

# Sin Confessed - Forgiveness Given

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- [ 0 : 00 ]     Let us join together in the worship of God, singing from Psalm 51.
- Psalm 51, from the beginning. After thy lovingkindness, Lord, have mercy upon me, for thy compassion's great.
- Lord, blot out all mine iniquity, me cleanse from sin, and throughly wash from mine iniquity. For my transgressions I confess, my sin I ever see.
- Against thee, thee only, have I sinned. In thy sight done this ill, that when thou speakest thou mayst be just, and clear in judging still.
- Behold, I in iniquity was foreign to one within. My mother also may conceive in guiltiness and sin. Behold thou in the inward parts, with truth delighted art.
- [ 1 : 02 ]     And wisdom thou shalt make me know within the hidden part. Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so. Yea, wash thou me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow.
- And so on. Let us sing these verses. Psalm 51, verses 1 to 7. After thy lovingkindness, Lord, have mercy upon me.
- After thy lovingkindness, Lord, have mercy upon me.
- For thy goodkindness, Lord, have mercy upon me.
- Thank you.
- [ 2 : 27 ]     Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- [ 4 : 33 ]     Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. outstretched hands as others have done in the experience of your word. We are reminded of them doing so with a sense of of applying to God in heaven to meet need whatever that need was. We see them come with empty hands acknowledging that they were coming to fullness with their emptiness. We see them coming with desire to elevate the name of the God that they appeared before so that their praises would be heard and received.

Your people can come in many different ways and their experience of coming may vary at every time. There may be a sameness of about it, there might be a sense in which when they come they come as they have never come before. And every time may occasion a different need, a different pressure, a different desire, even a different understanding of what they are themselves or what you are as God. We appreciate through your word that we have much to learn, that we are by nature ignorant. And unless we are receptive to your truth our ignorance will overtake us. Help us to be submissive to the guiding of your own spirit, that we may learn from you and that we may be content to be informed. But not just to possess that knowledge as a knowledge that we can store, but a knowledge that we must utilise and put into practice.

We know from your word how the mother of our Lord Jesus, that there was a time when she saw what her son was doing and she marvelled at his wonder-working power. She marvelled at what he said and she laid it up in her heart and no doubt it would serve her well when she was able to draw upon that which she had seen.

And as we are currently involved in a world-wide situation that has affected every individual in the world in one way or another, we know that your word has spoken to us in the midst of this pandemic, reminding us of the fragility of our own humanity, reminding us of the provision that you have made for us as the God of our Lord Jesus, and that you have made for us as the God of our Lord Jesus, and that you have made for us as the God of our Lord Jesus, as the God who is the God over all, the one who is almighty, the one who is the healer, and the great physician, the one who is exemplified even in the activities of our Saviour when he was in the world, and when he was followed by so many of those who were in the world affected by weakness, the blind, the halt, the maimed, and they pursued him relentlessly knowing that there was something about him that they needed.

[ 9 : 27 ] And how much we need to turn to you and to be earnest and relentless in our pursuit of you, so that you may exercise mercy towards us as your people here in this world at this time.

May your mercy fully undertake for us as we take your word, as we handle it, and as we seek to get to the heart of it, we know that there is limited attention span on many who are under your word.

They may listen very much to a whole host of different sources, and yet we are all in the same boat, our retention is limited, and we need to learn to take on board what is essential, the truth concerning Christ, the truth concerning the need that we have of him, the truth concerning ourselves as sinners, how much we need to discover the weakness that is debilitating as a consequence of sin.

We bless your name for the way your word has set that before us, even in the words that we have been singing. A servant, David, who was a man after your own heart, and yet your word tells us in these words how he needed to experience the true nature of penitence, and sorrow for sin, and grace to flee from it, and grace to embrace the salvation that God had on offer.

We are equally weak, if not more so, and we are in more danger because of the kind of world in which we live, and to the sins that we are exposed to.

[ 11 : 38 ] So help us, O God, to remember that, even as we approach your throne of grace today, that we may seek grace to help in time of need.

So visit us in mercy, remembering those that we bring to your attention, our neighbours, our friends, our families, those who are ill at this time, some suffering from COVID, some suffering from other ailments that are in themselves destructive.

