



March 1, 2015
Psalm 32
Pastor Larry Adams

Remember His Cleansing

Hello, my name is Larry Adams, and I want to take a moment to personally thank you for tuning into this week's podcast where you downloaded or are streaming this week's Bible message. I hope it will be a great encouragement to you, and it's our prayer that God will use it to strengthen your faith.

I just want be sure to tell you too that we in no way intend for this message to be a replacement for your weekly involvement in a good local church. We hope that you are involved in a church in your community to worship, grow, and serve and to sit under the authority of pastors and teachers who can speak into your lives. We also realize that around the world there are places where there is no local church, so we're hoping that these messages each week will be a great encouragement to you and anyone else you may be gathering with to pray with, encourage, and to share with in this message. Thank you again for downloading this message, and we hope it will be a great blessing in your life.

If you have your Bibles, I'd like for you to turn with me to Psalm 32. We are going back into our psalm series, **People of Praise: Blessings from the Psalter**. Today, we'll look at Psalm 32, which is a psalm of penance, a psalm of confession, a psalm of acknowledging sin, a psalm where David not only acknowledges his sin, but acknowledges the joy of knowing that he is cleansed and forgiven. Here's the way the David recorded it (Psalm 32:1-11, of David, a "maskil" – we believe a song to be sung):

¹ Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

² Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

³ When I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD."
And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

⁶ Therefore let all the faithful pray to you
while you may be found;
surely the rising of the mighty waters
will not reach them.

⁷ You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

⁹ Do not be like the horse or the mule,
which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle
or they will not come to you.

¹⁰ Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the LORD's unfailing love
surrounds the one who trusts in him.

¹¹ Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Let's pray together: *Father, it isn't until we have an acknowledgement of sin, that we ever have a hope of truly being saved. It isn't until we become aware of our transgressions, that we have our understanding of our need for a Savior. Today, as we come to this table of communion, and as we open up Psalm 32, we thank You for the way You spoke to David and through him, and to help him to understand his need. And what he has discovered in this forgiveness, he has passed on to us: the wonder of a Savior, Who cleanses from sin. We thank you God, for that cleansing, in Jesus' name, Amen.*

About 70, maybe 80 years ago when I graduated high school, I took a trip with my buddies. We had just graduated high school. We were going to be working in the summer, and we took two weeks to go on an extended hiking, fishing, camping trip into the Allagash Wilderness in Maine. If you have ever read about or seen the Allagash, it's one of the last remaining true wildernesses in the country. We went there, as far as we could by car, then we went on foot with a canoe, fishing gear, and living off the land. There were no campgrounds, no hookups, no electricity, and no showers. I got to tell you, after seven days with no shower, in a canvas tent with two other guys, even the bugs stopped biting, and the bears no longer came into the camp. It was the dirtiest, smelliest, grungiest I ever remember being. And I remember us talking about how we were wishing we could take a shower. One day while we were hiking, we came across a waterfall, falling into this beautiful pool, and we lathered up and dove in. We spent the afternoon there. I got to tell you, I still remember how good it felt to be clean.

You know that same thing happened to me, spiritually, in 1977. Twenty-five years of sin and filth and shame had taken its toll on me. I knew that I was dirty in my soul and I didn't know what to do about it. And then I heard the gospel. I heard that God loved me, and gave His Son to die for me, and shed His blood to pay for my sin, to cleanse me. And that if I were to receive Jesus into my life and trust His sacrifice at the cross, all of my transgressions, all of my sin and all of my iniquity, would be cleansed and forgiven. I took God at His word, and I asked Jesus to save me from my sin, and He did. I got to tell you, it feels so good to be clean.

That's why any of us who have ever experienced His cleansing forgiveness can relate to David's psalm in Psalm 32. David said (vs. 1-7):

¹ Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

² Blessed is the one
whose sin the LORD does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

³ When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.

⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD."
And you forgave
the guilt of my sin.

⁶ Therefore let all the faithful pray to you
while you may be found;
surely the rising of the mighty waters
will not reach them.

⁷ You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Psalm 32 is one of seven penitential psalms in the psalter. A penitential psalm is a psalm of penance, a psalm of sorrow, a psalm of grief over sin. A desire to be clean. A confession. And then the ensuing relief and peace and joy of knowing that you have a Savior Who forgives. It's a cleansing and forgiveness we remember every time we come to communion. We are reminded that communion is our remembrance of the death of Jesus.

