That was happening to David and the result was **groaning all day long**. Groaning - you cannot even form words. You do not even have complete thoughts. It is just an expression of pain. This is the sickening picture of a soul just gnawing itself in torment.

4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me

God's mighty hand was just pressing down on him, and there was no escape - day or night. That is the most terrifying part of it. If it is coming from some created source, there might be a way of escape. But if God's hand is doing it, there is no greater power you can look to for refuge. It just continued **day and night**. All day you just look forward to bedtime. Then at night you can't sleep and you count the hours until morning. And the misery just never stops.

God Hides His Face

That is what happens to the human soul when God turns His face away.

Deuteronomy 31:16 ... They will forsake me ... 17 On that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them

Rebelling against God provokes Him to turn His face away, and that has dire effects on the human soul. It causes terror.

Psalm 30:7 O Lord ...when you hid your face, I was terrified.

In Psalm 143:7 when God turns His face away it makes strength fail. In Isaiah 64:7, it causes the person to begin to waste away. In Ezekiel 9:24 when God hides His face it means He deals with the person according to that person's sin and withholds the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah 59:2 we read that when God

turns His face away, He refuses to listen to your prayers, and He withholds protection and makes us completely vulnerable to our enemy's attacks (Ps.69:17, Isa.8:17), and God forgets your misery (Ps.44:24). When you cry out in pain He does not listen with a sympathetic ear. He just leaves you to suffer on your own. He does not draw near to bring comfort. He does not give you strength to endure. He does not give you wisdom and guidance to know how to deal with it. There is no horror like the horror of having God turn His face away from you.

Psalm 51

David gives a more detailed description of what that time was like in Psalm 51.

Pangs of Conscience

Psalm 51:3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

That is the pain of conscience. When conscience strikes you, you have a sense of being in deep trouble, and your soul just cringes in anticipation of the consequences. And for David, the pangs of conscience were unbearable. He can just feel how much he deserves to be punished.

Shame

On top of that, you feel deep shame. You feel like you are just dirty on the inside. Read Psalm 51 and count how many times David asks God to wash him and cleanse him. That is the very first thing he says to God, and then he just keeps bringing it up. What does it mean to have a dirty soul? Obviously it is not talking about literal dirt. It means that your soul is disgusting in God's sight, and that is a horrible feeling. God looks at you He has the same reaction you would if you found some greasy, slimy smelly sludge at the bottom of a garbage dumpster. Bugs crawling in it, and rotten food and hair mixed in - and a stench that makes you want to vomit. That is what sin looks like to God, and David felt it - his heart was disgusting to God.

Sorrow

And all this saps your joy.

Psalm 51:8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. ...12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation

It is possible to have a cold or get a headache and still have joy, right? It is possible to break a bone and have joy. It is possible to be in prison and have joy. In fact, it is possible to have joy in absolutely any circumstance except one. If God turns His face away from you, it is impossible to have joy. Your vacation will be miserable, your marriage won't make you happy, your job, a raise, a promotion, a new car, a new house, leisure, alcohol, food, sex, losing weight - nothing will be able to bring you joy.

Loss of Endurance

Another thing you lose is endurance and steadfastness.

Psalm 51:10 ... renew a steadfast spirit within me.

You become drained of spiritual stamina. You start a ministry, and in a matter of weeks you are burned out. You try to love your wife, serve your family, be a good employee, you commit to a small group, you start a routine of reading your Bible - but none of it lasts. In spiritual things you are like a heart patient who gets winded going up three or four steps.

Unwilling Spirit

And worst of all, you lose your willing spirit. When David asks for restoration, he asks for that to return.

12 ...grant me a willing spirit.

A period of unrepentant sin results in an unwilling spirit. Your heart just is not on board with God's will. No matter how hard you try, you cannot get yourself to do what is right because your heart just is not into it.

Inability to Praise

On top of all that, when unrepentant sin does its damage to the soul, you can no longer praise God. You might be able to force yourself to sing, but it is not real praise, because the joy isn't there. It is just noise.