We pray for healing. We pray for mercy. We pray for grace. We pray for help, for a sense of your presence, for your love to be to be shed abroad in their heart through the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sustain lives, minister to them families and loved ones. Uphold them, we pray. All that we know that may be concerned because of their loved ones, we pray for them.

We pray for the bereaved, for the heart-sick, sorrowful, those who are broken in body or mind, we pray that you would restore them, that you would guard, keep and protect those who are isolated and alone, those who feel lonely even though they may not be alone.

[ 13 : 02 ] There's a mystery concerning the fragility of our human condition. Sometimes we can be living in vast cities, surrounded by hundreds of thousands of people and yet feel as if we're alone on the face of this planet.

It is so easy to succumb to the sorrows that that may introduce into our heart. Keep your people free from it and encourage them to look to the Lord, who is the brother born for adversity, the friend who is a friend indeed.

We pray for our hospitals. We pray for the staff who are involved in the care of those in hospital, those who are in care homes and those who minister to their needs.

We pray for those who are concerned for them. We ask, Lord, that you would mind them and show that you are a God who slumbers not nor sleeps.

We pray your blessing upon our governments, our local government, our national government, our government in London, in Westminster.

[ 14 : 23 ] We pray for the Prime Minister, the First Minister, all parties and all who have engaged in governing with a view to the glory of God.

Lord, in particular, we give thanks for those who are Christians engaged in such work. May you add to their number. May you keep their feet free from falling, their eyes free from tears.

We pray, Lord, that you would remember all those who have responsibility for keeping us safe at this time.

All who are members of the armed forces, of the police force and the fire brigade and the ambulance services and people who put their own lives in danger when they are looking to the needs of others.

We pray that you would remember them. May you now pour out your spirit upon us as we read your word and as we pray your blessing upon it.

[ 15 : 26 ] May the seed sown fall upon ground that you have prepared that those who hear your word would hear it indeed to the saving of their soul. Have mercy upon us in Jesus' name.

Amen. We are going to read from Psalm 32 in the Book of Psalms. Psalm 32 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah 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 everyone that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayst be found.

[ 16 : 46 ] 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.

Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice.

Ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. Amen. And may the Lord at his blessing to this reading of his word and to his name be the praise.

[ 17 : 53 ] I'd like us to think for a while of the words of this psalm. We can read at the beginning of the psalm, Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

And in verse 5, I acknowledge 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. It has been said by many, and well said, man cannot cover what God would reveal.

Psalms 32 is said to be all about a cover-up. Interestingly, the psalm begins with the blessedness of the man whose sin is covered.

But it is God who is doing the covering. Verses 3 and 4 describe to us another cover-up and the consequences of that.

[ 19 : 15 ] when I kept silence, David says, my bones walked old through my roaring all the day long.

For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

David covered his sin. He kept silence. He did not admit his sin, possibly not even to himself, but his conscience smothered him.

The words of the psalmist as translated in sing-salms describe the punishing effect. beneath your hand I felt entrapped.

Both day and night my strength was sapped as in a summer drought. Over the years we have heard of many cover-ups and even more alleged cover-ups within the political arena.

[ 20 : 31 ] Some of you will remember the Watergate affair that resulted in the resignation of the then President of the United States Richard Nixon in the 1970s.

Despite the best endeavours of the most powerful office in the Western world, the truth came to be exposed. I am sure you have any number of international, national, local and sad to say personal experiences that spring to mind.

Wrongs deliberately hidden from view but exposed in time for all to see. However, the psalmist is not concerned with the embarrassment and such exposure causes, even when it can be part of the experience of being discovered.

What he is discussing is of far greater consequence. At the same time it is something that potentially we are all open to and we either dispute the reality of it or do not appreciate the significance.

I want first of all to begin with a premise derived from the scripture that requires us to act in its light. Secondly, the action that is anticipated is not always fulfilled.

[ 21 : 59 ] And thirdly, however, when it is fulfilled, the benefit is exceptional. The premise of which I'm thinking can be summarised by quoting one passage from the Bible.

God's verse 1. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Doubtless we can accompany this one statement with numerous others, but this one version encapsulates the universal condition of men and women of every age and every generation.

