

Psalm 32

"Blessed Are the Forgiven"

Imago Dei Church | 4/26/2020 | Livestream Sunday AM

INTRODUCTION

Want to talk this morning about the blessing of being forgiven. 3 Reasons:

1. In a time of great turmoil and uncertainty, there are some blessings that transcend our circumstances. They cannot be taken away. And especially when we feel the loss or threat of losing other blessings, we lose sight of ones we can never lose. At least I do. I want to reflect on forgiveness because even in this crisis, if you have been forgiven, you have something to celebrate. Yes, it is a time of mourning, but not absolute mourning. Christ is still King and his forgiveness is still sweet.
2. Crises cause us to reevaluate, and there may be some who you know or may perhaps even join us online who are asking big questions and need big answers. If that's you, I want to look at Psalm 32 today to hold out to you the best answer we have. In Christ Jesus, you can receive the blessing

of forgiveness from your sins and acceptance by the God who created you. And no virus or job loss or lockdown will ever be able to take his love away.

3. The forgiveness that we receive from God is meant to be a cornerstone of the relational dynamic between God's people. Col 3:13: "as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." And yet I and many others I've seen have found many inventive ways to excuse our lack of forgiveness. I must confess I can only make an excuse when I lose sight of the blessing I have received. So let's stare at it and have it drive us to forgive one another with the same willingness that God forgives us.

Psalm 32 offers us at least 5 different angles for us to consider the blessing of forgiveness.

1) THE ANATOMY OF FORGIVENESS

(1-2)

[1] 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 images of forgiveness:

"**transgression is forgiven**" — sin is taken/lifted away (cf. Ps 103:12 — "as far as E from W")

"**sin is covered**" — sin is covered, out of sight; God refuses to look at it anymore

[**Micah 7:19**] He will again have compassion on us;
he will tread our iniquities underfoot.
You will cast all our sins
into the depths of the sea. (ESV)

"**the Lord counts no iniquity**" — sin is not counted against us

God sees the sin, but he doesn't hold it against us

(ILL) Accounting terminology

Romans 4 — Paul quotes from Ps 32 in order to talk about the very nature of the gospel ... **sin** is NOT counted against us ... **Christ's righteousness** IS counted ... by faith.

Therefore, we don't have to pretend that we don't have sin. Our forgiveness actually depends on acknowledging ourselves as sinners. No one will be forgiven who does not first acknowledge their need for pardon.

Augustine — Ps 32 etched on the wall next to his deathbed; "The beginning of knowledge is to know oneself to be a sinner."

I think this is the best way to understand the last line of v.2: "in whose spirit there is no deceit."

He's not saying, 'Oh, and blessed are the perfect ones.'

But rather, "blessed are those who come to the Lord without the pretense of being perfect. They know themselves to be a sinner, and they don't pretend otherwise.

This is actually the problem the Psalmist runs into in vv. 3-5...

2) THE EXPERIENCE OF FORGIVENESS

(3-5)

[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

The psalmist has a problem — he won't be real about his sin. He's hiding it (not in the same sense as v.1).

And the effect of this hiding is some kind of emotional, psychological, and possibly even physical distress—
“bones wasted away” ... “groaning” ... “my strength was dried up.” He's in turmoil trying to pretend to be something he's not.

(ILL) Waiting for mom and dad to catch you...

(ILL) I heard a story on a podcast this past week about a man named Bill Henry who passed away in FL in 2007, having spent the last 20 years of his life impersonating another man named Bill Henry. The second Bill Henry was a 16-year major league baseball player in the 50s and 60s—pitched in the World Series.

Same name ... Same height (6'2") ... left handed

Got married & wife didn't know!

Podcast hosts were playfully discussing the internal angst they would feel trying to keep the ruse going.¹

¹ The podcast was Effectively Wild #1528. The story can be found at <https://vault.si.com/vault/2007/09/24/the-passing-of-a-counterfeit-bill>

You and I may never have carried off such a scam, but the psalmist felt a similar kind of angst. He was trying to fool everyone, perhaps even himself, and he was tormented by it.

But **v.4** adds a layer to it — **It was the Lord's hand that was pressing down on him!** This turmoil wasn't fatigue at trying to keep a con going. It was the disciplining hand of God.

