

Sin Forgiven Through Sin Confessed

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Date: 15 January 2017

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[0 : 00] Let's turn now to the passage we read in Psalms, the book of Psalms, Psalm 32. We'll read again from the beginning. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. Look at these verses down as far as verse 5.

Looking at the topic of sin forgiven through sin confessed. Forgiveness of sin is integral and indispensable to our possession of salvation.

It's very much a primary feature of what the Bible tells us salvation and our relationship with God in which there is salvation consists of.

In fact, you find in the likes of Ephesians chapter 1 verse 7 and in Colossians chapter 1 verse 14, that forgiveness is so much an integral part and a central part of God's redemption or salvation that it's spoken of there even as defined by forgiveness.

[1 : 15] Remember in that passage in Ephesians, for example, it talks about the Father and the blessing that the Father has bestowed on his people. And he says he has blessed us in the beloved in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Forgiveness of sins almost there being equivalent to redemption, though we know that redemption, of course, has more to it than forgiveness itself.

Forgiveness is a part of it. It's an important part of it. But it's such an important part of it that even there Paul is really defining redemption by forgiveness, if you like, in the words that he uses.

And you can see, therefore, from that itself why the psalm here would speak about a person who knows forgiveness or who has been forgiven by God as blessed.

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

[2 : 23] And I want today to just try and look into the meaning of this word blessed, looking at the details that are given us in explanation of it, and then looking at how the path to blessedness or the way to blessedness is set out as in our confession of sin to God, which is part of our repentance.

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven. Blessedness. What is blessedness? What's the essential meaning of this word blessed? You find it so often, of course, in the Bible, not least in the book of Psalms.

Blessed is the word that begins the book of Psalms. Blessed is the one who does not walk in the way of the ungodly, who does not sit in the seat of the scornful. What is the meaning of this word blessed?

Well, it's a matter of our relationship with God. The word blessed is a word that comes into our consideration of that relationship that we must have with God.

And as we think of our relationship with God, as the Bible teaches us, we know that there's one thing in particular that has come in to spoil that relationship, to break that relationship, to mar that relationship, and that is our sin.

[3 : 39] And so you can say blessed and blessedness is essentially the removal of that which has affected our relationship with God, so that we come again to know the blessing, the benefit of reconciliation, of friendship with God restored.

So blessed, as it refers to, or as part of our relationship with God, that sin that has broken that relationship requires to be taken out of the way, and all the consequences of that sin needs to be taken out of the way, needs to be removed before we have that relationship with God as it should be.

And that's why blessed, essentially, is the removal of all aspects of sin, including its consequences in the curse of death.

Remember, that's what God said to Adam when he created him, that he could eat of any of the trees of the garden in which God had placed him, a garden environment so special and so relevant to his circumstances, a perfect human being.

But he said, of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die. Sin, in Romans 5, as Paul takes up that theme, is that by which death has come into our world.

[5 : 08] It is the wages of sin, as death is defined for us. And so blessedness really is the removal of sin and all that's attached to it, including the curse of death.

And you could say, therefore, that sin really, that blessedness rather, is the removal of sin and all that's attached to it. And that blessedness is essentially God taking a person, having and forgiving their sin, and bestowing righteousness or imputing righteousness to them, so that ultimately they're placed above death.

They're placed as victors over death. They're given a position where death cannot touch them anymore. We know the physical part of it will for believers, but that's the extent of it.

And indeed, even then, their bodies are united to Christ, even as they rest in the graves. So blessedness really means the taking out or the taking away of sin and its consequences of death, so that we're placed actually above it ultimately.

Blessedness. And if you take that into all the ways in which you find the word blessed used in Scripture, you'll find that it really helps to understand its meaning when you think of it in terms of the removal of sin and the curse of death that's attached to it, and then you take that in to these words blessed, this word blessed as it's used.

[6 : 39] And you find, whether it's New Testament or Old Testament, that that helps you really to open up its meaning and how special a word it is as you find it in the Bible.

