

Psalm 32: Confession

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[0:00] Our scripture reading for today is found in Psalm 32. Please follow along with your Bibles, and if you don't have one, you can get one on either side of the stage or at the back.

So in the Church Bible, our passage is on page 432. Let's listen to God's word for today. Psalm 32, a mascal 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.

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.

[1:05] Selah. 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.

You are a hiding place for me. You preserve me from trouble. You surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.

I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near.

Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Let us believe and respond to God's true and living word. Amen. Hey, can I pray for us before we start?

[2:10] Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that you are a God who speaks, who reveals yourself through your word. And God, as we look into your word this morning, Father, we pray that you would speak to each one of us this morning.

That you would convict our hearts of places that we have let go, the places that we have hidden away, and places that we try to hide away from the world, sins that we try to cover.

And God, we pray that through your spirit, you would also show us the grace and the beauty of Christ that calls us into your forgiveness, into your presence. So God, we pray, would you do this work for your glory and our good.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Before I start, just a quick note. For youths, if you do grab those paper at the back, and if you give it to, at the end, if you give it to a youth leader or a volunteer, there's actually also a gift waiting for you.

So it's not just a conversation. So a gift is waiting for you, so go for it. Okay, let's begin. I wonder what comes to your mind when you hear the word confession.

[3:17] For many, if not all, it's something that's quite difficult, isn't it? Whether that's confessing our wrongs or our offense to our family, a friend, or a colleague, or whether that's confessing our sin to God.

And what makes it so difficult is because we struggle with pride. We struggle with shame. We struggle with our own ego. Fear, fear of what might happen to the relationship if I confess.

Fear of what might happen to my reputation if I confess. And we also wrestle with self-justification, thinking that, hey, maybe it's not that terrible that I need to confess.

Maybe it's not necessary. And yet, beyond confession, when we are met with mercy and grace and embrace, we know that there is a peace and joy that's waiting for us.

Between two friends, confession might be something that is talked about once in a while when there's an offense, but between God and us, if confession is something that is regular and an important part of our faith journey.

[4:23] So over the summer, we've been going through this series called Praying Through the Psalms. Praying, a psalm is a book that touches on the whole range of human emotions and human experiences.

And what we are trying to do is we are trying to let this book guide us by teaching us how to pray, and not just how to pray, but also how to grow in prayer.

And this book gives us words and vocabularies to pray. And today's psalm, David is going to speak about something that's a core theme, one of the core themes of Christianity, and it is confession. And he speaks about confession in quite an interesting way. He starts off by giving his big idea up at front, and after that, he's going to teach us through giving us his experience, and at the end, he's going to call us into confession by encouraging us, and at the same time, warning us.

So if you do have Psalm 32 open before you, do keep it open. We're going to look at it verses by verses. So David begins here by talking about a blessing.

[5:28] And right at the beginning, he gives us two profound sentences. Verse 1 and 2, he says, Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven. Blessed is the one whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the one against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, in whose spirit there is no deceit. Now, before we dive in into what David is saying here, it would be good to understand the word blessing.

Now, it is a word that is used quite often, even nowadays, right? And if you go on Instagram, and if you search up hashtag blessed, you're going to find a whole range of pictures depicting a whole lot of experiences and emotions.

Now, you might find like, oh, I got a new car, hashtag blessed. Oh, I'm finally to the top of the hike, what of you, hashtag blessed. I won a billion dollars in lottery, hashtag blessed.

And so on and on and on. Now, whether you have a social media or not, or whether you use this hashtag or not, this is something we all have experienced in our life, one way or the other.

[6:34] Maybe it's when you're spending a really meaningful time with someone you love or with your family, and you just mutter under your breath, oh, what a blessing. Or maybe when you are on a trip to Japan, and you are sipping that coffee without a care about your work or life, and you're just feeling deep in your heart, what a blessing.

Hashtag blessed. Now, if you know what I mean, and I'm sure we all do, here's a question for us. What emotion or state are we trying to capture when we say hashtag blessed?

What exactly are we trying to describe when we say softly to our hearts, wow, such a blessing.