Several things worth noting here:

1. It is a kindness of the Lord to not let us chase after sin with a clear conscience
2. We ought not confuse the discipline of God with the judgment of God. He disciplines those he loves (Heb 12:6). The judgment, though, is poured out on another.
3. Our consciences are relevant in our obedience to God. While a guilty conscience is not always a perfect indicator of God's will for our lives, if we are in Christ and have the Spirit of God, we ought to consider whether a guilty conscience is showing us some sin in our lives.

4. At the same time, we should not imagine that a guilt-free conscience is a guarantee of sinlessness. Often one of the side-effects of sin in our lives is a callousness to the Spirit's convicting influence.

Now, the psalmist learns his lesson in **v.5**.

The sinner awakens from his unrepentant slumber and turns to God, bringing his sin into the light. **3 phrases:**

"I acknowledged" — rather than denial; he no longer tried to pretend it wasn't there.

"I did not cover" — rather than hiding; he didn't sugarcoat or blame shift.

"I will confess" — Rather than keeping silent; he names it.

The result of his confession is forgiveness. The Lord doesn't hold sin against the repentant. If we confess our sin and run to the Lord rather than away from him, we will surely find this forgiveness.

Not just for the unbeliever!

(APP) **Simple question:** is there unconfessed sin in your life? Why hold onto it?

3) THE PROMISE OF FORGIVENESS

(6-7)

- [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

In these verses there is both promise and warning.

PROMISE = God's righteous judgment against sin ("the rush of great waters") will not reach him.

Why? Because we run to the Lord?

In order to escape the just judgment for our sin we run to the Lord.

This is the gospel, though he and he alone has the right to judge us, he and he alone can save us. (v.8)

WARNING = "when you may be found"

The Lord may be found ... but do not linger! Don't be slow to deal with your sin.

It is the Lord's kindness and patience that allows us time to wrestle, feel conviction, and repent. Should we respond to this kindness with laziness and apathy?

Repeated theme in Scripture: TODAY is the day of salvation (2 Cor 6:2).

Psalm 95:7–8: "Today, if you hear his voice, [8] do not harden your hearts,"

(ILL) 'carpe diem' from *Dead Poets Society*

(APP) Appeal to the **unconverted**; appeal to the **believer** with unconfessed sin. The promise is for you!

4) THE LESSON OF FORGIVENESS

(8-10)

The psalm turns now to provide instruction.

It's interesting that someone who experiences the grace of God's forgiveness then turns to share it with others.

[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.

It's unclear if the psalm is now speaking for God or if it's the psalmist himself, but it doesn't affect much.

The point is the same. **He wants others to learn from his own journey and not hide their sin.**

He uses the **illustration of a horse or mule** needing to be coerced (disciplined?) into obedience, and then never really learning anything. It only obeys with discipline.

He says, "don't be like that." Don't *only* confess if you're forced into it.

Why? — **v.10** — because there is a deep contrast between those who refuse to acknowledge their sin (here called "the wicked") and those who run to the Lord in trust.

They are both overwhelmed by something. The wicked are overwhelmed with sorrows. The repentant are overwhelmed by God's love.

5) CONCLUSION: THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS**(11)**

[11] Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Our response to his loving-kindness is to sing. It's to worship. When we, like Augustine, understand ourselves to be deep sinners, the natural result of our sin being forgiven is to rejoice.

If we do not rejoice at the Lord's forgiveness, we cannot have understood the depth of our plight.

We "were DEAD in our trespasses and sins ... children of wrath ...but God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us..." send his Son to make it possible that our guilt could be counted to HIM, not to us. And his perfect righteousness could be counted to US.

HE is the one who protects us against great waters. HE is the one who shields us from judgment. HE is the one who never needed forgiveness so that he could secure ours.

If you have trusted Christ and received this forgiveness ... you are blessed. Shout for joy.

If you're a Christian but once again suffer under the weight of unconfessed sin, bring it into the light. Tell it to the Lord and tell it to a brother or sister, knowing that the guilt will not be held against you.

Non-Christian, whether you know it or not, you are under the weight and guilt of your own sin and rebellion.

Know that the promise of forgiveness is available to you as well. Call out to Jesus Christ. He is able and willing to save, as this psalm says, "with shouts of deliverance." He will have you.