

Psalm 32

[A Psalm] of David, Maschil.

Psalm 32: The psalm describes the blessedness of forgiveness as no other does. This is the theme of especially the first five verses, which include the happiness of the forgiven man (verses 1-2), the physical and psychological effects of unconfessed sin (verses 3-4), and the simple remedy of confession to obtain God's forgiveness (verse 5). On this basis David can experience prayer (verses 6-7), divine instruction (verses 8-9), and personal witness (verses 10-11).

Verses 1-11: This psalm has been classified by the early church as one of 7 penitential psalms (compare 6, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). Among these, Psalms 32 and 51 stand out as confessional giants. As historically related to the life of David and especially in connection with the Bathsheba episode (compare 2 Sam. chapters 11-12), Psalm 51 would have preceded Psalm 32. The over-all thrust, intent, and development of Psalm 32 may be summarized as follows: Life's most important lessons about sin, confession, and forgiveness are skillfully shared by David through two avenues of approach.

- I. First Avenue: Remembering These Lessons (32:1-5).
 - A. Lessons about Results (32:1-2);
 - B. Lesson about Resistance (32:3-4);
 - C. Lessons about Responses (32:5).
- II. Second Avenue: Relaying These Lessons (32:6-11).
 - A. Lessons about Responses (32:6-7);
 - B. Lessons about Resistance (32:8-9);
 - C. Lessons about Results (32:10-11).

Title: "A Maschil" in the heading introduces a new technical term. It could indicate that Psalm 32 was a "contemplative poem", or a "psalm of understanding", or a "skillful psalm".

Verses 1-2: "Transgression ... sin ... iniquity": Three key Old Testament words for sin occur, viewing it respectively as rebellion, failure and perversion.

Psalm 32:1 "Blessed [is he whose] transgression [is] forgiven, [whose] sin [is] covered."

Most scholars agree (that this psalm and Psalm 51), were responses to David's sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. chapter 11).

Or "lifted up"; bore and carried away. Sin is a transgression of the law. The guilt of it charged upon the conscience of a sinner is a heavy burden, too heavy for him to bear, and the punishment of it is intolerable. Forgiveness is a removal of sin, guilt, and punishment. Sin was first taken off,

and transferred from the sinner to Christ, the surety. And who laid upon him really and judicially, as the sins of the people of Israel were put upon the scapegoat typically. And was bore by him, both guilt and punishment, and taken away, finished, and made an end of. And by the application of his blood and sacrifice it is taken away from the sinner's conscience. It is caused to pass from him, and is removed afar off, as far as the east is from the west. It is so lifted off from him as to give him ease and peace, and so as never to return to the destruction of him. Wherefore such a man is a happy man; he has much peace, comfort, calmness, and serenity of mind and now can appear before God with intrepidity, and serve him without fear. No bill of indictment can hereafter be found against him; no charge will be exhibited, and so no condemnation to him. The same is expressed, though in different words, in the next clause.

"Whose sin is covered": Forgiven, literally, "taken away," opposed to retained (John 20:23). So that God no longer regards the sin (Psalm 85:3).

This Psalm begins like the Beatitudes in Matthew with "blessed". In the days of David, the sins were covered by the blood of the sacrificial lamb. But praise God, our sin is wiped completely out by the precious blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:4 "For [it is] not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

If David can say, blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, how much more can we Christians say blessed is he whose sin is abolished?

Psalm 32:2 "Blessed [is] the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit [there is] no guile."

The confessing sinner is "blessed" ("happy"), because no sin is beyond Almighty God's ability to forgive. God forgave murder and adultery in David, just like God will forgive any person who confesses (103:3; Rom. 4:7-8; 2 Cor. 5:19).

I believe that it is saying, the man is blessed when God does not think of the man's sins. Iniquity means transgressions or sins. The spirit of the man who has been forgiven is humble. His spirit is thankful for the Lord who forgives sin.

Romans 3:25 "Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;"

Propitiation means atoning victim. The easiest way to say this, is Jesus paid all the penalty for our sin, and our sin does not exist anymore, if we trust in His blood.

1 John 4:10 "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins."

Verses 3-4: David had no fellowship with God for as long as he was “silent” about his sin. He became physically ill from carrying the guilt of what he had done, able to command all of his subjects as the king but unable to command his own conscience. His joy in life was gone, replaced with bitterness and anguish.

These are vivid descriptions of the physical effects of his impenitent state.

Psalm 32:3 "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long."

Namely, from a full and open confession of my sins, and from pouring out my soul to God in serious and fervent prayers for pardon and peace. The time spoken of is that which immediately followed the commission of the adultery, and which continued until Nathan uttered the words, "Thou art the man!" (2 Sam. 12:7).

My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long": My cries of anguish and distress (see note at Psalm 22:1). The meaning here is, that his sorrow was so great as to lead to loud and passionate cries. And this well describes the condition of a mind under deep trouble at the remembrance of sin and the apprehension of the wrath of God. Continually, without intermission.