We've shared many times that this remembrance will not make you a Christian. It will not get your sins forgiven. It will not earn you any grace. It won't get you into heaven. The only way to be saved from what sin has done is by coming by faith in Jesus Christ, and believing that His death on the cross was sufficient payment for our sin for all time. Believing that, when our payment was made and His death was done, He was buried in a tomb. But the grave couldn't hold Him. Three days later, He rose again victorious as He promised, conquering sin and death and the grave for all of us who believe. He is alive today, offering hope and forgiveness and eternal life to everyone who believes Him and receives Him into their lives. He is the way, the truth and the life, the only way to come to God. That's how people are saved. Communion is a vivid reminder instituted by Jesus to confront us with the awfulness of sin, the greatness of God's love, the cleansing we receive -- when we truly believe and surrender to Jesus. That was the cleansing David was talking about that we are remembering today at this table. Because communion is our reminder that we are cleansed of sin by the blood of Jesus.

What does it mean to be cleansed? David said that all of our transgressions are forgiven. All of our sins are covered. All of our iniquity is no longer counted against us. Because of the cleansing blood of Jesus, our transgressions are forgiven. David said in verse 1, "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven."

We have had a lot of babies born in our church over the years, and we still do. One of our ushers, Bob came up today and showed me his brand new granddaughter that was just born. I've heard a lot of names that people have picked out for their kids. Some of the names I can't even pronounce. Beautiful names with beautiful meanings. But over the years, I got to tell you, with hundreds and hundreds of babies, I have never heard of a couple that picked the name "Benedict Arnold" or "Judas Iscariot" for any of their kids. That's because Benedict Arnold and Judas Iscariot are names notoriously associated with rebellion and sedition, and betrayal. One betrayed his country, the other betrayed his Savior. Both of them died, rejected.

That word for 'betrayal or rejection' is the word that David is using to describe our guilt before a holy God. A guilt that every one of us has – we're born with it. David acknowledged that he and all humanity are guilty of transgressions. He said, "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven."

The word 'transgressions' is a word that describes an act of rebellion or betrayal or disloyalty. We are all sinners by nature and by choice. You might not like the sound of that; it certainly isn't what the world will teach you. Satan doesn't want you to know that you have inherited sin from Adam and Eve. He doesn't even want you to believe the story of their truth. Because unless you see your sin, he knows that you will never have a desire for a Savior. So, it's important that we understand that at the heart of the gospel, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and the wages of sin is death. Sin puts us in a position of willful rejection of God, turning our backs on the God Who made us, and the God Who gives us life. 'Transgressions' is a word you would use to describe a traitor, one you would use to describe a man or woman who betrays their marriage, or their family, or their country, or their God. What's fascinating to me is this: there are people who betray a marriage and they can then end up divorced. There are people who can betray a family, and they end up estranged. There are people who can betray their country and they can be imprisoned, or shot. But the amazing thing is, if you have betrayed God and His kingdom, you can find forgiveness. That's amazing to me! Nowhere else can you find a response like this, from a God Who has paid the price for that forgiveness. "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven."

The word 'forgiven' is the word 'carried away' and not only the penalty of the transgression is removed, but even the memory of the betrayal is gone! When Jeremiah was writing in the Old Testament about the coming of a new covenant, a new covenant that would be made between God and man, Jeremiah wrote this (Jer 31:31-34):

³¹ "The days are coming," declares the LORD,
"when I will make a new covenant
with the people of Israel
and with the people of Judah.

³² It will not be like the covenant
I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,"
declares the LORD.

³³ "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel
after that time," declares the LORD.
"I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God,

and they will be my people.
³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor,
or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,'
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,"
declares the LORD.
"For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."

That's why David would later write in Psalm 103:8-12 :

⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
⁹ He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

No wonder David wrote and sang and lived in the joy of knowing, "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven."

Not only are our transgressions forgiven by the cleansing blood of Jesus, but our sins are covered. David said in verse 1, 'Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose *sins are covered*.' Not all sin is a direct act of willful rebellion.

