

INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] A young boy was visiting his grandparents for the summer and had just been given his first slingshot. He went out into the woods to practice, but because it was new could barely even hit the trees. When he walked back to the house he spotted his grandma's pet duck named Harold. Suddenly he pulled up his slingshot and took aim and somehow hit the duck right on the head. He was horrified and filled with guilt when he discovered that the duck was dead. In a panic he took the duck and tried to hide it in a wood pile. But he was mortified when he discovered that he Grandma was doing the dishes by the window and could have been able to see him. He went inside, but so far she said nothing. She just asked for help with drying the dishes and he did. But she didn't mention the duck. All-day long he helped her constantly wondering if she knew what he did. Finally, when he felt like he was going to throw up he confessed his crime with snotty tears. His grandma told him that she had seen it, but she loved him and she forgave him. Relief flooded his body and he cried more, but mostly happy tears. Because his suffering was over.¹
2. [Need] Maybe you haven't killed your grandma's duck, but we all have sins and guilt that needs to be forgiven. That ultimate and lasting forgiveness cannot come from others, nor within ourselves. Ultimately we can only find the blessing of forgiveness from the blood of Jesus.
3. [Subject] How blessed it is to be forgiven. The relief of the boy in that story can and should be experienced by every believer.
4. [Text] Psalms 32
5. [Preview]

Our first point in your bulletin if you are taking notes is that **God forgives confessing sinners. God forgives confessing sinners.**

The Psalm begins with a strange Hebrew word.

It tells us that the Psalm is from David, but it says that it is a "maskil."

¹ Seems to be a common preacher story I couldn't find the original author. I changed details to make it fit our context this morning.

You may wonder what that is, and I do too.
Most Bible scholars can take a guess, but will admit that we honestly don't know.

We have to remember that the Psalms were originally songs and prayers.
They were a part of the normal and regular pattern of worship for Israel.
They would sing them when they gathered.
They would pray them when they were home.

So this is some kind of musical, liturgical, or worship instruction.
The original meaning is lost to us.
It could mean that they should play it slow or loud!
Or it could tell us what kind of song this is.
The best guess I found is that some think it means "teaching."
Because this is a Psalm that has some wisdom to impart to us.
So maybe it's that, but we don't know.

We might not sing it this morning, but we can still learn from it.

David begins in verse 1 **"Bless is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."**

What a blessing it is to be forgiven!

But who can receive this blessing of forgiveness?
What kind of sinner can be forgiven?
Because only one kind of sinner is actually eligible for forgiveness

And David actually mentions three kinds of sinners here in Psalm 32.
He uses three different words to describe sin
"transgression, sin, and iniquity."

Pastor David Shields

I do not believe that David is just flexing his poetic muscles and showing that he can use a thesaurus.

No he is trying to make a point about different kinds of sin.
Because sin is not all equal.

First, he describes **"transgression."**

This is a kind of sin that is a willful rebellion against God.

It is not a mistake or a lapse of judgment.

This is a violent intentional coup to overthrow God.

The transgressor is someone who sins while looking up at God and shaking a fist

Years ago in the early days of the internet, there was a blasphemy challenge.

People would try to commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit because Jesus says that is the only sin He cannot forgive.

And they would film themselves declaring like Michael Scott "I blaspheme against the Holy Spirit"

Now I don't think that's actual blasphemy against the Spirit.

But it is a transgression.

It is the willful mocking of God's rule and might.

After **"transgression"** we have **"sin."**

This is the famous one that we use most often, probably because it's short and easy to spell.

But sin is often defined as the missing of the mark.

It is the arrow that doesn't quite hit the bullseye.

This is our sin that falls short of perfect righteousness.

It is our mistakes,

or even our imperfect righteousness.

When we do the right thing, but with the wrong heart.

Or we even have the right heart, but we slip in a moment of weakness.
That is sin.

We might not want to call ourselves rebels against God, but we are all sinners who miss the mark.

And finally, there is **"iniquity"**

Iniquity is the deliberate taking of another path.

It is the guilt that we bear for choosing to go the wrong way.

It isn't a mistake because it gets lost,

Iniquity decides that it wants to do things differently.

Sometimes when I am correcting my son and I ask him "why did you do that?"

And sometimes he replies "because I like to!"

That's iniquity.

It knows the right thing

It knows the right path to take

But it wants to do something else.

So we have transgressors, sinners, and the iniquitous

This is the wide range of wicked who are guilty.

