
By David. A contemplative psalm.

PSALM 32: 1 Blessed is he whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

True blessedness consists in remission of sin, and purification of the heart, Psa 32:1, Psa 32:2. What the psalmist felt in seeking these blessings, Psa 32:3-5. How they should be sought, Psa 32:6, Psa 32:7. The necessity of humility and teachableness, Psa 32:8, Psa 32:9. The misery of the wicked, Psa 32:10. The blessedness of the righteous, Psa 32:11.

The title of this Psalm is significant, לְדָוִד מִשְׁכִּיל ledavid maskil, A Psalm of David, giving instruction, an instructive Psalm; so called by way of eminence, because it is calculated to give the highest instruction relative to the guilt of sin, and the blessedness of pardon and holiness or justification and sanctification. It is supposed to have been composed after David's transgression with Bath-sheba, and subsequently to his obtaining pardon. The Syriac entitles it, "A Psalm of David concerning the sin of Adam, who dared and transgressed; and a prophecy concerning Christ, because through him we are to be delivered from hell." The Arabic says, "David spoke this Psalm prophetically concerning the redemption." The Vulgate, Septuagint, and Ethiopic, are the same in meaning as the Hebrew.

Verse 1

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven - In this and the following verse four evils are mentioned:

1. Transgression, פֶּשַׁע peshwa.
2. Sin, חַטָּאָה chataah.
3. Iniquity, עוֹן avon.
4. Guile, רַמְיָה remiyah.

The first signifies the passing over a boundary, doing what is prohibited. The second signifies the missing of a mark, not doing what was commanded; but is often taken to express sinfulness, or sin in the future, producing transgression in the life. The third signifies what is turned out of its proper course or situation; any thing morally distorted or perverted. Iniquity, what is contrary to equity or justice. The fourth signifies fraud, deceit, guile, etc. To remove these evils, three acts are mentioned: forgiving, covering, and not imputing.

1. Transgression, פֶּשַׁע peshah, must be forgiven, נִשְׁוִי nesui, borne away, i.e., by a vicarious sacrifice; for bearing sin, or bearing away sin, always implies this.
2. Sin, חַטָּאָה chataah, must be covered, כִּסּוּי kesui, hidden from the sight. It is odious and abominable, and must be put out of sight.
3. Iniquity, עוֹן avon, which is perverse or distorted, must not be imputed, לֹא יִחְשָׁב lo yachshob, must not be reckoned to his account.
4. Guile, רַמְיָה remiyah, must be annihilated from the soul: In whose spirit there is no Guile. The man whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is hidden, God having cast it as a millstone into the depths of the sea; whose iniquity and perversion is not reckoned to his account; and whose guile,

the deceitful and desperately wicked heart, is annihilated, being emptied of sin and filled with righteousness, is necessarily a happy man.

The old Psalter translates these two verses thus: Blissid qwas wikednes es for gyven, and qwas synnes is hyled (covered). Blisful man til qwam Lord retted (reckoneth) noight Syn: ne na treson es in his gast (spirit). In vain does any man look for or expect happiness while the power of sin remains, its guilt unpardoned, and its impurity not purged away. To the person who has got such blessings, we may say as the psalmist said, אֲשֶׁר־י ashrey, O the blessedness of that man, whose transgression is forgiven! etc.

St. Paul quotes this passage, Rom 4:6-7 (note), to illustrate the doctrine of justification by faith; where see the notes.

PSALM 32: 2 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD doesn't impute iniquity, in whose spirit there is no deceit.

PSALM 32: 3 When I kept silence, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

Verse 3

When I kept silence - Before I humbled myself, and confessed my sin, my soul was under the deepest horror. "I roared all the day long;" and felt the hand of God heavy upon my soul.

PSALM 32: 4 For day and night your hand was heavy on me. My strength was sapped in the heat of summer. Selah.

PSALM 32: 5 I acknowledged my sin to you. I didn't hide my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

Verse 5

I acknowledged my sin - When this confession was made thoroughly and sincerely, and I ceased to cover and extenuate my offense, then thou didst forgive the iniquity of my sin. I felt the hardness of heart: I felt the deep distress of soul; I felt power to confess and abhor my sin; I felt confidence in the mercy of the Lord; and I felt the forgiveness of the iniquity of my sin.

Selah - This is all true; I know it; I felt it; I feel it.

PSALM 32: 6 For this, let everyone who is godly pray to you in a time when you may be found. Surely when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach to him.

Verse 6

For this shall every one that is godly - Because thou art merciful; because thou hast shown mercy to all who have truly turned to thee, and believed in thee; every one who fears thee, and hears of this,

shall pray unto thee in an acceptable time, when thou mayest be found; in the time of finding. When the heart is softened and the conscience alarmed, that is a time of finding. God is ever ready; men are not so. Who can pray with a hard heart and a dark mind? While you feel relintings, pray.

Surely in the floods - In violent trials, afflictions, and temptations; when the rains descend, the winds blow, and the floods beat against that godly man who prays and trusts in God; "they shall not come nigh him," so as to weaken his confidence or destroy his soul. His house is founded on a rock.

PSALM 32: 7 You are my hiding place. You will preserve me from trouble. You will surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

Verse 7

Thou art my hiding place - An allusion, probably, to the city of refuge: "Thou shalt preserve me from trouble." The avenger of blood shall not be able to overtake me. And being encompassed with an impregnable wall, I shall feel myself encompassed with songs of deliverance - I shall know that I am safe.

PSALM 32: 8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go. I will counsel you with my eye on you.

Verse 8

I will instruct thee - These are probably the Lord's words to David. Seeing thou art now sensible of the mercy thou hast received from me, and art purposing to live to my glory, I will give thee all the assistance requisite. I will become thy Instructor, "and will teach thee," in all occurrences, "the way thou shouldst go." I will keep mine eyes upon thee, and thou shalt keep thine upon me: as I go, thou must follow me; and I will continually watch for thy good.

PSALM 32: 9 Don't be like the horse, or like the mule, which have no understanding, who are controlled by bit and bridle, or else they will not come near to you.

Verse 9

Be ye not as the horse or as the mule - They will only act by force and constraint; be not like them; give a willing service to your Maker. "They have no understanding;" you have a rational soul, made to be guided and influenced by reason. The service of your God is a reasonable service; act, therefore, as a rational being. The horse and the mule are turned with difficulty; they must be constrained with bit and bridle. Do not be like them; do not oblige your Maker to have continual recourse to afflictions, trials, and severe dispensations of providence, to keep you in the way, or to recover you after you have gone out of it.

PSALM 32: 10 Many sorrows come to the wicked, but loving kindness shall surround him who trusts in the LORD.

Verse 10

Many sorrows shall be to the wicked - Every wicked man is a miserable man. God has wedded sin and misery as strongly as he has holiness and happiness. God hath joined them together; none can put them asunder.

But he that trusteth in the Lord - Such a person is both safe and happy.

PSALM 32: 11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous! Shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart!

Verse 11

Be glad - and rejoice - Let every righteous soul rejoice and glory, but let it be in the Lord. Man was made for happiness, but his happiness must be founded on holiness: and holiness, as it comes from God, must be retained by continual union with him. Probably this verse belongs to the next Psalm, and was originally its first verse.