Blessed, then, is the man, the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and against whom the Lord counts no iniquity. Now, you'll notice there that there are three words to describe what we normally call sin.

Sin can be used in a general sense, but it's used here in a more particular sense, along with the two other words that actually apply to sin and what it is.

That's the word transgression and the word iniquity. So these three words, really, if you like, encompass the entirety of sin, as the Bible presents the doctrine of sin, or God's presentation of what sin is to us.

And it's so important that we come to understand something of what sin is, something of what sin consists of, because you cannot appreciate forgiveness, and you cannot appreciate salvation, and you cannot appreciate what blessedness is, unless you've come to understand something of what sin is, what it is that God forgives, what it is that God cleanses us from.

[7 : 55] And that's, we'll see that in forgiveness, too, because the three words are used not just in describing sin, but in describing the forgiveness of God in terms of making us blessed.

Three aspects of sin. Well, let's look at them just very briefly, each one of them. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven. And that word transgression essentially means to go beyond certain boundaries.

And, of course, these boundaries are, as far as the Bible is concerned, set by God. The boundaries that are set by God in God's law are the boundaries that He sets for our human life.

And it doesn't matter whether we come today to be followers of God, or whether people belong to other organizations, religion, secularism, whatever it is.

As human beings, God has set boundaries for human life and for human behavior. And these boundaries are set for us in His law. The law, essentially, of God, especially summarized in the Ten Commandments, are the boundaries that God sets for human life.

[9 : 03] I know people will dismiss that today and say, that's no longer relevant, but whether people accept it or not, that's how it is. I may not like the fact that there are certain streets on which you're not meant to do more than 20 miles an hour.

I may dismiss that. But the fact remains, whatever I think of it, that's the law. That's the law that exists. That's the law that I'm meant to keep to.

And it's the same with the law of God in its entirety. Whatever people think of it, whatever people would prefer to have instead of it, whatever people would substitute for it, it is still God's law.

It is still marking out the boundaries to human behavior. And to go beyond it is to transgress. Sin is transgression beyond the marks that God sets for us.

Then secondly, blessed is the man whose sin is covered, using the word sin. And where transgression means to go beyond God's set boundaries, sin actually describes failing to hit a target, failing to hit a standard, because you see, God doesn't just set out boundaries for us in his law.

[10:27] What he's saying by this law, and all that you find in Christ, a savior as well, as the pattern for human life, is a pattern that we need to conform to.

We need to seek to attain to that pattern. We know we can't ourselves as sinners. That's why we need Christ, and we need his righteousness. We're not going to go into that for the moment. But sin, essentially, in this use of the word, in this word that's used for it, is to miss the target, to miss the mark. You can tell a wall that's had a dartboard on it, even if it doesn't hang there anymore, because it's full of wee holes.

And it's full of wee holes around a certain circumference, the middle of which is clean and free from holes, but all the way around it, you find all of these holes on the wall, unless, of course, somebody's painted them over again.

But that's indicative of something that's been happening there for some time. People have been throwing darts at the board, and sometimes they'll miss. Sometimes, very often, they'll miss, and the dart goes into the wall, or whatever surrounds the board.

[11:37] And you can tell from these marks on the wall that they've missed the mark, that they've missed the target, that they've not hit what they were intending to hit. That's how our lives are with regard to our relationship to God and to God's law.

We fail to hit the target. We don't attain to righteousness in order that God would accept and find our lives pleasing to Him until we come to be in Christ.

But sin in itself is a missing of the target, a missing of the mark. And again, it doesn't matter what achievements we may have in life, and human beings like ourselves can achieve many things in life, many things that are useful to other people as well.

But without forgiveness of sin, we fall short of God's standard. We don't conform to the standard God has set for us.

We need Jesus as a Savior for that. Third word is the word iniquity. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity.

[12:50] And iniquity, whereas transgression and sin have to do more with our doings, our actions as they are seen, whether they're in words or in deeds, iniquity has to do more with what we are inside, with what we are rather than what we do.