And David doesn't rank them, though we would like to.

And we would rank whichever one we are last and our enemies highest.

But notice that David says about each of these sinners.

Let's read verses 1-2 again

"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."

He used three different verbs to describe sin

and now he uses three different verbs to describe forgiveness.

"Transgression is forgiven."

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The rebel who proudly has spit at God has their transgression forgiven.

The verb for forgiveness here is literally "lifted up" or "carried away."
Your transgressions are lifted up into the heavens like Christ at His ascension.

They go up and up and up until you can see them no more.
Have you ever seen a helium balloon get loose into the sky?
And then you try to watch it as long as you can?
In Christ, your transgression is lifted up like that.

I think of Christian in the old story of Pilgrim's Progress.
He has been carrying the burden of his sins and transgressions symbolized by a heavy bolder on his back.
But when he comes to the cross, before he does a thing the burden is carried away.
Forgiven.

And **"sin is covered."**

Our missing of the mark and falling short is covered up and concealed.
Our sins are taken out of God's sight.

Now don't misunderstand what this covering means.
This covering does not mean that the sin is still there.
Don't picture putting a blanket over a heap of trash and old banana peels.
It is not pushing the mess under the bed,
nor hiding it in the closet.

It is taking our sin out to the trash can and covering it with the lid.
It's taking that trash out to the dump and covering it with a hill and trees
It is covering our ugly sins with the red paint of Christ's blood.
And when you look close you can't see anything else bleeding through.

I like the message here **"your slate is wiped clean."**

Or the NET **"sin is pardoned."**

And finally **"counts no iniquity."**

It means that their iniquity is not imputed towards them.

It is not reckoned on their account.

There is no record of the iniquity.

When you stand before the judgment seat of God at the end of your life

And the books and records of your life come out.

Everything you have done

Every word you have spoken

Will be examined by God.

This will be a terror for many.

But for those who have given their lives to Jesus.

Who have confessed their sin and begged will be forgiven.

When those believers' books are opened much will be redacted.

There will be blank pages and blank days

And God will say that He has no record of their iniquity.

So how do we obtain this kind of forgiveness?

We do so by confessing our transgressions, sins, and iniquity.

Verse 5 David confesses

"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"

Notice the elements of this confession.

David confesses to God. **"I acknowledged my sin to you"**

"my transgressions to the LORD"

He goes right to the source, not other people.

He confesses to the one that He has sinned against.

And David **"acknowledges"** his sin.

Pastor David Shields

He admits it.

He does not lie about it.

He does not try to explain it.

He does not say "I'm sorry BUT"

He acknowledges his sin.

"I did not cover my iniquity;"

Some of us try to cover up our sins.

We want to hide them in a closet where no one can find them.

We want them to be out of sight so that no one can see.

David stops trying to hide them and just confesses.

He admits the truth about the nature of his sin.

Notice that he refers to it in three ways.

"my sin"

"my iniquity"

"my transgressions."

David admits that all of the sin is his.

He does not try to blame someone else for it.

He does not try to say that he could not help it.

And he does not downplay it.

He does not say it was just a mistake, but it doesn't reflect who he is in his heart.

He says I am a sinner and rebel against God who is guilty.

He takes all of his sin and runs right to God.

David confesses his sin because he knows the weight of unconfessed sin.

Verses 3-4 describe for us the experience of carrying around our guilt.

"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"

Pastor David Shields

David was being crushed by his guilty conscious.

Now we don't know exactly what period of his life David is speaking about.

He could be talking about the guilt of his rape of Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah.

We know that it was several months after killing Uriah before David confessed his sin to the prophet Nathan.

Months of knowing what he died.

He tried to cover up his sin, but probably wondered if anyone knew.

If people would talk, or what the scandal would be.

He was up at night groaning just waiting to be found out.

His mention of silence in verse 3 **"for when I kept silent"** is a reference to a refusal to audibly confess his sins.

All-day long he groaned.

And he felt the hand of God pressing on him.

"your hand was heavy upon me."

His conscience bothered him.

He knew that God saw his sin and was waiting for him to confess.

It was like a heavy rock on his back that he carried around everywhere.

Now we have seen the word **"selah"** but what does it mean?

Again we are not sure.

It is some kind of liturgical, musical, or worship note.

The best and most helpful comment I found on it is to consider it a pause for reflection, or silence.

It is a moment when the music should peel back.

It is a moment when the words of the prayer should stop.

