

Psalm 32 – When Sins Are Forgiven! (Part 1 of 2)

Introduction – When man sins against each other he can make restitution. He does so by making payment such as a fine or some kind of compensation. If he murders another person, he pays for it with his life. If he kills a person accidentally, he might spend time in jail. There are earthly consequences accompanied by earthly reparations for the sinner when he sins against another. But what happens when he sins against God? What can a sinner give to God that is of this earth that can placate the wrath of God, so that he will not be punished for his transgressions? The answer is that there is nothing a man can do or give that is of this earth in order to receive from God the forgiveness of sins. God made this universe. He owns everything that is on this earth, for he owns the earth itself. Sin will forever remain in every sinner, for he is born in sin and he will continue to commit sins as long as he lives. God has to help or else the burden of sin will remain in the sinner's life for life!

The burden of sin is the heaviest load a man can carry on earth. Everywhere he goes, the load follows. It cannot be cast off like any other load on earth. He can pretend that the load is gone by getting drunk. But when he is sober, he feels the load again. Such temporary solutions have done more harm than good because they create new problems such as alcoholism, and the real problem of sin in the soul remains. Others pretend that all is well in their soul by laughing and feasting and having a good time. But when the laughter dies off and the feasting ends, reality sets in again and the sin problem is as large as life itself. Nothing on this earth can take away the sins in the soul of every sinner.

God must intervene, or else man will head hopelessly toward death and hell. This is a one way journey of no return that only God can stop. Thank God that He did! He sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross for man's sins. God accepted what Christ did on the cross of Calvary when He raised Christ from the dead for man's justification. Each sinner must believe by faith what Jesus Christ has done for him personally in order for him to be saved. There is no universal automatic salvation. Those who reject Christ will die in their sins. When they die in their sins, they will end up in hell. The forgiveness of God in both the OT and NT is based upon this completed work of Christ. Forgiveness is not sweeping of sins under the spiritual carpet. Payment or just restitution must be paid in order for sins to be forgiven. Christ paid with His life's blood.

This is how we must look at Psalm 32 when we study the topic of the forgiveness of sin.

- I. **Confession the Pre-requisite (vv 1-5)** – This psalm was written by David. "Maschil" means "instructive." The exact period of the writing of this psalm is not known but it does not matter much because the psalm describes David's heart when he received the forgiveness of sin in his life. He began by stating the "blessed" state he was in; and not for him only but also for all whose transgression (i.e. breaking of God's law)

is forgiven by God. The meaning of "forgiven" is explained by the synonymous parallelism. It is the same as one whose sin (i.e. offence) is covered whereby the sin is wiped away as if he has not sinned at all. This is more than just a mere covering of one's sin. The word "blessed", when used by God to describe a believer as in his instance, always refers to a person who has a personal relationship with God which is the basis for his state of blessedness. This is a blessed state not based upon deliverance from physical harm but a deliverance from the bondage of sin through Christ. This is the only way David's sins could be covered and all his transgressions forgiven. There is no other way. The Levitical system that David believed in was based upon Christ's salvific work on the cross of Calvary.

The verbs "forgiven" and "covered" mean that the sins have been permanently removed from the believer's life. They were not forgiven or covered because God just pretended that the sins were not present in David's life. They were covered because Christ took the penalty for David's sins when He died on the cross. David had already accepted Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour when he was a young boy. David understood the blessedness of having a personal relationship with God through Christ. The knowledge and clarity that believers today have of the finished work of Christ is, of course, better because of progressive revelation. But whatever revelation David had in his days that he received and believed by faith was sufficient for him to know of Christ as his Lord and Saviour. This knowledge is found in the Law of Moses, especially through the Levitical system of sacrifices. To be forgiven and to have sins covered required the death of animals whose blood only provided temporal external cleansing. This was sufficient for the priests to enter the holy place once a day and they needed to repeat the process of animal sacrifices the next day and every day.