It takes us back to a promise made by God to Adam and Eve. That if they broke the conditions of the covenant relationship that existed between the creator God and the creature Adam, the consequences were dire.

Put simply, Adam and all humankind would suffer death. death. As the Apostle Paul explains repeatedly, it was because of the rebellion of Adam that sin entered into the world to be the experience of all mankind from that point on.

If there is the rule of law, the potential exists for that law to be disobeyed. the fact of the matter is this.

[ 23 : 33 ] God did not lie when he said that he would visit death on Adam if he disobeyed or if he sinned.

He may not have caused Adam to die instantly in the sense of him ceasing to live at that point.

But he was no longer able to live as he once did. He died spiritually. God made Adam a living soul. When he sinned, what was necessary for that soul to prosper, to survive, was no longer the case.

God drove Adam out of the Garden of Eden, a physical act to emphasise the breakdown in the original relationship to God. He was not only cut off from the tree of life, he was estranged from God instantly.

I would argue Adam began to feel the pangs of death, the pains of a body now preparing for dissolution. Some debate the difference in the physical experience of the fall.

[ 24 : 57 ] Pre-fall human experience is hidden from us, largely, but it does seem that the world that Adam lived in required labour, and God gave him a day of rest from his labour, but after the fall, the labour became toil.

Now there is no doubting that the human body of Adam, from the moment that God's curse became active because of sin, that Adam was a dying man.

Despite the resistance of men generally to the doctrine of sin, they are not able to deny the reality of death. Whatever explanation they may choose to give for it, it is not the primary cause.

That is what God promised, the day you shall leave doffod, that is the forbidden fruit, that day you shall surely die. Not only does the Bible insist that there is sin in the experience of every person, however much we may dispute that, however much we choose to describe sin by other means, we fail miserably.

Not only does the Scripture show us that sin comes in many forms, it results in the same end. The Bible itself uses different words, transgressions, iniquity, guile, rebellion, missing of the mark.

[ 26 : 35 ] What it all stems from is this. God's law requires obedience, perfect obedience, and where that is not forthcoming, God has promised punishment.

Some would argue that such a statement defies the reality of the gospel message. It is more akin to the God of the Old Testament, they say. But where does the notion that such a God exists come from?

There is but one God. He is from everlasting to everlasting God. with him there is no variableness or shadow of turning. He is the God of the New Testament, the same as the God of the Old.

He is capable of anger, a holy anger against sin and against the sinner. The preacher R.C. Sproul in his book The Holiness of God writes, if God is holy at all, if God has a noun of justice in his character, indeed if God exists as God, how could he be anything else but angry with us?

We violate his holiness, we insult his justice, we make light of his grace, but a God of love, who has no wrath, is no God.

[ 28 : 05 ] He is an idol of our own making, as much as if we carved him out of stone. The second thing that I want to highlight briefly is that despite the reality of sin and the clear opposition of God to it, many do not accept the guilt or the accountability to God.

Someone has said of our first parents that the reason they fled from the Lord was threefold. They were alienated, they were ashamed, and they were afraid.

They did not face up to the consequences of their sin. That is why they turned from God. I think that is one of the great mysteries of the fall.

Adam knew God well. He had an intimacy with him that no other living person outside of the trench had. And you would suppose he would know what God was like and what he was capable of, that he was omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient.

God. The psalmist rightly asks the question, from thy spirit whither shall I go, or from thy presence fly? Ascend I heaven, lo, thou art there, there if in hell I lie.

[ 29 : 42 ] People believe what they want to believe. I think David knew God was opposed to him because of his sin, and he tried to suppress that knowledge, and yet it could not be suppressed.

Some people try and live with their sin, and they are miserable, no matter how they try to say otherwise. God's hand was heavy on David.

He was truly in a bad way. There was no relief for him. Some will argue for a theological position that they believe brings relief, but it is a false position that requires them to believe that God is different to the God of the Bible.

When I used to visit a school many years ago, just a thought came to mind concerning this. When you would go in to the infants, sometimes they were completely engaged in whatever activity it was that they were doing themselves, quite oblivious to anybody else.