Now, if you really think about it, we are trying to describe something that's, there's a sense of peace and fulfillment.

It's the sense that we're getting something that we don't really deserve. It's the sense that this is happiness, but it's not exactly just happiness, is it? In the Bible, blessing can be translated to happiness, but then it's much more than happiness.

It's being deeply fulfilled. It's this deep joy that is independent of one's circumstances, whether one is going through suffering, loss, or poverty. It's also this idea that God's favor is resting on that person, that there's this God's protection and strength over him, that there's just this God's face shining on him, and there's just peace and comfort and fulfillment and a sense of satisfaction deep within our soul.

[8:19] Now, isn't that a wonderful place to be? To be blessed, to be deeply fulfilled. And the question is, how does one be blessed? How does one be truly happy in this truest sense?

How can one be deeply fulfilled in the deepest sense? Now, if you go around and if you pick up a self-help book about happiness and fulfillment, most of the books would deal with five things.

They would say, these are the five things you need to conquer in life that's going to give you deep happiness and deep fulfillment. And the five things are gratefulness, that you've got to be grateful in life, you've got to be thankful in life, always be giving thanks for the small things that you have, you've got to be mindfulness, be aware of your own emotions and their surroundings, you've got to have purpose in life so that you don't feel lost in life, you have a clear vision of where you're going in life, you've got to be loving and devoted to others, do some charity work, when you help others, you become happy, and finally, you know how to approach suffering in life.

You conquer all this five, and that's how you'll be deeply happy and fulfilled. But look at what David says in God's Word. Blessed is who? Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven.

And now that is interesting, because it's not blessed is the man who is righteous or who is successful and educated and has his life together. It's not blessed is the man who lives a grateful life and who has a clear purpose, does charity work, and knows how to deal with pain.

[9:53] No. The one who is blessed is the sinner who has been forgiven. Now that begs the question, what does being forgiven and blessing have to do with one another?

If you think about it, well, when we talk about forgiveness between two friends or two people, we know how much joy and peace and happiness that brings.

To have that misunderstanding finally cleared up, to be met with embrace when you are full of guilt and shame, to be finally reconciled with the one you deeply love.

But this forgiveness and this blessing that we see in Psalm 32 is a little bit different than that. Because you see, this is talking about God and us.

And unlike the offense and forgiveness between two human beings, though it is important, the forgiveness between God and us is of infinite importance. Because this is between God, the creator, and us, the creation.

[10:59] It's between God, the source of all life, who is powerful, who is king over all things, who is holy, who is the standard of purity, and us, mortals.

You see, when we talk about sin, sin is first and foremost against this God. And like sin between two friends creates a divide, sin between God and us creates a divide that is devastating.

And unlike sin between, and it's not like a, this relationship is not like a business relationship. You see, when there's a divide between two friends, when there's an offense between two friends, the grief is not so much about the things that have been lost.

It's not so much about the benefits that have been lost. Whenever two friends, there's a fight, the grief is always about the relationship that has been lost. You see, when the sin creates a divide between God and us, yes, it separates us from all things that's good, where God is the source of all good things.

But actually, you see, when sin divides us between God and us, this devastating divide, the grief is not mainly because of all the good things that is lost along with it, is because of the sweet fellowship between God and us that has been lost.

[12:22] The sweet fellowship between the God who created us in his image and us who was created in his image that has been lost. And along with that, all the things that is good, the source of life, the source of blessing.

Now imagine that this sin was taken away. Imagine that this transgression that was between God and us, the source of all blessing in life, was taken away.

Can you start to see how that would be a blessing? Because that brings us back to that relationship which we were created for, to the one whom all things good flows from.

You see, blessedness is not found in creation, but is found in the one who created us. Therefore, blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven.

Blessed is the man whose sin is covered. Blessed is the one against whom God does not hold or count any iniquity. How do you define blessed? In your life, how do you define hashtag blessed?

[13:28] Is it in material goods and things of this earth? Or is it in the fact that we've been forgiven in Christ? What is it that causes you to say under your breath, I'm blessed?

