

# Psalm 32:1-5 - The Joy of Confession

*A Maskil of David.*

*Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah*

*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*

## Exordium

For most of us, when we take a serious look at our sanctification, prayer is an area we neglect more than we should. We look back at the end of the year and think, "Ok, in 2025, I am going to pray more than I did in 2024." Furthermore, if we were to press into our prayer lives, we might say that the confession aspect is the quickest part of our prayer life, or the most neglected. For me, when I sin, I want to replicate Adam's actions in the Garden of Eden. I do not want to be in the presence of a holy God because I know I've sinned against Him. I want to do some good works, and then present myself to God in fig leaves. "Look, God! Look at all these good things I've done. Have I earned your favor?" What we are doing when we try this is works-based righteousness. God, I hope I can earn your favor by all these good works I've done. As if our imperfect, self-righteous works could ever earn God's favor.

So, we approach God in our fig leaves, hoping that we can come in without Him remembering our sinful acts. In these moments, the fiery, holy eyes of God burn away our fig leaves, leaving us naked before Him, utterly realizing we are great sinners. Then the overwhelming truth hits us, we have no hope in

ourselves to stand before the awesome God of heaven. It is then that we remember our great need for Jesus Christ, our High Priest.

My thesis for these verses is that the one who is forgiven in Christ, whose sin is atoned for, is truly the happy person.

## Psalm 32:1-2 - Happy is the One who is Forgiven

Psalm 32 has been recognized as both a psalm of thanksgiving and lamentation. As we read these first five verses, it becomes apparent why both of those titles are fitting. David indeed laments his sin and also gives thanks to God for giving forgiveness. The early church recognized six psalms as penitential psalms, or psalms of repentance: Psalm 6, Psalm 32, Psalm 38, Psalm 51, Psalm 102, Psalm 120, and Psalm 143. These Psalms have been sung throughout the ages as churches cry out to God seeking forgiveness for sins, and trusting He forgives us.

Finally, it is largely believed that Psalm 32 is the result of a line written in Psalm 51. I'm sure most of us are familiar with Psalm 51. David wrote Psalm 51 after he repented of his sins in his adulterous relationship with Bathsheeba, and consequently murdered Uriah, Bathsheeba's husband. Let's pick up David's confession in Psalm 51:9:

*Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.*

Many commentators and scholars believe Psalm 32 to be the result of Psalm 51:13: "Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you." After David takes Bathsheeba as his wife, Scripture testifies that this displeased the Lord, or what David had done was evil in the eyes of the Lord (2 Samuel 11:27). Whether Psalm 32 flows from Psalm 51:13 or not, what we can all agree upon is that David knew the depths of his sin and the joyous heights of forgiveness.

As we look at these first two verses, we see the depiction of the one who is blessed, or the truly happy one. Notice who the blessed one is: 1) the person whose transgression, or rebellion against God, is forgiven, dismissed (Psalm 32:1), 2) the person whose sin, or offense, is covered, or God has put the sin out of His sight (Psalm 32:1), and 3) the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, or moral distortion. So, who is the blessed or happy one? It is the person whose sins have been discarded as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). And those who are happy, there will be no deceit or minimizing of their sin.

This brings us to a significant point: those whom Christ has redeemed are blessed and happy, but those who are not redeemed are not blessed. Why do believers have such joy, such blessedness? Paul gives us the answer as he quotes Psalm 32:1-2 in Romans 4:6-8. Paul makes it abundantly clear that David celebrated forgiveness, not because of his works, but because by grace through faith righteousness was credited to his account. Likewise, we know that Christ's righteousness is credited to our account, not because of our works, but because of the amazing grace of God. This is why we have tremendous joy: we are accepted by God because of Jesus Christ, which we will elaborate on more when we arrive at Psalm 32:5.

Now, however, we will look at the reality that the unbeliever is not blessed or happy. This might seem like an overstatement, for I know many unbelievers who are quite happy with their lives. They have a family they love, jobs they enjoy, and hobbies that bring them apparent happiness. So, how can the Word state that one who is not forgiven is not blessed, is not truly happy?

It is here that we look through the earthly realm and peer into the spiritual realm. We ask, why then are unbelievers not blessed and not spiritually happy? Firstly, let us turn to Ephesians 2:1-3, which shows the state of unbelievers:

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

Paul, writing to the church in Ephesus, reminds them of who they were before

their salvation. First, they were dead in the trespasses and sins in which they once walked. This is the reality of every human from Adam until today, before conversion, which means this was our state as well. We were dead in our trespasses and sins, yet Christ mercifully and graciously saved us. He transferred us from the deadness of the power of sin to life as slaves of righteousness.

Second, we learn from Ephesians 2 that unbelievers follow the course of this world and the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. This is a significant reason why unbelievers are not blessed. The world and the enemy have a great influence on them, their lives, and their souls. Do we not remember the hold that the world and Satan held over us before we became Christ's? Do we not remember the chains that had us in bondage before the beams of Christ set us free? We should have eyes of pity, mercy, and grace for those trapped under the snares of Satan and the currents of culture, because we know what it is like to be under their power as sons and daughters of disobedience. We should lament as Jesus lamented over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37:

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!*

Oh, how we should long for those in sin to come under the wings of Christ. How we should long for friends, neighbors, and family members to know the great love of the sure High King.