Salvation in Christ is gained always and only through believing that Christ died on the cross for man's sins. There is no other basis. The basis of wealth and health as the reward for believing in Christ and that Christ died for one's sin so that he can become wealthy and healthy are definite lies of Satan. This is a false gospel that must be repudiated at all costs. Anyone who thinks this way cannot be saved. The heart of greed mixed with sin cannot be the basis for salvation. That person will not be considered blessed. He is still in a state of sin. His "salvation in Christ" is based upon carnality. Therefore dear reader, if you have believed with your heart in all sincerity in Christ and have received Him as your Lord and Saviour because He died for your sins, and not because you will get wealth and health, then God says you are blessed. When you know in your heart and soul that your sins have been covered and your transgressions forgiven, then you are considered blessed by God.

Verse 2 (synthetic parallelism) – The blessed believer will have a transformed mind, heart and life, which is the supernatural work of God. That is why David continued in verse 2 with this revelation. This same blessed man is also one "unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity." The verb "imputeth" means "to reckon" or "to count." The LORD will not count any iniquity committed by the sinner as a sin anymore. This has to be carefully explained. When a believer accepts Christ as Lord and Saviour, he becomes a child of God instantaneously. He is declared righteous by God. This righteousness will never be taken from him. To take this righteousness from him whenever he sins would mean that one moment before sinning he is a child of God, and then the moment he sins he is no longer a child of God, and when he repents, he is a child of God again. This "in and out" of salvation is not taught in the Bible. While the believer after salvation remains on earth to serve God in this mortal body, he will continue to sin, whether in mind or heart or words or in action. This is so because there is no sinless perfection on earth. When the believer sins, the LORD does not impute his sin on him from a positional or relationship perspective whereby he will lose his salvation, i.e. his state of blessedness. That does not mean that the sins committed are not sins in reality because they are. What is affected is his fellowship with God whereby his prayers will not be heard by God (cf. Psalm 66:18). Is he still considered blessed by God when he sins and has not repented of his sins yet? The answer is a resounding "yes". When he sins, his testimony is affected, i.e. the image of Christ he bears. Thus he must care for this by immediate and sincere repentance to protect this image of Christ that he bears everywhere he goes.

The truly born again believer has no more guile in him. The word "guile" refers to "treachery" or "deceit." This describes the person's heart which is the seat of all his emotions and decisions. The believer's motive behind his actions and words will no longer be spurred by deceit or treachery. Self interests have become a thing of the past. This does not mean that there will not be moments when he lapses into sin because the motive is self-serving. If he is truly born again, he will repent and get rid of it the moment he knows that his motive is sinful. But "there is no guile" in his heart. Guile does not control his motives anymore. That is why lying and deception are very serious transgressions. These will have no part in the kingdom of heaven, but belong to eternity in the Lake of Fire. **Revelation 21:8** (KJV), *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."* **Revelation 22:14-15** (KJV), *"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. 15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."*

Verse 3 (synthetic parallelism) – The result or consequence of failure to repent is described in verse 3. David shared that when he kept silence, i.e. refused to repent of his sin, "his bones waxed old." When a person is not born again and sin is his master, he is very comfortable with sin. He carries sin with him everywhere he goes and feels no ounce of shame. There might be certain sins that he is ashamed of and he tries to hide them; but the general sins that he can hide, he will. David was not ignorant of his sin. Sins that a person is not aware of will not cause any discomfort. However, when the sins are told to that person who is a child of God, the result is a great loss of peace in his heart.

When David struggled and refused to repent of his sins, his relationship with God was affected; furthermore, he could not approach God in prayer and worship. The feeling he had was that his "bones waxed old through my [David's] roaring all the day long." The word "roaring" is "groaning." The groaning of mental anguish as well as emotional and spiritual pain was so great that David felt that he was growing old before his time. His bones like that of an old man have become old. This means that he was feeling listless and lifeless. He was walking slowly like an old man as the bounce in his feet was gone. Life was tasteless as if the light of life had been switched off. No matter how great the physical life was, even for a king who was always surrounded by great luxury, life was meaningless. For a blessed man who has a personal relationship with God through Christ, his spiritual life always dominates. Since David kept silent and delayed in his repentance, the joy of the Lord was taken away from him. He felt like this all day long, until he returned to the Lord and made right his relationship.