Now it's not wrong to say, I'm blessed when you're sipping that coffee in Europe and enjoying that time. No. But what is it that stirs your heart and above all of these things, causes you to say and feel blessed?

Now David, having made these profound statements that blessed is not the one who's grateful and all of these things that this world offers, blessed is the one who's forgiven.

Now he goes on to give us his experience and through which he's going to tell us how does one actually do get forgiven. So let us look at verses 3 to 5 in the passage.

The path to being forgiven. And what you'll see here in these two or three verses is we see David here in anguish as God's hand is on him over the sins that David has hidden away.

[14:36] He's groaning. His strength is dried up. Now this does not just seem to be spiritual, but it seems to be quite physical for him. He's struggling under God's hand. And it's very obvious that it's painful and heavy.

But if you really think about it, this hand, this is actually God's hand of grace. It's God's hand of love. Because ultimately, this is going to lead David to the path of being forgiven.

And I'm sure you have felt this in your life once in a while where God has convicted you of a sin in your life and your soul is restless and deep down you know you've done something wrong, but you try to justify yourself.

You say like, that's okay. I was tired and I was not thinking straight. And you try to justify yourself and you wrestle with it. And we do this in all parts of life, right?

Not just with God. We do this in between our relationships. I mean, just this past week, I had ordered a bed guard from Taobao so that our son does not fall off bed. And I ordered the wrong size.

[15:40] So our bed is 180 cm. I ordered a 180 cm guard. And I knew my wife wanted something smaller so that we got a way to get in the bed. And my wife comforted me. And deep down I knew that was a mistake.

I made a terrible mistake. We paid money for it. But what came out of my mouth was not that. And I said, you know what? It's okay. He's got to be more protected. That's fine. What's done is done.

Let's move on. It doesn't matter, you know? It's okay. It's just a few dollars. We can order it again. Now, obviously my wife was not happy about it. And I knew deep inside I was wrong.

And I had to come clean and say, okay, I'm sorry. That was a stupid mistake. But what was more stupid was my reaction to that stupid mistake. Now, if you're in this hall and you do feel God's heavy hand over a situation, a certain circumstance in your life, where you might be wrestling with it, saying, maybe you're trying to justify it.

Maybe you know that people, your trusted friends and leaders have been coming and trying to confront you about certain things. And you do feel heavy about it. And I would say, really consider it wisely.

[16:54] Are you fighting it with self-justification? Is there some kind of defense mechanism at work there? Consider it. But if you are a Christian this morning, and you have stopped feeling this heavy hand of grace over your sins, then that's a dangerous place to be.

A place where sin no longer grieves us. A place where sin no longer makes us go into despair. Where sin becomes habitual and normal for us.

Beloved, that's a dangerous place to be. Do reach out to a trusted friend or a leader if that's you this morning. Because this heavy hand is God's grace, is God's love, and is God's discipline in calling us back.

So here we see David feeling the weight physically of God's hand over his hidden sin. Now, what does he do? Let's look at verse 5. What does he do? Verse 5 says, I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity.

And I said, I will confess my transgression to the Lord, and you forgive the iniquity of my sin. What does he do? He comes to a place of confession. You see, blessed is the man whose sin is forgiven.

[18:12] But how do you reach the place of being forgiven? It's through confession. And that is crucial here. Because one pastor talks about this. He says, Forgiveness is free, but it isn't automatic.

Now, what he means by that is, every year, once a year, in the month of June, I receive a notification on my Starbucks app saying, Happy birthday, Alan. You got a free cake waiting for you. Now, the cake is free, but it doesn't mean it automatically appears in my hand on my bed. I need to get dressed, go down, show them my app, and get my cake.

Okay. You see, forgiveness is free, but the confession is the path to that, to get there. And this is crucial because we could go through all of life knowing about forgiveness, learning about forgiveness, knowing all the details and the steps of forgiveness, and missing it.

Because we've missed confession. Confession is the boat that brings us to the shore of forgiveness. And I want us to see one thing about confession here.