The last couple of weeks, I've spent a lot of time up in my attic. I don't normally spend a lot of time up there. I was running lines from a security camera I put on the front of the house, and the sides, through the attic, and then down in the wall and out through the bottom by the floor so I could run the wires in to hook them up in my office. I spent a lot more time in the attic than I should have, because I have no idea what I'm doing. Most of the time I spent up there was trying to be careful not to put my foot down through the ceiling in all the places I was walking. When you are in an attic, it's a very interesting perspective. You stand there, looking, thinking, what room am I over right now? You're trying to find points of reference. Trying to find a light in the ceiling, or a wire that goes down a wall. You're trying to find your way around. I finally located the wall that goes down near the office that I was going to try to drill through, to run the wires down and then out the bottom, and hook them up. So I put an "X" on the top of the stud wall where I was drilling. Got the drill out. Aimed that thing up, and I drilled right down. When I pulled the drill out, I saw light coming up through the hole. I heard Karla down there going, "Hi Honey." I had put a mark, drilled right on it, but I had put the mark in the wrong place and I had actually drilled right down through the ceiling in my office. (Karla was very gracious.) You see, I wasn't trying to drill a hole in the ceiling, in fact I was trying to drill a hole in the right place. But I 'missed the mark.' That's the word that David uses when he said your sins are covered – he used the word that means 'to miss the mark'. You see, God knows that some of our sin is like that. We're not always trying to rebel

against God, we're not always trying to do the wrong thing. Sometimes, we're ignorant, sometimes we're foolish, sometimes we are deceived, sometimes we're weak. We have a lot of reasons. But whatever it is, sometimes we just miss the mark. We miss God's holy standard. Either we didn't know it, or we didn't know we were aiming in the wrong spot. All of us are guilty of it. God said, when that happens, you need to know that in Jesus, your sin – when you miss the mark – it's covered.

David said it was a blessing to know that our sin was covered. The word 'covered' means 'atoned for' or 'paid for'. All the sins we commit, whether intentional or not, have a price. There are sins we commit when we miss the mark, and David said, those things are all covered. It's what the apostle John was writing about in his first letter in 1 John 1:5-2:2 :

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

People, when we miss the mark, and we all do, we're not to hide that, or deny it, or pretend it didn't happen. I can't drill a hole through the ceiling in my office with Karla standing below and say, "It wasn't me!" or "I don't know how that happened!" I know how it happened! I missed the mark! So we don't deny it, we don't cover it up. John said to confess it.

David said, "When I didn't confess it, it was like my bones were wasting away. It's like Your hand was heavy on me and my strength was sapped, so I acknowledged my sin to You. I didn't cover up my iniquity, I confessed my transgressions to the Lord and He forgave the guilt of my sin."

Confession is agreeing with God. He knows it anyway. He sees everything. So we aren't to hide anything. *Lord, I don't know why I did this! I was careless, I was ignorant, I was foolish, I was selfish, I was blind, I was in a hurry. I don't know but I sinned again. I know better! I know what I did was wrong. I don't know why I did it, but I did it. I want You to help me not to do it again, but You and I both know I can't promise I won't fall again. Because I know I will and so do You. I don't want to, but when I miss the mark like this, forgive me. Thank You, that in the blood of Jesus my sins are covered. It feels so good to be clean.*

John said that Jesus was our atoning sacrifice. The word is 'propitiation'. It's the turning away of God's wrath. God propitiates our sin, applies His mercy, and His wrath is appeased and our sin is gone. D.L. Moody the great evangelist once said, "There are two ways of covering our sins: man's way and God's way. If you seek to hide them, they'll have a resurrection sometime. But if you let the Lord cover them,

neither the devil nor man will ever be able to find them again. Amen!" No wonder David said "Blessed is the one whose sins are covered."

Not only transgressions are forgiven and sins are covered, but because of the cleansing blood of Jesus, our iniquity is not counted against us. David said in verse 2: "Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit."

Each week, people can write in to "Ask GHCC" (you can do it on our website, you can do it from your phone, you can do it wherever) and you can send in questions. People do it every week. And some weeks there are more that come in than we can do, so we archive those and we try to group them around themes, and we try to get to them as soon as we can by me or one of our staff, having a chance to speak to them on our website. One of the ones that came in a while ago, that I'm hoping to have a chance to address soon, was a very good one. It simply said this, "Is there a difference between sinning and living in sin?" It's a good question and very insightful, in fact. David would say, "Yes" – There's a difference between sinning (missing the mark), and iniquity (choosing to live in sin). That's the response that David gave in Psalm 32. Some of our sin, he said, is iniquity. "Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against him, and in whose spirit is no deceit." That word 'sin' there is different than the verse for 'sin' in verse 1. That word up there (vs 1) means "missing the mark", this is a different word. It's more a product of continual choice, a lifestyle of sin, a willfulness implied and a spirit of deceit behind it. This is the person who knows the wrong path and continues to choose it anyway. This is the person who knows they're in sin, they hear the gospel, and yet they still refuse to embrace it. Because at the heart of it is, they want to be gods of their own lives, although they'll never use those words. And they want to be in charge, and call all their shots, and the fact is, they love the darkness, Jesus said. Although they'll never use those words. And when we love sin more than the light, it's amazing the excuses you can find for not believing that Jesus is real. We are born in sin. So we choose sin. We're sinners by nature and by choice. So, if we stay in that sin, that willful choice, or as a professing believer, we choose to stay in a sinful position, we know is wrong, that's a serious situation. It's the classic offense of the unbeliever. They're born in sin and they stay in it. By the way, there are no exceptions to this. We are all born in sin. Paul told the Ephesians in Ephesians 2:1-3 :

