

Dear Friends,

I believe David wrote Psalm 32 many years after his broken heart and repentance, recorded in Psalm 51. The Psalm's description of the writer is not a description of an unsaved person, but of a child of God who confronts, confesses, and repents of his sins, hoping for the Lord's forgiveness. David walks us through sleepless, pillows-wet-with-tears nights of wrestling with a convicted conscience before he finally decided to "Do the right thing" and confess his sin to the Lord. When we study these two Psalms together, we see a powerful lesson that encourages our open, "Confessional" mindset toward the Lord, as well as the Lord's amazing and loving forgiveness.

All too often modern believers do their best to ignore their sins away. Surely, if we just ignore the sin, eventually the Lord will forget it and we can as well. No, the Lord never forgets. If we study the healing grace David discovered in his moment of confession and repentance, we should be the most motivated people in the world to go to the Lord and confess our sins to Him.

Lord bless,

Joe Holder

Pray for Forgiveness: David, an Example

I acknowledged my sin unto thee, And mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. (Psalm 32:4-7 KJV 1900)

When Jesus gave the disciples the model prayer, (Matthew 6:9-14; Luke 11:2-4) He included the example of praying for the Lord's forgiveness.

And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. (Luke 11:4a)

Take note that Jesus associated sins with a debt. If you owe someone, Scripture requires that you faithfully pay that debt. When we sin, we create a debt, one so large that we cannot pay it, with Lord. Absent our ability to pay, Jesus teaches us to honestly take our sins to Him in prayer, and to pray for His forgiveness. Study His lesson in Matthew 18:22-35. This lesson provides rich assurance of forgiveness, but it also contains a stern warning if we refuse to forgive those who owe us (Including their sins against us) as freely as we pray for the Lord to forgive us.

Because the notion that God doesn't actually alter anything in response to our prayers surfaces so regularly, I offer a sobering question. If the Lord does not respond to our prayers, we must conclude that He does not forgive us when we pray for His forgiveness. Are you really willing to live with that conclusion? You see, when we embrace error, we must live with its consequences. It is far better to accept what the Bible teaches about prayer and the Lord's active intervening forgiveness than to buy into any of the populist notions that impose unacceptable consequences onto our spiritual lives. Why even think the Lord doesn't respond to our prayers when the Bible contains one example after another that teaches the opposite, that He graciously does respond, actively so, to our prayers?

Fatalistic leaning folks will protest, "But God knew in advance what you would do and what He would do." Of course He knew. However, they can't cite one Bible lesson that explains the Lord's response to the prayers of His people with that line of fatalistic reasoning. Not one. Every passage, Genesis to Revelation, that deals with the Lord responding to the prayers of His people presents the event in "Real time." Consider our study passage as a perfect example. "*I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; **And** thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*" Why did David not reason in the fatalistic reasoning we are discussing? "God knew I would confess, I did confess, and He forgave, because He

knew in advance that I would confess.” Scripture does not contain a single prayer passage (In fact not a passage at all) that reasons in this way. If Scripture does not give us one single example of a particular way of thinking, why should we pursue it and insist on it? Do we want to follow the Bible or our own “Wrested” (A Bible word, 2 Peter 3:16) way of reasoning?

Psalm 32 forms a perfect companion with Psalm 51. In Psalm 51, David records his prayer to the Lord for forgiveness after Nathan confronted him over his sin with Bathsheba and his having Uriah, her husband, murdered. Although Psalm 32 does not contain a “Date stamp” notation of the setting or background to the Psalm, the subject matter and theme of the Psalm perfectly matches a subsequent godly and insightful reflection of David himself some time much later than Psalm 51.

Consider the overall harmony of the two psalms. Further, consider this specific link between them.

*For I **acknowledge** my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. (Psalm 51:3)*

*I **acknowledged** my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. (Psalm 32:5)*

Psalm 51:3 records David’s heart-broken confession and acknowledgment. But it does not tell us whether he found forgiveness or not. But, when we unite Psalm 51 with Psalm 32, we find the answer. The Lord did forgive him.

It is disappointing that so many Christians who look more for support for their doctrinal ideas than for a right contextual interpretation of Scripture read the first two verses of Psalm 32, impose a salvation view onto it, and choose to ignore the remainder of the Psalm that quite clearly describes a person already saved coming to terms with his sins, confessing them to the Lord, and finding gracious forgiveness. Despite being already saved prior to this Psalm, the Lord could have held David’s sin against him for the remainder of his life. But our loving, gracious God actually responds to the confessions, repentance, and prayers of his erring children with His loving forgiveness. And we need this Bible record of just such an event.