[19:21] Because you see, from verses 3 to 5, there's a small change that happens in David. He goes from silence to speaking. He goes from hiding to uncovering.

And that's what confession is, isn't it? It's to lay bare in front of someone. It's to come clean in front of someone. And figuratively, it's to be naked in front of someone.

And there's shame and there's fear in that. And we sometimes think that we need to come before God a little polished, you know? Even with our confession, we need to hide a little and give them a kid-friendly version of our confession.

But see what David says here. I acknowledged my sin. There's no excuses. God, I did it. This is what I've done. This is who I am. This is what I felt. This is what I thought. I did not cover my iniquity. It's an openness. It's a bareness before God. There's no hiding anything. I mean, it's already foolish to hide anything from God who sees all things.

[20 : 28] And yet we do it. And yet that's what Adam did in Genesis to hide from a God who sees all things. You see, confession is an openness to God about our brokenness.

The disgusting thing that we try to hide in the dark is to come open. And that is the place where David is met with forgiveness. I mean, look at verse 5.

The forgiveness is so instantaneous. It's like, I confess my sin. And the next line is, and he forgave my sin. It's so quick. So you see, David, through his experience, is telling us two things here.

The only path to forgiveness and blessing is through confession. And confession is bare, is open, and is truth, and is spoken.

And finally, at the end, David is going to call us to confession now through two things. He's going to warn us, and he's going to encourage us. And let's look at verses 6 to 11, finally.

[21 : 33] The call to confession. Now, David gives us two negatives in these verses. The first one is in verse 6, where he tells the reader that they should offer prayer when God can still be found.

Now, we can understand that in two ways, in a big picture and a small picture. In a big picture, we're living in a time of grace right now. But one day, Christ will return, and it is going to be a time of judgment.

And the thing is, we don't know when he's going to be back, when he'll return. All we know is, Scripture says that he's going to return like a thief in the night. In other words, no one's going to expect when he's going to come.

So if that's the case, then don't delay confessing your sin. And in the small picture, don't delay, because we really don't know what's going to happen in the next few hours, let alone tomorrow.

Are we going to be alive? Are we going to be somewhere else? Suffering? Sickness? We don't know. I mean, look at verse 6. It says, Surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

[22 : 38] Now, the rush of great waters can mean two things. One, it means judgment. We can't tell what happens in a few hours, but one thing we do know for certain is that there is judgment after death.

Hebrews 9 says that, And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, when there's no more time for confession. So don't delay. Now, the rush of great waters can also mean chaos.

When you hold off confessing, and soon the chaos of life and the wrestle of our own souls come in, we slowly start to drift away, drift off into this chaos.

It's further and further away from the shore of forgiveness. So that's what happens if you really think about it, when our sin, unconfessed sin, slowly becomes normal, habitual, and we stop even thinking about it.

It no longer grieves us, and we slowly fade away into this chaos. The second negative David gives us is in verse 9 and 10. Don't be like a horse or a mule.

[23 : 43] Don't be stubborn. That's what he's basically saying. And many are the sorrows of the wicked. Now, David is saying not only not to delay, but also don't be stubborn about it.

It's like he's talking about his own experience in verses 3 and 4, right, where he tries to stay silent, and he tries to sleep it off. But you see, missing out on confession, being stubborn, brings about many sorrows.

Mainly missing out in forgiveness, missing out in this blessing of coming into a relationship with God, the Creator. So don't delay. Don't be stubborn.

But then, David also gives an exhortation. He gives an encouragement. Look at verses 7 and half of 10. David says, David speaks as one who is forgiven, and I want us to notice how God is depicted here.

Look at verses 9. He says, Oh, sorry. Verses 7. Verse 7. David says, You are a hiding place for me.

[24 : 48] God becomes a hiding place for David. God is the one who preserves David from trouble. God surrounds David with shouts of deliverance. Half of verse 10.

God's steadfast love surrounds David because he trusts in the Lord. Do you see the position of God in these verses? You know, because when we think of confessing our sins to God, we imagine a God who's disappointed and frustrated that we have yet again messed up.

We imagine God going, Oh, gosh. Again? This guy? Same sin? How many times has it been? 70 times? He's got seven more left.