I remember watching them one day and they were playing with large jigsaw puzzles, very large pieces.

[ 31 : 07 ] The jigsaw puzzle itself was small, but the pieces were wooden and very, very big. pieces were trying to fit the pieces into the puzzle.

They weren't really very sure how to go about this. They hadn't got the idea of shapes properly grasped. pieces.

Some, at least, were trying to force the pieces into shapes that the pieces did not belong to.

It was a wrong fit. God. And that's the way some people are with God. Some people want him to be like themselves. They want to fit him into the shape that they have created themselves.

[ 32 : 04 ] or perhaps there are those who latch on to one aspect of God's character that appeals to them. And they will quote the words of the scripture and say, this is my God, this is the kind of God that I believe in.

Words such as the words of the psalmist in Psalm 103, the Lord our God is merciful, he is gracious, long suffering and slow to wrath and mercy plenteous.

And that is true, it is so true, but the mercy of God and the grace of God is shown in a particular way. And we must go to that place and use that way.

And David highlights it in verse 5. I acknowledged my sin, he says. I did not hide my iniquity any longer. I confessed my transgression.

It is a great privilege to understand the need for confession. Not to a priest, but to God. Christ, the Son of God, has secured access for his people, so they have no need of a human advocate, because we already have an advocate with the Father.

[ 33 : 20 ] Even Jesus Christ, the righteous, the scripture tells us. But we have a problem. We know the formula for confession. Yet, we more often than not do not experience the burden of our guilt.

Or at times, the opposite. We feel the guilt and believe that it is too heinous for God to accept us. Both positions are possible and both are dangerous.

But we must come and offer confession and seek from God the true spirit of the penitent. Do you not think that David speaks of this in Psalm 51, which we heard sung at the outset?

Hide your face from my sins. Blot out all mine iniquity. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

There must be an acknowledgement of sin in the light of the spirit's leading, but there must be an appreciation of the remedy that is prepared.

[ 34 : 35 ] It is Thomas Watson the Puritan that wrote the following, to pardon sin is one of the juror regalia, one of the flowers of God's crown.

sin. This is the final brief thought and the psalmist dwells on it to the end. Forgiveness, covering, mercy.

The stain of sin is dark, but God covers it. He hides it from sight. sin is the sin.

When we look at where our sin is most obvious to us, we hardly dare look in that place. We're so afraid of it or ashamed of it.

But if we have confessed our sin, and if we go looking for it where once it was, we should not be able to find it.

[ 35 : 40 ] God has taken it and dealt with it when it is confessed. If we have truly come by faith, unbended knee and acknowledged our guilt, it is not excused or belittled by us or overlooked but confessed.

Just as Paul tells us, as he wrote to the Romans, there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

God, we are told, will not remember their sins and iniquities anymore. Do not dare think that this is a cheap grace, anything but the fact that God forgives sin, he does it in a way where his grace and his mercy is paramount, it is highlighted.

Remember a sermon preached preached by, well it's written for us, Thomas Guthrie I think it was, and he was looking at the words of Psalm 130 and he asked the question, why in that Psalm is forgiveness tied in with fear?

God's and he gives us two reasons. First he says the manner of the forgiveness, it sets forth the holiness of God and the evils of sin in the clearest light.

[ 37 : 27 ] There is an altar and there is a victim. Pardon flows by a stream of blood, the altar is the cross and the victim is the son of the most high.

and the manner of the forgiveness sets forth God's hatred of sin, but also his love to sinners. Someone has described the grace of God as outrageous, extravagant and astonishing.

There is no doubt that his love is great and his mercy accompanies it and it defies description. But the thing for us is not to speak of it but to experience it so that we can speak of it with all sensitivity and with all the understanding of one who has truly enjoyed the privilege.

May God add his blessing to these few thoughts. Let us pray. Most merciful God we give thanks that the sinner can come to you on bended knee and confess his sin and make their sin known to you even though you have knowledge of it prior to that.

The confession acknowledges you right to hear it and their need to part from it. So cleanse us from sin.

[ 39 : 00 ] Drive us to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ to put our trust in him for time and for eternity. Continue with us we pray.

Cleanse from sin and now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always. Amen.