
The Pilgrim's Blessed Forgiveness

Psalm 32²²

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God's people sin...

God's people must deal with their sin...

The Bible shows us believers who sinned and have dealt with their sins.

Behind this Psalm is the terrible sins of its author. At the height of his place and power as the king of Israel, he committed adultery with a neighbor lady, had her husband murdered on the battle field and attempted to cover-up her pregnancy. For several long months he would not repent of his sins. Finally, a prophet sent by God was used by God to convict David so that he repented of his sin. We have several Psalms that look back over that long, painful time.

This is one of them in which the blessedness of being forgiven is celebrated. Let us make our own.

Our happiness when receiving God's grace (v. 1-2)

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.

There is great joy for those who experience what confession of sin brings.

Our transgressions are forgiven.

Where we have crossed the line and disobeyed God, that is no longer held to our account.

While David's sin was covered because he was in the Old Covenant, our sins have been cleansed. If he could rejoice in the covering of sin, how much more should we rejoice in the washing away of sin, its guilt and its stain?

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Our iniquity has been cancelled.

The result is that we owe no debt. The payment for each sin we commit has been put on Christ's account. He has paid what was owed. Our debt now has been canceled because it is marked, "Paid In Full".

Our heart is truthful.

Happy are those who finally are honest about their sin. Now there is no more deceiving themselves or others. May we receive the grace of being honest with God, ourselves and others.

Does this make you happy? Do you feel blessed when this is true of you? Do you rejoice with others who know the happiness of being forgiven?

Our misery when we don't confess our sin (v.3-4)

³For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. *Selah*

There is deep pain and misery to those who will not deal with their sin.

If we do not deal with our sin, we will sink, sink down into pain.

Our silence brings our suffering.

Our suffering is not just the inner trouble of guilt. But silence over sin bring physical consequence as well. Groaning in the soul and pain in the body may sometimes be because we have unconfessed sin.

God's hand brings our chastening.

His had is heavy on us. Pressing... No rest... Heavy as we go through our daily work... Heavy when we sit at our evening meals... Heavy when we lie down to sleep... And so we are shriveled up and weak.

Is this kindness? Is this grace? Should we expect this from God? Yes. This is love. This is our Father. His firm hand will press down on our lives when remain silent in the face of our sin.

Our forgiveness when we confess our sin (v.5)

⁵I 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*

There is forgiveness for all who confess their sin in genuine repentance.

Our repentance brings confession.

Three nouns reflect what genuine repentance understands. We clearly understand what we have done wrong. It is rebellion, the deliberate flouting of God's Word. It is sins, the specific words, thoughts and deeds the cross the line of God's Word. It flows from an inner disposition of the heart to distort, disregard, deny and disbelieve God's Word.

Three verbs highlight what genuine repentance does. We acknowledge that we have sinned. We stop covering up the sin and its consequences. We confess our sin to the Lord in view of His provision and promise of forgiveness.

Our confession brings forgiveness.

As soon as we confessed our sin, God forgave us. God is faithful and right to forgive us. He just does not dismiss the sin as though it does not exist. Rather, He has put it to Jesus Christ so that His sacrifice on the cross settles all that was required. Having been forgiven, we are no longer guilty and so joy floods our souls in a restored fellowship. (1 John 1:1-2:2)

This is what God declares to us in 1 John 1:8–2:2 (New Living Translation):

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

So pilgrims deal with their sins as God requires. Therefore, they are forgiven by God.

Our protection when we pray to God (v.6-7)

⁶Therefore 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.

⁷You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. *Selah*

There is a way for God's people to be delivered through the troubles that accompany sin.

Our prayers rise when God can be found.

Those who live God-ward lives and are forgiven of sins will experience the nearness of God in their prayers. God is always near and present but He discovers Himself to our souls when we seek Him for fellowship.

Our protection comes when God preserves.

Our protection in troubles comes from God. But it is among God's people. This deliverance is of God's people. So when we are delivered all around us are the shouts of God's people who being protected and delivered as well. So we do not individually huddle safely in fox holes. We hide within the protection of the city of God, Mt. Zion, the people of God together.

Our instruction when we trust in God (v.8-11)

⁸I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

⁹Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,

which must be curbed with bit and bridle,

or it will not stay near you.

¹⁰Many are the sorrows of the wicked,

but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.

¹¹Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,

and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Instruction and warnings bring joy to those whose heart and life is pleasing to God.

Our counsel transforms our lives.

It is not certain whether is the voice of God or the repentant saint who is speaking here. Who is giving the instruction and the warning? I tend to think that it is the Lord here. But even if it the repentant saint, it is still ultimately from the Lord. It is just mediated through people who have gone through the deep waters and learned the joy of forgiveness and the ways of God. This stanza is more concerned about those who are receiving this counsel.

We need to hear the instruction that God gives us. Sin in the future may be avoided by listening carefully to the teaching that we are receiving. That counsel comes to us in the context of a relationship.

We need to heed the warnings that God gives us. Pride, stubbornness and a hard heart will bring trials, temptations and troubles. Be someone who responds easily and quickly to God's Word. Do not be someone who has to be reined in and pulled about.

Our lives are lived in relation to God.

Wise godly living is discerning about our lives. The wicked have many sorrows. Their lives are filled with the troubles and painful consequences of not regarding God's Word, His will or His ways. But even though the righteous also may have many troubles in life, we are stepped in the unfailing love of God. So our sorrows are experienced in faith and trust. We are confident of the love of God because we believe and trust Him.

We will rejoice in the forgiveness God grants.

We are exhorted to rejoice as God's people. We are righteous because of God's work for us in Christ. We are upright in heart because of God's work in us by the Spirit. So may all who know God and are growing in grace, shout for joy that your sins are forgiven! Even when surrounded by the trials and troubles of this life, trust in God with joy in what He has done for you and in you.

Reflect and Respond

What does this great Psalm celebrate?

There is great joy for those who experience what confession of sin brings.

There is deep pain and misery to those who will not deal with their sin.

There is forgiveness for all who confess their sin in genuine repentance.

There is a way for God's people to be delivered through the troubles that accompany sin.

Instruction and warnings bring joy to those whose heart and life is pleasing to God.

Psalm 32:1-2, 10-11 (NLT)

Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sin is put out of sight!

Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt,
whose lives are lived in complete honesty!

Many sorrows come to the wicked,
but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the LORD.

So rejoice in the LORD and be glad, all you who obey him!
Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure!