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

People, I don't care if you were five years old when you came to Jesus, and you lived your whole life trying to follow Christ, the fact of the matter is, you were born with a sin nature, and you need to understand and confess that sin to God at some time in your life or you'll never really know the joy and forgiveness that comes. I ask people all the time, "What are you saved *from*?" A bad marriage? Bad life? Bad economics? Bad health? Salvation is when you are saved from SIN, and all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and the wages of sin is death.

In Christ, when we are in Him and when we are saved, those iniquities, those sinful choices, that way of sin that we lived in, is no longer counted against us. Our iniquity is cleansed. God took all of our transgressions, all of our sins, and all of our iniquity and lawlessness, and He laid it on Jesus at the cross. People, I have to tell you, I can barely look at a cross anymore, certainly not one where Jesus is on it, without being reminded that it was my transgressions, sin and iniquity that put Him there. He died there because He loved us and because I needed His cleansing. So He had to pay my price.

Over 700 years before Jesus went to the cross, Isaiah was proclaiming the good news. Isaiah 53:4-6 :

⁴ Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

David would be the first to tell us, “Don’t be deceived, acknowledge your sin. Don’t believe that you’ve been so bad that God can’t forgive you, He already has. He has paid your price. Blessed are those whose sins and iniquities are no longer counted against them.

I was reading a piece by Kevin Kim, a pastor who was doing a sermon called *Total Nakedness*, and he was describing how their church each year has an Ash Wednesday service. Ash Wednesday is a traditional service not often celebrated by evangelicals. It’s from a tradition that obviously isn’t found in the Bible, but the principle is there. It is a beginning of the Lenten season where people are focused on penance, or focused on sorrow for their sin, self-denial, and focus on God. A very healthy thing, actually. Some people acknowledge it on Ash Wednesday by putting ash on the forehead and having a special service to get people focused on that season of repentance. Kevin Kim said,

Every year at our Ash Wednesday service, people have an opportunity to write their sins on a piece of paper, fold the paper and then pin it onto a wooden cross as a reminder of Christ’s forgiveness.

One year, a family came into the service, and they walked through the worship experience as an entire family. When they came to the confession station, they explained to their six-year-old son the practice of confessing their sin, and writing it on the paper. So, when they all grabbed a sheet of paper and started writing their confessions, the little boy did the same. Remember, he is six. He started writing in large, clear, block letters. The rest of the family wrote their confessions and then carefully folded the sheets so no one could see the sins they had written down. They intentionally left their names off the paper as well. Then they walked to the front of the church, to the cross, and pinned their sins on the cross.

Their six-year-old son wrote in large, block letters, “GOD I’M SORRY BECAUSE I LIE.” Then he signed his name. He refused to fold it. He walked to the front, pinned it on the cross in front of everybody, for them to see.

His parents said to him, “Why did you put your name on it? Don’t you want to fold it up so no one can see?”

The six-year-old said, "I wrote my name on it because I want everyone to see it. Because if they know it was me, maybe they can help me stop."

I can learn a lot from a six-year-old like that, who is more concerned about what God thinks than what people think; whose desire to be cleansed is so strong, they're willing to confess it before God and anyone, if it would help them stop. People, let me ask you this: how badly do you want to be clean before a holy God?

David said, we've all committed transgressions, rebellion, betrayal. God is ready to forgive. We all have sins. We all miss the mark. We have a God who covered those sins with the blood of His Son. There are times we have lived in sin, and chosen sin. We have iniquity. But we have a God Who says, "You come to Jesus, and I will no longer count that iniquity against you. This bread is My body," Jesus said. "This cup is My blood. It was given for you. Now, as often as you eat it, remember Me, the One Who cleanses you from your transgressions, your sin and your iniquity." I have to tell you, if you are a Christian today, and you've truly been forgiven, isn't it true? It feels so good to be clean.

Thank you, God for forgiveness we don't deserve. Couldn't earn. Can only accept by faith, the gracious act of cleansing that we remember today at this table. Your servant David was right. We are blessed and we thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.