

PSALM 32:1-11

CHAPTER STUDIES ON THE PSALTER

"God's hand is helpful when it lifts but awful when it presses."

(Psalm 32:1) Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. He is now and will ever be blessed. Is he poor, or sick, or sorrowful? He is still blessed indeed. Pardoning mercy is of all things in the world most to be prized, for it is the only and sure way to happiness. To hear from God's Spirit, the words *absolvo te* is joy unspeakable. In this Psalm, blessedness is not ascribed to one who has been a diligent law keeper, for then it would never come to us. It is to a lawbreaker, who by grace most rich and free, has been forgiven. Self-righteous Pharisees have no portion in this blessedness. It is over the returning prodigal that the word of welcome is pronounced and the music and dancing begin. A full, instantaneous, irreversible pardon of transgression turns the poor sinner's hell into heaven and makes the heir of wrath a partaker in blessing. The word forgiven in the original is taken off or taken away, as a burden is lifted or a barrier removed. What a lift! It cost our Savior a sweat of blood to bear our load (Luke 22:44); it cost Him His life to bear it away. Samson carried the gates of Gaza (Judges 16:3), but what was that to the weight Jesus bore on our behalf?

Whose sin is covered, covered by God, as the mercy seat covered the ark,

as Noah was covered from the flood, as the depths of the sea covered the Egyptians. What a cover! It forever hides the filthiness of the flesh and the spirit from the sight of the all-seeing God! He who has once seen sin in its horrible deformity will appreciate the happiness of seeing it no more. Christ's atonement is the propitiation, the covering, the making of the end of sin. Where this is seen and trusted, the soul knows that it is then accepted in the Beloved. It therefore enjoys a conscious blessing that is the foretaste of heaven. It is clear from the text that people may know they are pardoned, for who could know the blessedness of unknown forgiveness? Clearly it is a matter of knowledge, for it is the ground of comfort.

(Ps. 32:2) Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity. The word "blessed" is plural. Oh, the blessednesses, the double joys, the bundles of happiness, the mountains of delight! Three words denote our disobedience: transgression, sin, and iniquity. This is the three-headed dog at the gates of hell. Our glorious Lord, however, has silenced the barking against His believing ones. The Trinity of heaven overcomes the trinity of sin. Non-imputation is the essence of

pardon; the believer sins, but the sin is not reckoned, not accounted.

(Ps. 32:3) When I kept silent. When through neglect I failed to confess, or through despair dared not, **my bones**, those solid pillars of my frame, **waxed [grew] old**. They began to decay with weakness. My grief was so intense as to sap my health and destroyed my vital energy. What a killing thing is sin! It is a pestilent disease, a fire in the bones! When we smother our sin, it rages like a festering wound, swelling horribly and tormenting terribly.

Through my roaring [groaning] all the day long. David was silent as to confession but not to sorrow. Horror at his great guilt drove him to incessant laments, until his voice was no longer articulate. It was so full of sighing and groaning that it resembled the hoarse roaring of a wounded animal. None know the pangs of conviction except those who have endured them. The rack, the wheel, the fires are easy when compared to the hell that a guilty conscience kindles. Better to suffer all the diseases of the flesh than to lie under the crushing wrath of almighty God. The Spanish Inquisition with all its tortures was nothing to the inquest that conscience can hold in the heart.

(Ps. 32:4) For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me. If God's finger can crush us, what must His hand be like as it presses heavily and continuously? Under terrors of conscience, many people have

little rest at night. The grim thoughts of the day dog them to their bedrooms and haunt their dreams, or else they lie awake in the cold sweat of dread. God's hand is helpful when it lifts but awful when it presses. Better a world on the shoulder, like Atlas, than God's hand on the heart, like David.

My moisture is turned [vitality was turned] into the drought of summer. The sap of his soul was dried, and through sympathy the body appeared to be deprived of fluids. The oil was almost gone from the lamp of life; the flame flickered as though it would soon expire. Unconfessed transgression, like fierce poison, dries the fountain of strength. It makes us like a tree blasted by lightning, like a plant withered by the scorching heat of a tropical sun. Pity the poor soul when it learns of its sin but forgets its Savior, for it goes hard for that person.

(Ps. 32:5) When the soul determines to plead guilty, absolution is nearby. We read, **And Thou forgavest [You forgave] the iniquity of my sin.** Not only was the sin pardoned, but also the iniquity. When the acknowledgment was made, the virus of guilt was immediately put away. God's pardons are deep and thorough. The knife of mercy cuts the roots of the ill weed of sin.

(Ps. 32:7) Thou shalt compass [You shall surround] me with songs of deliverance. What a golden sentence! David is surrounded with song and with dancing

mercies, all proclaiming the triumphs of grace. There is no breach in the circle; it surrounds him. On all sides, he hears music; in front, hope sounds the cymbals, and behind, gratitude beats the timbrel. Right and left, above and beneath, the air resounds with joy. And all this for the man whom a few weeks earlier had been roaring all day long. What a great change! What wonders grace has done and still can do!

Selah. There was a need to pause. Love so amazing needs to be pondered. Joy so great demands quiet contemplation, for language fails to express it.

(Ps. 32:11) Be glad in the LORD. Here is the directory by which gladness is preserved from levity. We are not to be glad in sin, or to find comfort in corn, wine, and oil, but in the LORD. He is to be the garden of our soul's delight. That there is such a God, and that He is ours forever, our Father and our reconciled Lord, is reason enough for a never-ending Psalm of rapturous joy.

(The Treasury of David, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, updated by Mark Wash)

Describe the person spoken of in this Psalm. 2 Sam. 12:13

What is God trying to tell us in Psalm 32:9?