So David sits and pauses after bounding the oppression of sin.

And then pauses again in verse 5 after receiving forgiveness.

And this forgiveness is so incredible that Paul talks about it in Romans. He quotes this Psalm in Romans 4:7-8 when speaking about Abraham. Romans 4:3 **"Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness."**

That's the same work for count.

And Romans 4:5-6 **"and to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works."**

This is a confession born of faith.

It is a confession that believes God.

It is not trying to earn salvation through works.

It is not just trying to clear it's conscious.

It is a confession of faith.

A man named James Washington once confessed his sins.

He was serving a 15 prison sentence when he began having seizures.

He was terrified and thought he was going to die.

So he called over a guard and said "I have something I have to get off of my conscious and you need to hear this. I killed someone and beat her death."

Years before he had murdered another woman.

He was suspected, but they could never prove he did it.

However, he recovered and survived.

Then he tried to take his confession back when he got charged with murder again.

That was not a true confession.

It was an attempt to alleviate a conscious, but not to put faith in Jesus.

But the true confession will find forgiveness.

[transition] And God does not just forgive sinners and then leave them alone. He gives further blessings.

Point number 2 if you are keeping notes in your bulletin is that **God guides forgiven saints. God guides forgiven saints.**

After receiving forgiveness we are no longer considered sinners, but called saints. Our status is given by God.

And God does more than forgive us.
He then guides us for the rest of our lives.

Verse 6 **"Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found."**

We can all be considered godly by the blood of Jesus.

What is interesting is that if you look,

you do not see sin mentioned again for the rest of the Psalm.

Not a single time will you see the words "transgression, sin, or iniquity."

They have been banished from the Psalm just like they were banished from your life.

And all of us should pray.

We should confess our sins.

We should be running to God all of the time.

Because there is not always time to confess. **"when you may be found."**

After you die and stand before God it is too late.

But if you are alive and listening you can still confess your sins and be forgiven.

David describes the judgment of God like rushing waters.

The rest of verse 6 **"surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him."**

It is the picture of a flood coming.

Picture a low valley with you at the bottom between two mountainous hills.

Pastor David Shields

I pictured the Forty-foot hole, which is a trail in the Wichita Mountain wildlife refuge.

It's a trail that goes up to the top of a little canyon.

And down in the middle as it gets taller there is usually some water and I believe a little waterfall.

But when I was there it was all dried up.

But picture yourself there at the bottom of that canyon.

You are all the way in with the walls cliffs almost a hundred feet over your head.

Now picture being there when the water rushes in.

Not a little trickle of a creek, but a flash flood with 8 feet of water.

If you do not confess your sins, when you die you will be standing at the face of a flood in a canyon.

But if you confess **"the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble, you surround me with sorts of deliverance."**

If you confess God is a cave of safety above the waters line.

He is a safe place to flee from the waters of judgment.

No matter how serious the storm, no water will reach you.

And this is not just about deliverance from death and sin.

This is also about how God guides us to safety.

When the waters of suffering start to rise

we have high ground we can run to.

When we pray, our guide God answers and saves us.

You will be like Noah and his family saved from the Earth's flood.

You can be like Moses and Israel who crossed the Red Sea while Pharaoh and his army drowned.

You can be like Joshua walking through the River Jordan on dry land.

Like Peter who walked on the waters.

Pastor David Shields

You can be with Jesus who calms the storms.

The cross is the cave you can hide in.

The cross of Jesus is the ark above the flood.

The cross is the only place you can find forgiveness and deliverance.

at the end of verse 7 **“, you surround me with shouts of deliverance.”**

God is actually the one who shouts over us.

He shouts for joy like the congregation worshipping at the temple.

He shouts for joy like an army would after a fierce battle is won.

He shouts so we know that we are safe.

Our God does not just save you, wipe off your sins, and then leave.

He continues to deliver us.

And he continues to guide us.

Verses 8-9 change who is speaking.

No longer is it the voice of David, now God speaks to us.

Verse 8 **“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.”**

God speaks and is going to help us.

He will **“instruct and teach you.”**

He is the one who becomes our guide.

He is the tour guide while we are in a foreign land.

He is our teacher who guides us through the new material.

He is our tutor who helps us when we don't know what to do.

And what does he teach us? **“in the way you should go.”**

He wants to teach us where our lives should head.

He teaches us the paths that we should walk on.

He tells us where it is safe to go.

He knows where the quicksand is.

