

“Psalm 32” Analysis Example 1

In “Psalm 32,” the roles of sin, guilt, and confession are explored through strong diction that aids in conveying the theme and the shift in the tone of the passage. At the beginning, the psalm’s tone is very negative, conveying feelings of fear, burden, paranoia, and debilitating guilt. The speaker is being torn apart from his guilt over his sins that come from the “iniquity” and “guile” (line 2) with which he has been poisoned from not seeking help from God. As he kept his transgressions to himself and allowed them to prey upon his conscience, the “heavy hand” (line 4) of guilt weighed upon him, consuming him “all day long” (line 3). His guilt over his sins even caused him to lose “moisture” (line 4), better known as his hope and enjoyment of life, until it had “turned into the drought of summer” (line 4) and life seemed bleak and burdensome. However, in line 5 a shift occurs and the speaker has now completely changed his attitudes after he confessed his sins until the Lord. The speaker’s words now feel positive, conveying emotions such as freedom, exhilaration, hope, and even righteousness (which aids in giving his message a slightly condescending tone also). He confessed every detail of his sins unto God, who then “forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (line 5). God’s role has now morphed from condemner to savior because God has delivered him from his sins. God is now his “hiding place,” his source of rescue to “preserve me [him] from trouble” (line 7). The speaker appears to have also developed feelings of righteousness that contribute to the last few lines of the psalm also being laced with slight nods of condescension, which can be attributed to the fact that his words are being preached to a crowd in order to get them to reach out to God like he did, for “every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found” (line 6). And, because of confession filling him with holy

instructions and teachings, and God “guid[ing] thee with mine eye” (line 8), he now believes he has the role of spreading the good word to others around him. Confession has changed him from a man of sin, of evil, of nefarious deeds, to a man who is pure, holy, free, and righteous. He is no longer like the “horse” or “as the mule, which have no understanding” (line 9) of the wonder of confession and God; he is now being guided in God’s grace and intelligence, as he wishes for all people to be. He knows that God will make the sinful people--the mules and horses he is preaching to--”upright in heart” (line 11) if they only confess their unholy actions onto the merciful God, as he is referred to in line 10. Confiding his confessions in God and trusting in him completely has saved the speaker from a life of wretched actions and being consumed by guilt; he will now “shout for joy” (line 11) as he has been rescued from his own demise and wishes for other people he knows to do the same.