This is a good feeling to have as a child of God. This is the godly sorrow that will lead to repentance. If David, or any believer, were to feel nothing and went on with life as if all was well with his soul, and there was no remorse or feeling of bones waxing old, then his relationship with God would be really cold, if there was actually one in the first place!

Verse 4 (synonymous parallelism) – David, like all children of God, would have known that when God's children refuse to repent of their known transgressions, He knows and will do something about it. David described it as "... day and night thy hand was heavy upon me." The heavy hand of God was upon him. The period of this heaviness was "day and night." There was no relief in his soul. The worse thing that can happen to a sinner who is in sin and knows it is to say, "God leaves me alone and I have peace in my heart." These are the words of a person who is not loved by God. This is the thinking of a sinner whom God does not consider as blessed, i.e. not God's child.

This is an awful feeling to have in his heart. He is not born again and he does not even know it. The Bible describes what God the Father will always do for His wayward child who remains far from Him by not repenting of his sin. **Hebrews 12:5-8** (KJV), "*And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*" [Emphasis added]

Using synonymous parallelism, David said that his "moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Summer in Israel is always very dry. It could reach up to 40 degrees Centigrade. David said that he felt like a person who is all dried up. A dried up person is a person who feels like a dead person within. There is no more life in him. His life is tasteless and meaningless, for how can there be meaning in life when the LORD will not even hear his prayers or receive his offerings in worship? He knows that what stands in the way of reconciliation is his own pride and stubborn sin that he refuses to get rid of. Whatever the sin might be, and it could also be an unforgiving heart which is one of the most if not the most difficult sin to get rid of in the believer's life, he thinks he is right and therefore would rather hold on to it. He should get rid of the sin and learn to forgive the way that he has been forgiven by God through Christ! This struggle of dryness in his soul is a good feeling to have, which must now drive him to his knees in humble repentance. He should turn to God for forgiveness and for strength and humility to seek God's forgiveness and be reconciled back to God. This is the primary purpose of chastisement from the LORD. It is not punishment for a wrong done like in a court of justice, but rather a loving chastisement to redirect the child of God back to the path of holiness and righteousness.

This was David's testimony because he kept silent and did not return to his LORD in humble repentance to receive the forgiveness of sin. With "selah" as a pause to ponder and contemplate all that has been written thus far, David brings us to the next phase of his experience.

Verse 5 (synthetic parallelism) – David returned to the LORD in repentance to receive forgiveness of sin. He said, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid." This is the most important step in confession. No excuse was made by David. He just confessed his transgressions. He did not hide from the LORD any of his sins; he did not try to justify that it was not really a sin or that he did it accidentally

or that he did not mean it. These are some examples of insincere or diminished repentance. David did not do any of these. All believers must not as well.

Using synthetic parallelism, David said he "will confess my [David's] transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my [David's] sin." David knew that when he confessed his transgression from the bottom of his heart without justifying or diminishing his transgression, the LORD would surely forgive. Forgiveness of transgression does not mean there is no consequence for sins committed. All sins come with a certain level of consequence. The consequence varies from sin to sin. For example, if a person lusts after a woman in his heart, he knows he has already committed adultery. If he repents with all his heart at this stage of the transgression, the consequence will be minimal. He will feel defeated and humbled by his failure before the LORD. However, if the lust leads to the actual act of adultery, then the consequences will be major. His relationship with his wife and all others around him, and especially the testimony of Christ will be terribly affected. The damage of the latter compared to the former is like night and day!

To be forgiven is the best feeling to have, especially after a long struggle with sin in the believer's life. David experienced the sweetness of being forgiven when he repented of his sin. The dryness in his soul and bones was taken away almost instantaneously. The peace and joy in his heart that God alone can give was his to enjoy once more. The abundant life in Christ could be experienced all over again. He was right again with His heavenly Father and this is priceless. His prayers were heard by God again. Selah, i.e. pause, is used again for contemplation after just one verse. If any reader is keeping silent like David, learn from his testimony so that you can experience the forgiveness of God. All that is needed is to acknowledge your sin before the LORD and hide nothing from him.

To be continued.