Psalm 51:15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

Isn't that incredible - that of all people, *David* had to ask God to pry open his lips for praise? The greatest hymn writer of all time, the man who wrote half the book of Psalms, the man whose music drove demons away from Saul, the man whom God chose to teach all the righteous how to worship for all the ages - that man could not open his mouth in praise. Keep a sin in your life too long and it will give you a case of spiritual lockjaw. You will not be able to take delight in worshipping God.

These are some of the horrors of having God turn His face away from you because of unrepentant sin.

Psalm 40:12 troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me.

Psalm 102:3 For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn ... 4 My heart is blighted and withered like grass; I forget to eat my food. 5 Because of my loud groaning I am reduced to skin and bones. ... 7 I lie awake ... 8 All day long my enemies taunt me ... 9 For I eat ashes as my food and mingle my drink with tears 10 because of your great wrath, for you have taken me up and thrown me aside. ... 23 In the course of my life he broke my strength

Psalm 38:2 your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down upon me. 3 Because of your wrath there is no health in my body ... 4 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. 5 My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. 6 ...all day long I go about mourning. 7 My back is filled with searing pain ... 8 I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart. 10 My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes. 11 My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away. ... 17 ... my pain is ever with me.

Why Did It Take So Long To Repent?

“If it was that horrible, why did he take so long to repent?”

For one thing, when this happens you don't always realize it is because of sin. When you are denying your sinfulness, or rationalizing, blaming others, justifying yourself - you can get so you start to believe all of your own excuses. And when the idea of admitting wrong and repenting comes along, the idea gets passed over without consideration. Your pride says, “No! That's not an option. I'll find another way out of this.” And you start looking for other ways to feel better, besides repentance. You decide this whole thing must just be a chemical imbalance. Or some mental disorder. Or just some problem that will eventually go away. And so we run to distractions, things that will deaden the pain a little, and we clutch all the harder onto our sin.

That is especially true when the sin is a relationship. Those are very often the hardest to let go of, because your love for the sin is disguised in your heart as love for the other person, so it doesn't seem evil.

Do not underestimate the tenacity with which the human soul will hold on to the sins that it loves. There are people who lose everything and undergo the deepest agony and then finally die and never do let go of their sin. And it is bizarre, because in many cases the sin is not even pleasurable. It could be a sin like bitterness or envy – there is nothing pleasurable about it, it is ruining our life, and yet we just will not let go. Why we have that kind of love for our sin really is a mystery. In fact, the question of why someone would die rather than let go of sin is a question even God has asked.

Ezekiel 18:31 ...Why will you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!

The love affair the human heart has with its own corruption is one of the most baffling mysteries in the universe. But it is deadly, and so in His mercy God sent the rod into David's life to break that love affair with sin.

Repentance By Way Of Reason

"Isn't there any other way?"

Yes! You don't have to go the way of the rod. The purpose of this psalm is to let you know that you can skip verses 3-4 when you sin and go immediately to verse 5. You can bypass the rod - skip all the suffering and agony and misery. All you have to do is repent immediately.

Don't Be A Mule!

And that is usually what we do as Christians. We sin, and right away we repent. And so God rarely uses the rod. He only gets it out in those times when our hearts become stubborn and just continue to cling to a sin. And David's whole point here is to persuade us - by means of reason - not to do that.

9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be controlled with bit and bridle, or it will not come to you.

Have you ever watched an old western where there is a wild, unbroken colt, and some cowhand has to break it? How does he do it? Does he walk in there with a notebook and say, "Horse, let me give you 10 reasons why you should let us put this saddle on your back"? No. You control a horse with a bit in its mouth. The bit causes the horse pain if it does not respond to your direction. You may be able to train an animal to some degree with reward or punishment, but never through reason. You walk up to a mule who does not want to move, and you give a brilliant line of argumentation with impeccable logic and undeniable syllogisms, and that mule will just stand there and look at you. Animals just do whatever they feel like doing unless forced to do otherwise.

And the unrepentant sinner is the same way. Promises of reward will not motivate him to give up his sin. The offer of the nearness of God does not motivate him. Threats of future judgment do not motivate him. Only one thing will motivate him - excruciating pain - that agony of verses 3-4. He's like an animal - the only thing that can keep him from doing what he feels like doing is pain. But if you're a human being, made in the image of God and capable of logic and reason, then there is another way besides pain.

