



## OVERVIEW

**Author:** David

### Outline:

The Blessed One (v. 1–2)  
The Curse of Silence (v. 3–4)  
Confession/Absolution (v. 5–7)  
Wisdom’s Instruction (v. 8–11)

### St. Augustine on Psalm 32:

"To David himself; for understanding; by which it is understood that not by the merits of works, but by the grace of God, man is delivered, confessing his sins," (The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VIII:70).

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## Around the Word BIBLE STUDY

Lententide, 2015

# The Penitential Psalms Psalm 32

### PSALM 32

*A Maskil of David.*

<sup>1</sup>Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,\*

whose sin is covered.

<sup>2</sup>**Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,\* and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**

<sup>3</sup>For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away\* through my groaning all day long.

<sup>4</sup>**For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;\* my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**

<sup>5</sup>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.

<sup>6</sup>**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.**

<sup>7</sup>You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble;\*

you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

<sup>8</sup>**I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;\***

**I will counsel you with my eye upon you.**

<sup>9</sup>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.

<sup>10</sup>**Many are the sorrows of the wicked,\* but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.**

<sup>11</sup>Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,\* and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son\* and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning,\* is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

**v. 1: "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven"**

Psalm 32 begins by assuming the guilt of all

humanity (compare Romans 3:10). What does our Lord say about those who think they can see? What can only the blind see? See John 9:40–41.

See Romans 4:1–8, where St. Paul uses the example of Abraham (Genesis 15:6) to illustrate the teaching of Psalm 32:1–2. What do we learn about forgiveness from the example of Abraham?

**v. 2: "and in whose spirit there is no deceit"**

Why is it dangerous to persist in sin? See Hebrews 3:13; Romans 1:24–25. Why is continuing in sin not an option for Christians? See Romans 6.

One danger of a routine liturgical confession of sins is that it can become routine and shallow. What sort of confession does God desire, according to Psalm 51:17?

**v. 3: "For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away"**

Does the impulse to confession come naturally to the sinful flesh? Consider the example of Adam in Genesis 3:6–8.

Did God leave Adam in his guilt? See Genesis 3:9, 15; Luke 15:4–7.

**v. 4: "For day and night your hand was heavy upon me"**

What does Matthew 10:29 teach about God’s relationship to everything that happens in His creation?

Who is responsible for chastening David in Psalm 32? Compare also Psalm 6:1; Isaiah 40:7; Hebrews 12:5–11.

Why did the Spirit lead Jesus into the wilderness in Matthew 4:1?

Spangenberg: "[The Spirit drove Christ into the wilderness] to show that all tribulation, adversity, persecution, trial, affliction, sickness, cross, and suffering come from God and are laid on men not for their ruin but to bring them to call on God in time of need," (*The Christian Year of Grace*, 107).

### v. 5: "I acknowledged my sin to you"

What do Genesis 6:5, 1 Corinthians 2:14, and Ephesians 2:1–3 teach about the human condition?

How can sinful humanity, who are blind, dead enemies of God, and whose instinct it is to conceal sin, arrive at an awareness of their sin and desire to confess it? See Ephesians 2:4–9; compare also Matthew 16:16–17 and 1 Corinthians 12:3 on the nature of faith, which is required for true repentance.

Those acknowledge their sin stand in contrast to those who have a deceitful spirit (Psalm 32:2). What does John say about those who deceive themselves into thinking they are righteous? See 1 John 1:10.

What does our Lord say about those who attempt to deceive others with the outward appearance of righteousness? See Matthew 23:27–28.

Luther: "[The self-righteous] get into quarrels with other people and lapse into pride, anger, hatred, impatience, condemning, and slander. Their innocence makes them really guilty, and yet they claim to have done justly and rightly and to have acted fairly. They conceal deeply their own iniquity, for they look at their own righteousness and do not confess their sins to God sincerely and without deceit of the inner spirit. Righteous people, however, do not hide their iniquity, do not become angry, do not grow impatient even when they are wronged; for they do not feel that they can be wronged, since they find no righteousness in themselves," (AE 14:150).

See Luke 7:36–47. How does having a good conscience (being forgiven much) impact one's relationship with others? See Luke 7:36–47; 1 Corinthians 13:4–7; 1 John 2:9; Matthew 6:9–15.

Why are the righteous able to bear patiently with others in their sin? See Matthew 7:3–5.

Does God owe us anything for trying to keep His commands? See Luke 17:10.

### v. 5: "I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."

Luther: "As to the current practice of private confession, I am heartily in favor of it, even though it cannot be proved from the Scriptures. It is useful, even necessary, and I would not have it abolished. Indeed, I rejoice that it exists in the church of Christ, for it is a cure without equal for distressed consciences," (AE 36:86).

### v. 6: "at a time when you may be found"

What does St. Paul teach about God's patience in Romans 2:4–5? What urgency is stressed in Isaiah 55:6 and Amos 8:11–12?

How is the Day of the Lord described in Matthew 24:36–51? Who does our Lord declare blessed in verse 46?

### v. 6–7: "in the rush of great waters... you preserve me from trouble"

What confidence does St. Paul express in Romans 8:31? Where, according to Psalm 46:1, should we put our confidence? What help and comfort does Psalm 121 promise?

Davidson: "If 'the mighty waters' retains an echo of the threatening powers of chaos (see Psalm 29:3), then we might paraphrase 'the rush of mighty waters' by 'when all hell breaks loose,'... 'Even in such a dire situation, the faithful express their confidence in the protection God offers and the joyful deliverance they shall experience (v. 7),' (*The Vitality of Worship*, 111).

### v. 8: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go"

What does Moses caution against in Deuteronomy 5:32? What instructions does he give in Deuteronomy 6:6–9 to guard against this from happening?

### v. 8: "I will counsel you with my eye upon you"

How do the eyes of the Lord regard those who fear Him? See Psalm 33:18.

What sin did King Jeroboam commit in 1 Kings 12:28–29? Why was Jeroboam's sin particularly insidious? See 2 Chronicles 6:4–6, 7:15–16 on the location God had chosen for His dwelling. How do the eyes of the Lord regard those who persist in the sin of Jeroboam (or any wickedness)? See Amos 8:14–9:4; Psalm 5:5.

### v. 9: "Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle"

Israel is repeatedly portrayed as being stiff-necked and stubborn (see Exodus 32:9, Deuteronomy 9:6). They are like rebellious calves (Exodus 32:1–9). How does St. Paul characterize unbelievers and those who stand fast through faith? See Romans 11:20.

How does God deal with the proud? See Isaiah 2:12; Luke 1:51–53.

What is known to even an ox and donkey, but not to evildoers? See Isaiah 1:2–4.

### v. 10: "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord"

How do the wicked behave in contrast to those who trust in the Lord, according to Proverbs 28:13? What is the result of these behaviors?

### v. 11: "Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous"

What, according to Psalm 63:3, is the very best thing in life?



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