David like us, was miserable until he confessed all of his sins to God and was forgiven. When the heart is full of guilt, it makes the body feel bad too. The roaring all the day long was a lot of noise that did not include confession to God. Sinful living brings only sorrow and pain.

Psalm 32:4 "For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah."

Meaning the afflicting hand of God, which is not joyous, but grievous, and heavy to be borne. Especially without his gracious presence, and the discoveries of his love. This continued night and day, without any intermission. And may design some violent distemper; perhaps a fever; since it follows.

My moisture is turned into the drought of summer": That is, the radical moisture in him was almost dried up, as brooks in the summer season. His body was parched, as it were, with the burning heat of the disease. Or with an apprehension of the wrath of God under it, or both. And so he continued until he was brought to a true sense of sin, and an acknowledgment of it. When he had the discoveries of pardoning love, as is expressed in (Psalm 32:5).

The worst punishment comes from the Lord when He is trying to get us to repent. Tears that David shed were tears of sorrow for the problems he was having, and not for the wrong he had done. Some of us do the very same thing before we come to God and confess our sins, so that we can be forgiven. We say poor me.

Psalm 32:5 "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah."

David picks up the key terms that he had used to describe sin (in verses 1-2), but now, in a context of personal confession, he identifies those heinous affronts to the person of God as his own. On the priority of confession (compare Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:8-10).

Confession is to say about one's own sin what God says about it (38:18; 2 Sam. 12:13; Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9).

The very first step in getting help from God is confessing the sins. Sometimes it is hard for us to even acknowledge to our self that we are committing sin. The very best thing to do, as I said, is get the sin out in the open. Do not hide the fact you have sinned, and then confess the sin and get forgiveness.

Psalm 32:6 "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him."

This immediate following of the grant of forgiveness upon confession of sin. I.e., that is sincere and earnest in religion, though he may be overtaken in a fault or surprised into a sin.

"Pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found": Literally, in a time of finding, which some understand as a time when God "finds," and visits, some iniquity in his servants. And others, as the Authorized Version, "in a time when thou art gracious, and allowest thyself to be found by those who approach thee."

Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him": (i.e. the waters), shall not approach such a man to injure him.

Until the very moment before the flood came, the people could have asked God to forgive them of their sin and God would have forgiven them, and saved them from the flood. When the rain started coming down, it was too late. The judgement of God had already begun. We must not wait until after Jesus appears in the eastern sky, to believe. It will be too late then.

Psalm 32:7 "Thou [art] my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah."

When by faith I have recourse to thee, I see all the reason in the world to be easy, and to think myself out of the reach of any real evil.

"Thou shalt preserve me from trouble": As I was while I kept silence, and did not confess my sins, and pray for forgiveness (Psalm 32:3). If, when God has pardoned our sins, he was to leave us to ourselves, we should soon relapse back into sin, and contract fresh guilt. And thereby plunge ourselves again into the same gulf of distress and misery. Therefore, when we have received the comfort of our remission, we must have recourse to the grace of God to be

preserved from returning to folly again. And having our hearts again hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. God keeps his people from trouble, by keeping them from sin.

"Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance": With such great deliverances on all sides as will give just occasion to sing thy praise. And my friends, also, shall compass me about in the great congregation, to join with me in songs of praise. They shall join their songs of deliverance with mine.

"Selah" (on this word; see note on Psalm 3:2).

Notice, in the next verse that Christians are hid in Him.

Colossians 3:3 "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

God heard the cry of the Israelites in Egypt and sent Moses to deliver them. Egypt symbolizes the world. God sent us a Deliverer, and His name was Jesus. The Lord is my very special place of hiding. Notice that David uses the word my, and me. Salvation is an individual thing.

Psalm 32:8 "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

"Instruct ... teach ... guide": This terminology applies to biblical wisdom. We must suppose the "godly man" (of verse 6 addressed), if we regard David as the speaker. Such a man was not beyond the need of instruction and teaching, since he was liable to sins of infirmity, and even to grievous falls, as had been seen by David's example.

"I will guide thee with mine eye": I.e. "I will keep watch over thee with mine eye, and guide thee as I see to be necessary."

God's eye sees everything. He watches over us and keeps us in the path of Light that guides us. Jesus is the Light of the world. When we walk in that Light, we are on the right path. Just as a loving parent corrects a child who has wandered, God watches us and instructs us in His ways.

Psalm 32:9 "Be ye not as the horse, [or] as the mule, [which] have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee."

"Horse ... mule": I.e., don't be stubborn. Such animals are used as pointed illustrations of this sin (compare Prov. 26:3; Isa. 1:3; James 3:3).

A horse, and especially a mule, does not mind very well unless there is a bit in their mouth to make them mind. If the bit and bridle were not on them, they would go and do whatever they wanted to do. Do not be lacking in understanding and have to be driven to do what is right.