Third, unbelievers live according to the passions of their flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind. Unfortunately, since the Fall, all humanity suffers from a corrupt, sinful nature. This was passed down to every human being upon conception due to Adam's rebellion in the Garden. Due to the disease of sin, all humanity is carried about by their hearts. We know that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick (Jeremiah 17:9). Unbelievers follow their deceitful and sick hearts in rebellion against their Creator.

Finally, Ephesians 2 reveals that unbelievers are by nature children of wrath. This is, to our flesh, an affront. We, before our salvation, were under the wrath of

God, sitting in condemnation. We were His enemies, and He was our enemy. How can there be true happiness for the one at war with God? How can a person be blessed if God is their enemy?

So, first, we know that unbelievers cannot be truly blessed because their state is opposed to God. Second, we understand that their consciences constantly judge them. The conscience, which is mentioned thirty times in the New Testament, is the inner part of the soul that testifies there is a holy, just, and righteous Creator, and ultimately, we are accountable to Him. Throughout the day, the unbeliever's conscience constantly speaks about how they are living is not pleasing to their Creator.

Take a minute and think about the months, weeks, and days leading to our salvation. The Spirit of Christ brought conviction upon our souls, revealing our true spiritual state. We could feel Him pursuing us, showing us the depths of our depravity. And at the same time, our conscience, within our soul, was revealing how we were condemned because we were not pleasing, in and of ourselves, to the great God of creation. There, in our state of deep conviction, did we not cry out, "Where can I go to remove the shame, guilt, and condemnation?" And the Spirit's answer is always, "Look to the Son of God. Look to Jesus. Look to Christ. Repent and believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Come to Him, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light." As the Spirit regenerated our souls, and by grace through faith Christ redeemed us, we felt turmoil turn to joy. The condemnation shed from our souls, and the doors were swung open so that we could experience the surpassing love of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

So, we remember the days when we did not experience this joy. We can recall when we were not the blessed ones that Psalm 32:1 speaks of so clearly. Our transgressions were not yet forgiven. Our sin had not yet been covered. The Lord had counted against us our iniquities. We did not have the love of God being poured into our hearts through Christ by the Holy Spirit. Sure, we may have had earthly happiness, but that type of happiness does not compare to the everlasting, covenantal love we find in Christ when we read "Blessed is the man" in Psalm 32.

## Psalm 32:3-4 - The Heavy Hand of the Lord

In these verses, we are taken into the moments when the heavy hand of the Lord was upon David for his sin. David had not yet confessed his sin, as evidenced by his silence. What comes as a result of his lack of confession? His bones wasted away through his groaning the whole day. David is under immense physical, emotional, spiritual, and / or psychological pain as he writes. There is an understanding that he knows and can feel the heavy hand of Yahweh upon him day and night. This soul longs for water as he thirsts in the heat of summer. His strength has been taken from him.

On July 8, 2019, I broke the golden rule for purchasing books: I judged a book by its cover. The book entitled *Reformed Preaching: Proclaiming God's Word from the Heart of the Preacher to the Heart of His People* was written by Joel Beeke. Thankfully, the book was even better than the cover. The book aims to introduce and teach individuals about reformed experiential preaching. Beeke covers preachers over approximately 400 years: John Calvin, William Perkins, Thomas Goodwin, Jonathan Edwards, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones, to name a few. It was in this book that I was introduced to the Puritans.

Since reading this book, I have not stopped learning about the Puritans and reading their writings. Few have been able to capture my heart like this group of men. What I find most comforting about them is their ability to probe the depths of Scripture and doctrine in their sermons and writings, exposing the sinfulness of the human heart, all the while exalting Christ and showing Him to be the greatest treasure of the world. To me, as the men's Puritan group would gladly tell you, John Owen is the prince of the Puritans, and he exemplified the unique ability to teach deeply while simultaneously taking a scapel to your soul, carefully wounding you, so that Christ might heal you. He has become a friend who has helped me to practically live experientially in a way I had never done previously.

For me, the Puritans unlocked this aspect of the Christian life in a way that I had never heard before. So, when we look at Psalm 32:3-4, can't we also say that there have been times in our lives when we attempted to hide unrepentant, unconfessed sin from God, as if we ever could, and in doing so, we felt the heavy

hand of God upon our hearts? Don't we all know the feeling of our strength being taken because the Holy Spirit's conviction is so great upon our souls?

In these dreadful moments, Psalm 38:2 becomes real to us:

*For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me.*

The Lord, with perfect aim, sinks arrows into our hearts, and we know our sin has greatly offended Christ. We feel the weight that ensues.

In 2008, the worship song "Healer" swept the globe. The pastor who wrote the song had been diagnosed with terminal cancer, and also performed the song while the band was on tour. It was later discovered that the pastor did not have terminal cancer, but a deep addiction to pornography. The guilt of his addiction led his body to respond in such a way that it mimicked cancer-like symptoms. This man knew Psalm 32:3-4 intimately and experientially. The Lord's heavy hand was upon him, God's arrows had sunk deep into his heart, and his strength had been taken from him.