He knows the places that are too dangerous.

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The rest of 8 **"I will counsel you with my eye upon you."**

He tells us.

He continues to teach us.

And He does so with **"my eye upon you."**

He watches over us.

He is not a parent who is tired and staring at their phone.

He is not distracted while we wander off on our own.

His eyes are on you.

He sees what you are facing in your life now and wants to help you.

But often we reject His help and guidance.

Verse 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."**

God says don't be like a horse that will not listen.

The bit and bridle are the things put in a horse's mouth to help guide them

God says don't be a mule that I constantly have to yank the right way.

Don't be a mule that continually wanders off.

Maybe picture a dog that never obeys and is poorly trained.

Or just picture a cat that it doesn't matter what you say it will never obey.

God wants to guide us, but it's up to us if we will listen.

Will you heed His voice?

Again the assumption is that God is talking to you.

If you are a believer, then you are being guided by God.

The question is not if God is helping you,

the question is if you are listening and heeding His voice.

[Transition] Now in light of everything that God does for us. He forgives confessing sinners and then guides them. In light of that our third point is that we should **Joyfully go to God for forgiveness. Joyfully go to God for forgiveness.**

Verses 10-11 function as a kind of summary and application of the Psalm.
Verse 10 begins by telling us what happens when we don't seek forgiveness

"Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trust in the Lord."

Our unconfessed and unrepentant sin leads to sorrow.

The guilt will crush you.

And not just that, but you cannot handle your sin.

1 Cor 6:20 reminds us that **"we are not our own, but were bought with a price."**

But the world tells you that you are your own.

The world would say your guilt is all manufactured.

It's just a result of Christian guilt.

You should just forgive yourself.

The world wants you to believe that your sin and guilt is something you can handle.

But you cannot.

Your sin is like a weight that you cannot lift

It is like a car stuck on the ice whose wheels will not spin.

It is a stain that you cannot remove no matter how many times it goes in the wash.

You cannot give yourself the forgiveness you need.

Your gods cannot bring forgiveness.

You cannot handle it, but Jesus can.

"Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trust in the Lord."

Just in the Lord and you can receive the steadfast love.

And God will come and bring joy.

Verse 11 **"Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart."**

We can trust God with our sin.

We can confess, receive forgiveness, and then rejoice!

And we can rejoice because we know that we are forgiven.

Our hearts can be upright because our conscience is clean.

The question we all need to wrestle with is where do you go when you sin?

What do you do?

Do you crumple and fall into shame and pity?

Do you run and hide because you don't want anyone to know you are a sinner?

Do you head to addictions and comforts?

Do you seek to drown your sorrows in pills, alcohol, food, or anything else that might bring relief?

Do you run to people who will just affirm you?

People who might tell you that your sin is fine!

That you have nothing to fear?

Or do you go to Jesus?

Listen when you sin you can go to Jesus.

When you find yourself drunk and high again you don't need to wait till you sober up.

You can go to Jesus.

When you are caught in adultery or pornography you can run to Jesus.

Picture a child in trouble for drinking at a party.

Or who has been pregnant, or got someone pregnant?

Who is filled with fear over how their parents will respond.

You do not need to wonder how Jesus will act.

You do not need to wonder how Jesus will receive you.

You do not need to wonder what Jesus will say.

You can walk into the throne room of the Kingdom of heaven with joy.
Confess your sins and you will hear Jesus say "I forgive you."
Confess your sins and hear Jesus say "I love you son, or daughter."
Confess your sins and hear Jesus say "there is no condemnation for those
in Christ."

This is why we have joy.
We can have joy even in the midst of our sins.
We can and should joyfully confess.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] God forgives confessing sinners. God delivers and guides saints. Joyfully confess your sins.
2. [Challenge] The North African church father Augustine said that this was his favorite Psalm. He preached it and would pray it often through tears and weeping. In his 70's the Vandals, whose name lives on even if you don't know their empire, had invaded the African Roman Empire and sieged Hippo. Augustine found himself sick with a heavy fever that was most likely malaria. There he lay in his sick bed. Completely surrounded by enemies who he was certain would kill him and any Christians who would not deny Christ. And he asked his fellow priests to write Psalms 32 on his walls. So that as he laid there writhing in pain he could pray it. He died in that sick bed surrounded but the words of the Psalms. But at his darkest moments at the end of his life he found comfort remembering that our God forgives sinners. You don't need to paint this Psalm on your wall, but you should paint it on your heart.