

PSALM 32

THE PSALM OF FORGIVENESS

This Psalm is a very remarkable and valuable one. Paul quotes it in his profound discussion in Romans 4, where he teaches us what sin is, how we obtain the remission of sins, and how we are justified before God. It is in this matter that all hypocrites so deeply err; for human reason cannot imagine that sin is accompanied with such great and such infinite guilt before God, which no human powers nor works can wash away. Mankind, in his natural state, does not know what sin is; and so he thinks that it can be washed off and taken away by good works. But here David plainly says, "For this shall every one that is godly pray." And he says also that no one can be justified or sanctified before God unless he acknowledges himself to be a sinner, and knows that he is to obtain the remission of sins without any works and merits – by the mere mercy of God, and by a free and gracious imputation. Our righteousness is not placed in us or in our works. The remission of our sins is rightly called the *free* remission of our sins, and they are truly said to be covered. "Blessed," says David, "are they" – that is, those who are accepted before God, and who are truly righteous and reconciled to Him – "whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered" (verse 1). The true believer's transgressions of the Divine law are forgiven because they are covered with the atoning blood of Jesus. God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, and made Him the Sin-Offering for us. He took the punishment that was due to our sins, and so they are not imputed to us any longer. In fact, His perfect righteousness is now imputed to us! Such a person whose sins are pardoned goes on to seek sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit. He will not abuse the doctrine of free grace by deliberately continuing to indulge in sin, simply because the Lord is so ready to forgive. And to the person whose iniquity is forgiven, all manner of blessings are promised.

However, it is very difficult to bring sinful man to the point where he humbly accepts free mercy, with a full confession of his sins. But that is the only true way to peace of conscience, so that our sins may be forgiven. The Lord will

Overview of the Psalm, adapted from Charles Spurgeon:

The fact that David wrote this gloriously evangelic Psalm is not only proved by its title, but also by the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 4:6-8: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works," etc. Probably David's deep repentance over his great sin was followed by such blissful peace that he was led to pour out his spirit in the soft music of this choice song! In chronological order, it seems to follow Psalm 51.

In our reading, we have found it convenient to note the benediction of the pardoned (verses 1-2), David's personal confession (verses 3-5), and the application of the case to others (verses 6-7). The voice of God is heard by the forgiven one in verses 8 and 9; and then the Psalm concludes, in verses 10 and 11, with a word for each of the two great classes of people.

not declare us to be justified if we attempt to come to Him in any other way. Although repentance and confession do not merit the pardon of our transgressions, they are necessary for the real enjoyment of forgiving mercy. And what tongue can tell the happiness of that hour when the soul that is oppressed by sin becomes able to freely pour forth its sorrows before God, and to take hold of His Covenant-mercy in Jesus! David could indeed speak of this happiness, having experienced it himself. After his sin with Bathsheba, he continued in a state of unrepentance for the greater part of a whole year. However, after being confronted by Nathan the prophet, he was convicted of his great wickedness; and at last his misery in this matter came to this: either he must return unto his God in humble penitence, or he would die outright. So he hastened to the mercy-seat, and there he unrolled the volume of his iniquities before the all-seeing One – acknowledging all the evil of his ways in language such as you read in the 51st and other penitential Psalms. And immediately after doing this – a work so simple, and yet so difficult to human pride – he received the token of Divine forgiveness! The bones which had been broken were made to rejoice, and he came forth from his prayer-closet to sing the blessedness of the one whose transgressions are forgiven! In every case where there is a genuine confession of sin, mercy is freely given – not because the repentance and confession deserve mercy, but only for Christ’s sake. Blessed be God – there is always healing for the broken heart! The fountain of the Water of Life is forever flowing to cleanse us from our sins. The Lord Jesus is always freely accessible as the hiding-place for poor sinners! In His Person, righteousness, blood, salvation, power, love, goodness, and grace – how everlastingly secure are His redeemed ones! In Him, they are hidden from sin, Satan, and their own corruptions; they are safe from the accusations of the law, the alarms of conscience, and the justice of Almighty God.

In the last few verses (8-11), we learn that the Lord teaches His people by His Word, and guides them with the secret intimations of His will. Hence we are exhorted to submit ourselves to Him, and not stubbornly resist Him like an obstinate mule. And then David gives a word of caution to sinners, warning them that the way of sin will certainly end in sorrow; and he also gives a word of comfort to saints, so that they may see that a life of communion with God is the most pleasant and comfortable by far! “Be glad in the Lord!” he says. How natural does it seem that a person who is blessed with forgiveness should be glad!

What a delightful Psalm this truly is! Have you, in studying it, been able to claim a lot in the beautiful land of the Lord’s free pardon? If so, then publish to others the way of salvation!

Lord Jesus, we praise You for being our hiding-place, which is freely accessible to us! Thank You that there is healing in You for broken repentant hearts. Amen.