Are there unrepentant and unconfessed sins that you have kept hidden in your heart? Does malice, lust, homosexuality, drunkenness, envy, anger, idolatry, sorcery, jealousy, gossip, slander, gluttony, or laziness lie in your heart? The enemy loves to tell us the lie that if we were ever to bring them into the light, there would be a greater sense of guilt, shame, and even condemnation. He will tell you any lie to keep you from confessing your sins to Christ. He will craft convincing lies to keep you hidden on a ship heading to Tarshish, instead of finding comfort in the ark that is Christ. Don't believe his lies.ß

For in Christ, bones are not wasting away. Instead, you find a wellspring of love, compassion, care, mercy, and grace. You will find your Savior eager to welcome you, eager to forgive you, and eager to bear the burdens that are heavy for your weary heart. You don't have to continue to live with the heavy hand of the Lord upon you. Run to God seeking pardon through Christ, for He is altogether lovely and gloriously beautiful.

## Psalm 32:5 - Sin Forgiven

The words of Psalm 32:5 are like honey to our hearts. David, now recognizing his need for forgiveness, turns to the Lord and finds it. Let us recall the story of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah. We left off where David had taken Bathsheba for his wife, and it displeased God. Yet, the story does not end in 2 Samuel 11. We continue reading 2 Samuel 12:1-13:

*And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.' " David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."*

Notice that David first acknowledged his sin to God. He no longer covers up his iniquity. He confesses his transgressions and, here is the grace and mercy of God, you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Isn't it incredible to think that God forgave David? David stole someone's



wife, murdered her husband, and then took her to be his wife. Sin, after sin, after sin. Yet, God's grace abounds. Then isn't it incredible to think that God forgives us time and time again after we sin? Isn't it amazing that we can run to God knowing that the promise of pardon is true for those who come with humble hearts? How can He be so merciful and gracious to us?

This puts us face-to-face with one of the wonderful truths of the Bible: Jesus as our High Priest. Under the Mosaic Covenant, priests represented the people to God. One specific group of people in Israel, the Levites, was set aside by God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin. We read a lot about them and their work in the book of Leviticus. As the New Testament makes abundantly clear, Christ fulfilled the work of the Levitical priests.

Now, I think we'd all agree that Christ is able to forgive us of our daily sins, but do we believe that He is *willing and eager* to forgive us? Or do we believe He *has* to forgive us of our sins because He is the great Mediator? Do we believe that He is for us, not against us?

I want to show you that Christ is not only able to forgive us of sins as we confess them, but He is, in fact, willing and eager to forgive us of the sins we commit. John 13-17 captures the final Passover meal Jesus will have with His disciples. Jesus knows that He will be returning to the Father. Peter, as always, speaks up before thinking. John 13:36-38:

*Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.*

So, the stage has been set. Peter will betray Jesus, and ultimately, all His disciples will leave His side, save John. Despite knowing this, does Jesus tell them that His love, compassion, care, grace, and mercy are dependent upon them staying by His side? No. If you continue to read to John 17, you come to the High Priestly prayer. Do you know what you find in Jesus as He prays to the Father for His disciples? Grace, mercy, compassion, assurance, and love. Jesus knows they are going to betray Him, and is there any hint of malice in Jesus' heart? NO!

NONE! In the heart of Christ, even when He knows they will sin against Him, there is tender, steadfast love.

Do you know what is even more amazing? Jesus' ministry as the High Priest did not end at the cross. It did not stop at the resurrection or the ascension. As Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813–1843) resolved, "I ought to study Christ as an Intercessor.... If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million of enemies. Yet the distance makes no difference; He is praying for me." Right now, Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for you. As Hebrews 7:25 states:

*Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

Notice what that verse said: He always lives to make intercession for them, those who belong to Him. At this very moment, Jesus is interceding for you. How can we continue to hide from Him as if we were Adam, when He so desires to extend grace and mercy to us?

I want to press further into Christ being our compassionate High Priest. You might think, "Well, that is great that He lives to intercede for us, but it doesn't say that He does so with compassion or sympathy." Let us read Hebrews 4:15:

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Jesus, right now, has sympathy for us in our weakness. He can sympathize with us because He was tempted just like we are, yet He never sinned. Since He has been tempted, this means that He can be compassionate towards us. Isn't that amazing? Isn't it great to know that our Mediator is not aloof to our temptations?

## Closing

We all know the journey of Psalm 32:1-5. We understand that the blessed person is the one whom Christ has redeemed. We also know what it is like to

hide sin from God and experience His heavy hand. We know the anguish of those seasons. We know that desert, all too well. Yet, how many of us can testify to experiencing pardon given from a compassionate and sympathetic Christ? Know that He prays for you. Know that He loves to intercede for you. Know that you can run to Him right now, especially if you have been seeking to hide sin from Him. Know the throne is open, and see that grace awaits those who come humbly. Please, brothers and sisters, do not delay in running to the fountain of mercy where pardon is given.