I really think this is the bottom line of this psalm. The whole psalm is designed to convey this one message: *Don't be a mule*. Verses 3-4 are the description of David's mule days. In verse 3 where he says, **When I kept silent**, you could put in parentheses "When I was a mule." I would not confess, would not repent, would not reject that sin in my heart - I just wanted to give it time and hoped the whole thing would just go away. God's Word had given him a thousand good reasons to repent, but he refused. He was being a stubborn mule. He refused to get to repentance by way of reason, and so it had to be by way of the rod.

As a child of God, when you sin, you *must* repent. You absolutely must – there is no getting around that. It is going to have to happen. The poison of love for sin is going to have to be expelled from your heart. And what God is saying in this psalm is basically this: "We can do this the easy way or the hard way." The "easy" way is to be persuaded by reason, like a human being who bears God's image, and to skip right to verse 5 and repent right away. The hard way is to wait until God has to get out the bit and bridle and force the issue, so you have to go through verses 3-4.

Repent While You Still Can

Whenever you find yourself saying, "I want to enjoy the pleasures of sin just a little longer" – that is the mule heart talking. When we drop into the rut of our besetting sins, and conscience starts to object, our mule heart says, "Ok, I'll repent, just ... in a minute." Or, "I'll repent in a few days" or a few weeks - I'll repent soon. I'll repent - just not right this minute." The mule heart always wants to enjoy the pleasures of the sin just a little longer.

"I've Already Blown It"

And a lot of times the rationalization is something like this: "I've already blown it. Whether I repent now or a little later - either way I've blown it for today. So it doesn't really matter. I might as well just get it out of my system, and then tomorrow I'll start fresh."

Next time you find yourself using that reasoning, just ask this: "Would God agree?" And then ask yourself this: "Would Satan agree?" And we know the answer? No, God would not agree with that reasoning, and yes, Satan would wholeheartedly agree. If my greatest enemy, the most wicked being in existence, who is evil and malicious and desires nothing more than my absolute destruction and to do everything that is against God - if he agrees with this action, do I really want to do it? And if God, who has perfect wisdom and who loves me more than I love myself and who desires my greatest and highest good and who always loves what is best - if He does not agree, then do I really want to do this even one more second?

The fact that I am coming up with reasons to keep going in the sin, "I've already blown it for today, I might as well get it out of my system," or, "Just a little bit longer, then I'll quit" - the fact that I am thinking that way just shows that my heart is in love with this sin. I am certainly not looking at the sin the way God does. God tells me this sin is doing tremendous damage - and every second I keep doing it is that much more damage. If I really believed that, I wouldn't be saying, "Just a little longer." Imagine you are out in your garage cutting a board with a table saw. You are trying to be careful, but there is some distraction, you look behind you, your hand gets too close to the blade, and off goes the tip of your finger. Do you look at your hand and say, "Well, I've blown it for today - might as well just go all the way" and then stick your whole hand into the spinning blade? "I'll just keep doing this the rest of the day, and then tomorrow I'll go to the doctor, get fixed up, and start fresh." No. You immediately shut off the saw, find the duct tape and tape that finger back on. You might even go to the hospital - that very same *hour*. You see, if you believe something is actually doing real damage, you will stop doing it and begin the recovery process immediately. "Just a few more minutes then I'll stop," or, "I've already blown it, so I might as well keep going" - those are proof that you do not truly believe you are doing real damage to yourself. And every moment you do that - every moment you spend digging in your heels like a stubborn mule, you will deeply regret.

Be a Man, not a Mule

"Darrell, that analogy with the table saw isn't fair. Cutting your hand with a saw is a lot different, because it hurts. Sin brings pleasure."

That's true. When you cut your finger on a saw, it is not so much wisdom that gets you to stop, but pain. But you see that is the point of the psalm: "If you won't stop until pain forces you to stop, you're a mule. Don't be a mule. Animals do whatever they feel like doing unless there is pain. But human beings,

made in the image of God, are capable of reason. We are capable of understanding that there are some things that are damaging even though they are not causing immediate pain. We are capable of seeing a label on a bottle that says, "poison," and we can use our brain to think through the consequences of drinking it, and we can step back from it without having to actually suffer any pain or harm at all. That is what human beings do. That is the difference between a man and a mule.