On occasion, I’ve heard folks complain that God was “Too easy” on David. If you study David’s life, you might modify that conclusion. The Lord never stopped blessing David in his righteous activities, but he paid a dear price for his lapses into sin, such as this occasion with Bathsheba.

Was the Lord too easy on David? I suggest not. First and foremost, we must remember that God, not you or I, is the Judge of His people. Only He knows all the details of the events in question, so only He can judge righteously. At times, we may also be inclined to think similarly about someone we know who did something cruel and awful to another person, perhaps even to us. After their conduct, they seem to go on living their life as if nothing happened. And we want to complain, “God, where are you? Where is righteous judgment?” Likely, we are judging prematurely. Rest assured, the Lord’s judgment shall come, though it may not come on our timeline. It may not even come in ways that you or I can observe but rest assured. The Lord promised to judge, and He shall stand faithfully to His promise.

I find it interesting that one meaning of the Greek word translated “Forgive” in the New Testament is to send away. How does forgiveness relate to “Sending” something away? Think. As long as you and I hold onto a person’s sins, we attempt to act as judge instead of stepping back and leaving judgment with the Lord. But, if we dismiss the cruel offense, “Send it away” and off our shoulders, what do we do? We simply turn it over to the Lord, and, in our sincere faith, say, “Lord, I can’t fix this problem. I can’t heal the wound he caused. Only you can. I hereby take it off my shoulders and give it to You. Please judge and dispose of the problem righteously.”

“*Selah*” at the end of this verse, is believed to be a musical instruction, likely similar to a “Pause” in our musical jargon. When we convert the words from music to written poetry, the word takes on the

idea of “Pause and reflect. You just read something really important, and you need to think about it for a while.” So David instructs us after telling us his personal experience with sin, conviction, chastening, confession, repentance, and forgiveness. And we do need to pause and contemplate what he has told us. Let it soak deeply into our minds.

Read the verses leading up to our study lesson. David describes, vividly so, his deeply convicted conscience, sleepless nights, pillows wet with tears of regret and remorse. How did he find relief from this guilty conscience? Our study passage tells us. He honestly and sincerely confessed his sin to the Lord. No rationalizing the sin. No trying to explain why it really wasn't a sin, despite the appearance. He digs to the depth of his convicted heart, and he confesses the black sinfulness of what he did to the Lord. He needs to confess the sin to the Lord and resign himself to the Lord's righteous judgment.

When David wrote, “*And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin,*” we almost sense a surprised relief. “The Lord truly heard my confession, and He forgave me!” It is no wonder that David would respond with such a joyful surprise. Loaded with a convicted conscience, he likely didn't at all expect forgiveness. More likely, he expected some form of judgment, some serious price he must pay for the sin. Instead, he is over-joyed that the Lord heard and forgave.

What follows this verse in David's reflection?

For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. (Psalm 32:6-8)

Yes, even godly people sin and put themselves under the Lord's chastening judgment. And every one of them would pray for the same merciful judgment from the Lord that David here has described. Wouldn't you? I would! Rather than being our adversary because He chastens us and sends a convicting conscience upon us, He is no less—perhaps even more so—our hiding place, our solution, not our problem. As we ponder the Lord's dealings with David in this experience, can we not join with him? Can we not reflect? If—when—we sin, would we not pray for the same from the Lord? Can we not join David in singing his own “songs of deliverance,” even when he sings of being delivered from himself?

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. The Lord continued healing and restoring David from his sin over a prolonged time. He promised this loving, Fatherly teaching. Rather than forsake David in his darkest hour, the Lord promised to teach David the right way to live, including the right way to avoid falling into this sinful trap.

I love the idea, “*I will guide thee with mine eye.*” A parent and child who truly live a relationship with each other grow to understand each other. My daughters used to tease me that, when I disapproved of something they were doing, I didn't have to say a word. I could speak volumes by simply looking at them. Our youngest daughter is a second grade teacher. She thinks she learned my habit quite well. She often talks about making her points with her students by quietly looking at an unruly student. Nothing else. Just a quiet, steady stare. Well, the Lord uses that strategy as well. “*I will guide thee with mine eye.*” Perhaps this was the Lord's gracious way of telling David. Next time he looked in the wrong direction and saw a temptation, turn his gaze for just a moment back to the Lord. What does His “Eye” tell us? Are we looking steadily in His direction so that we know what He says to us with His eye?

Elder Joe Holder