And we also think that when God does forgive us, then he does it begrudgingly, like, Oh, fine. I forgive you. And he goes on back to his business of, I don't know, running the universe. But that isn't true. You see, one of the things we struggle with confession is the feeling of shame. Because confession is coming and being naked with our sinfulness and brokenness before God. [25:58] It's showing the things that we hide away. But look, God becomes our hiding place. He covers our sin and he forgives them. Isn't that wonderful?

I think the image that comes to my mind is someone who's dirty and broken and who's naked because he has lost everything coming before God. And God lovingly embraces and covers him with his coat and love.

And he says, he surrounds us with his steadfast love, a love that is faithful and unchanging throughout all history. And this is precious because you see, confession is also a step of faith. Between two friends, when one comes to confess his wrongdoings, he does not know whether he will be met with mercy. But he has to come in faith and trust that his friend would forgive him. And when we come to God, we too come in faith, trusting that he will forgive us. But then what happens when we trust him? Look at verse 10. But steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.

[27:11] See, when we come in faith and confession to God, we don't really have to doubt because we are met with steadfast love. We are met with a love that does not change, that is committed, that's loyal.

And this morning, if all of this have failed you to draw you to come into confession, then let me point us to that one place where the steadfast love was on full display and is at the cross.

Why can't you and I be assured of forgiveness when we confess? It's because Christ took the penalty and punishment of our sin so that anyone that comes and puts their trust in him and confesses and repents will receive the blessing of forgiveness.

You don't have to dread shame. You don't have to be afraid of being shamed because Christ took our sin and shame as he hung naked on the cross so that our shame would be covered with his righteousness, with his blood.

Church, let your eyes gaze upon this king of all kings that is beaten, that is tortured, dying the dead that you and I deserved for our sins and as you fix your eyes on him, it will begin to melt our pride and egos away slowly.

[28:41] this ego and pride and shame that comes between us and confession and as you've confessed your sins, you will find yourself on the path of forgiveness.

You will find yourself on the path to that sweet fellowship between the creator and us. You will find yourself forgiven, a blessing in the deepest sense, one that all humans of all this earth is looking for, that blessing, but can only be found in God and in forgiveness.

And when you reach that place, then you can truly hear and say the words that's found in verse 11 where David says, be glad in the Lord or you righteous, the ones that have been forgiven, and shout for joy all you upright in heart.

So church, make confession a deep and joyful part of your prayer life. It's crucial, it's wonderful, it's joyful.

Do it daily for we need forgiveness daily. And let confession drive you to joy, humbling you as you confess your sin and receive the forgiveness that you did not earn, you did not deserve, but out of the steadfast love of God, you receive in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

[30:05] And that is today's message for us. Confession, the blessing of forgiveness through confession. So church, in a second, after I close in prayer, after I close God's prayer, God's word in prayer, we're going to spend some time in confession and assurance.

We're going to do it as a church. We'll do assurance later after that through communion. So, as I start praying, I'd love for communion stewards to get into position as I start praying and just stay in position.

The music team can also come up as I start to pray. So church, can I pray for us as we respond to God's word? Father, we thank you that the greatest blessing in all creation is found in you, God. God, we confess that we try to find this blessing and joy in the things of creation, but what incredible news that we find in you, God, the one who creates us, the one who creates our hearts, the one

who satisfies our deepest longing.

God, we thank you for this forgiveness that we receive, not because of our merit, not because of how good we are, of how well our life is going and how educated we are, so on and on.

[31 : 27] For the forgiveness that we find because of Jesus, what you have done on the cross.

God, it is true that your forgiveness is free. We don't earn it, we cannot buy it, but we come in faith and we can receive it because with full assurance because of you, Christ.

God, what joy it is, it says, what goodness this is, God, that we are forgiven in you, that this wonderful relationship with you is restored through your blood.

Father, we praise you that there's nothing to be proud of, there's nothing to be boast about in all of this, but in the works of Christ, through which we are saved, we have made a life, and we thank you, God, and we praise you, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.