So when you fall into sin, be a man, not a mule. Be a woman, not an animal. Use the sense God gave you, so that we can do this the easy way and not the hard way. And David is pleading with us - take the easy way while it is still available, because it will not be available forever.

Limited Time Offer

6 Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found

The way of reason is still a possibility, but that is a limited time offer.

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

Once God finally decides to get the rod out, it is too late. You will be like Esau, who could bring about no change of mind even though he sought it with tears.

The Rod Will Be More Severe Than You Think

How can you bring your hard heart to a point of true repentance through reason instead of through suffering? By learning from David's suffering. That is why David tells us about the severity of it. He wants us to know - the rod is more severe than you think. God is very slow to bring out the rod. He rarely does it. But when he does, it is usually not just a few licks. God does not bring out the rod unless we have come to the point where the most severe measures are required to reclaim our heart. And typically what will happen is after a few blows, we say, "Okay! I give up! I'll let go of that sin. I'll repent." But the blows keep coming. The darkness that envelopes us remains. The gnawing of the soul, the disintegration of the bones, the sorrow, the weakness, the dryness, the shame, the distance from God's presence. And after that has all lasted what seems to us a long time, and we say, "Okay God, I've learned my lesson - I hate that sin now. I repent!" - God can see that, "No, there's still more love in your heart for that sin than you realize. The purging work isn't done. We are not even half-way. We have a long way to go." And the discipline goes on and on and on. You read some of those penitential psalms and you can tell the psalmist has been suffering God's anger for a long time and they want to know how much longer it will be. It seems too long to them - longer than they would have expected.

It is not a situation where as soon as we say "uncle," God relents. By the time we push it to the point where God has to get out the rod, that means the damage done by the sin is so extensive that getting our heart back to where it needs to be is going to be a long, excruciating ordeal.

Every time we willingly, knowingly indulge in something we know is not God's will, we pour a little more poison into our soul. We do a little more damage. And we take one step closer to having to go through an extensive detox ordeal in the desert. And so David pleads with us - "Repent now while you still can - before that rod comes out. Go the way of reason, not the way of the rod. Don't be a mule!"

Sin-Now-Repent-Later Forgets The Pain Of The Restoration Process

This is yet another problem with the "sin now and ask forgiveness later" approach. It ignores the agony of this process of restoration. If you are in some terrible accident, and you have crushed dozens of bones in your body, and they say you will never walk again, but then you find this brilliant surgeon who is able to work wonders and is able to repair things enough so you can walk again, you are elated, right? You are thrilled. You are so happy to walk again! But should that make someone else say, "I want to be that happy. I think I'll jump off a cliff and crush my bones so I can experience the same thing. Our hospital has the best surgeon in the world, so I think I'll shoot myself in the kneecaps." No, just because bones can be set and healed does not mean we should be eager to go out and break them. Especially if the

surgeon refuses to do surgery on anyone who thinks breaking bones is ok. Because even if you do finally get to the point where your heart is changed and you no longer think breaking bones is ok, and even though you can be healed, the healing process is not pleasant. Can you be restored? Yes. But the road to rehabilitation is an agonizing one - even after the surgery is successful.

10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked

Conclusion

So repent before it is too late. But what if it already is too late? You already missed the opportunity to seek God in repentance while there was still time. You were a mule, you missed that window of opportunity, God had to bring out the rod, and now you are right, smack in the middle of verses 3-4. You are in the desert. God has turned His face away, and you are going through the fires of chastisement. What should you do?

There is only one way out of that. You have to find a hiding place. And it has to be the same hiding place David found in verses 6-7. The only hiding place that can protect you from God's rod of discipline, and all the flood of trouble that comes with it, is God Himself. The only way out of the desert is to experience God as your refuge from His own rod. How is that done? I think that deserves a whole sermon, don't you? So let's plan on looking into that in detail next time.

Benediction: 1Kings 8:57 May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us. 58 May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways... 60 so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other.

1:25 Questions

1. In what areas do you find the most mule-ish stubbornness in your heart (slowness to repent)?
2. What loves in your heart need to be broken through reason, so they don't have to be broken with the rod?
3. Is there anything you are doing that might be feeding, rather than fighting against those loves?