1 John 5:20 "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, [even] in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

Psalm 32:10 "Many sorrows [shall be] to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about."

The meaning here is probably, that those who will not submit themselves to God in the manner which the psalmist recommends. Who are like the horse and the mule, needing to be restrained, and who are to be restrained only by force, will experience bitter sorrows. The psalmist may refer here, in part, to sorrows such as he says he himself experienced when he attempted to suppress the convictions of guilt (Psalm 32:3-4). And partly to the punishment that will come upon the impenitent sinner for his sins. The sorrows referred to are probably both internal and external. Those arising from remorse, and those which will be brought upon the guilty as a direct punishment.

"But he that trusteth in the Lord": Not in his wealth and riches, in his wisdom and strength, or in himself and his own righteousness. For such are wicked persons. But in the Lord. In his righteousness to justify him, in his blood to pardon him, in his strength to support him, and in his grace to supply him with everything necessary for him.

"Mercy shall compass him about": Not only follow him and overtake him, but surround him. He shall be crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercies. The phrase denotes the abundance of mercies that shall be bestowed upon him here and hereafter, as both grace and glory.

The word translated sorrows above, can also be translated lashes. It would be a terrible thing to stand before the Judge of all the world, knowing that you are guilty of all the sins in your life. There would be nothing to look forward to, but a lengthy stay in the lake of fire. How wonderful, in contrast, it would be to stand before the Judge of all the world in your robe of righteousness that Jesus traded you for your sin. There would be no sin to be accounted for. There would be a glorious reward of eternal life in heaven with Jesus our Savior. The mercy we are compassed with is Jesus' righteousness.

Psalm 32:11 "Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all [ye that are] upright in heart."

The Targum renders it, "in the Word of the Lord"; in Christ, the essential Word. In him as the Lord their righteousness, and because of his righteousness imputed to them, by which they become righteous. And in him as their Savior and Redeemer, and because of the salvation which he has wrought out for them (see Isa. 61:10).

"And rejoice, ye righteous": In the Lord as before; for this is not a carnal, but spiritual joy, which is here exhorted to. The same (as in Phil. 4:4). And "righteous" ones, who are excited to it, are such who are not righteous in appearance only, or in their own conceit, or by the deeds of the law, or in and of themselves. For there is none righteous this way. But who are made righteous by the obedience of Christ, and are righteousness itself in him. Under a sense of which grace they live soberly, righteously, and godly. And these have great reason to rejoice and be glad.

And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart": Who have the truth of grace, and the root of the matter in them. Oil in the vessels of their hearts, with their lamps. Whose faith is unfeigned,

whose hope is without hypocrisy, and whose love is without dissimulation. And who worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. And draw nigh to him with true hearts, and call upon him in the simplicity of them. These ought to rejoice, and even shout for joy, because of the grace that is wrought in them, and bestowed upon them, and the glory they shall be partakers of. For both grace and glory are given to these, and no good thing is withheld from them. The end of these upright souls is peace. And when they have done their work, they shall lie down and rest in their beds, and each one shall walk in his uprightness (Psalm 84:11).

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice. We have plenty to shout for joy about. The Lord Jesus has clothed us in His righteousness, and we are righteous indeed. We have spoken before about what righteousness means. It means to be in right standing with God. Notice, upright in heart. Our heart is what we are.

Isaiah 61:10 "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh [himself] with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth [herself] with her jewels."

Our robe of righteousness is snow white linen, washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 1:5 "And from Jesus Christ, [who is] the faithful witness, [and] the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,"

Revelation 7:14 "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

If you have believed and been washed in this wonderful blood of the Lamb, tell everyone you see how wonderful it is, and perhaps they will confess their sin and be washed in His precious blood too.

Psalm 32 Questions

1. What makes this Psalm similar to the Beatitudes in Matthew?
2. What was the difference in the blood from the lamb pertaining to sin, and the blood of the Lamb of God?
3. What is iniquity?
4. Describe the spirit of the man who has been forgiven.
5. David was miserable, until he did what?

6. What 2 things does sinful living bring?
7. What is the very first step in getting help from God?
8. When was the last possible time the people could have sought God in Noah's time, to avoid being drowned in the flood?
9. When will it be too late for us to seek forgiveness?
10. Who did David say was his hiding place.
11. The Christian's life is hid in whom?
12. Who delivered the Israelites out of Egypt?
13. What does Egypt symbolize?
14. Who is the Christian's Deliverer?
15. Why did David say my and me in verse 7?
16. In verse 8, God guides by what?
17. Verse 9 says, " Be not as the _____ or as the _____."
18. What are these 2 animals lacking in?
19. What is another word sorrows, in verse 10, could have been translated?
20. Where did the Christian get his robe of righteousness?
21. What is the mercy, that we are compassed about with in verse 10?