And you see, sin in its definition by the Bible has to include more than just what we do outwardly because God is telling us in the Bible sin actually has its root within us.

Sin is something when you begin defining it, you begin from inside, you begin from our soul, you begin from the way in which we are corrupt inwardly. And that's why you find the meaning of this word literally to be twisted or turned around or misshapen.

And when you go to Psalm 51, for example, that we sang a few minutes ago, this is exactly what David is expressing and indeed he uses the same three words in that psalm that he's used here in this psalm.

So you can see that David was somebody who thought a lot about sin, not because he was the greatest sinner the world ever saw, but because sometimes his sin bothered him and even if it didn't bother him and if he knew forgiveness, he knew it was important to actually keep going over the issue of sin and his understanding of sin and that's what every Christian does as well because when you're forgiven your sin, when you come to follow the Lord, your concern for sin to study sin and to know more about sin doesn't disappear.

[14:24] In a way, that's when it starts. And the more you come to appreciate the nature of sin and what sin is, the more you come to appreciate the beauty of forgiveness, the wonder of forgiveness, the grace of God through which this forgiveness comes to us.

So iniquity is to be twisted, to be bent, to be misshapen. And that's why David is saying, in sin, in iniquity, my mother conceived me.

We are iniquitous. We are misshapen spiritually and morally even before we're born. when we come into the world, we already have that moral and spiritual misshapeness about us.

And it shows itself in the actions of transgression and of sin. And that's why in Psalm 51, again, David is concerned that he will have a clean heart in the presence of God. because he says, you look for truth in the inward parts. And truth in that use of the word really means truth in the sense of being straight, of not being twisted and corrupted. [15 : 50] And David is saying, Lord, make me straight. Straighten out my inside. Give me a clean heart. Take the misshapeness away from me.

restore me to what I should be. And when you look at transgression and sin and iniquity as words that describe sin in the Bible's own description of it, you can see what a wonderful summary you have in the Shorter Catechism in its answer to the question, what is sin? Sin is any want, which means lack. Sin is any lack of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God.

Want of conformity unto we don't shape up. We're misshapen. We don't meet the standard. And transgression of we break it.

We transgress. We go beyond the boundaries. We miss the mark. And there's David's description of the sin that's been forgiven by God.

[17 : 02] Our world doesn't want to know the word sin very much. It's not a popular idea. It probably never has been. But at times when people think that they themselves are in charge of their lives, that they determine what is and isn't right, that they set the boundaries for their own life, that they set their own targets and achieve them, that they determine what is and isn't straight, it's in that kind of world that we need all the more to know how God defines sin and our human life and lifestyles.

That's his view, his verdict, his teaching on what sin is. Secondly, he says, in the blessedness that's spoken of that these transgressions are forgiven, that sin is covered, and that iniquity is not marked against him or counted against him.

And these are three aspects of pardon. We've seen the three aspects of sin, transgression, sin, iniquity, and now he comes to the three aspects of pardon. And you know, the wonderful thing is, for all of these aspects of sin, and for however complete they are, the pardon that he speaks of, the forgiveness he speaks of, is as complete as sin.

It takes account of all of these aspects of sin, so that when your sin is forgiven, your transgression is forgiven, your iniquity is forgiven, your sin is forgiven, everything is included by God, of what sin is about in his forgiveness.

That's why forgiveness is so central, so wonderful a thing, and that the possession of it really is to have a saving relationship with God and Christ.

[18 : 57] So let's look at the three aspects of pardon just very briefly. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, to be forgiven means sin to be lifted away, this transgression to be lifted away and removed and no longer kept in place, no longer left sitting upon us if you like.

That's one of the great things that John the Baptist said about Jesus when he pointed him out, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, by which he meant literally his lifting away the sin of the world.

When God forgives our sin for the sake of Jesus and through what he has done in Jesus, what happens is he lifts away that burden of sin. He takes it from resting upon us and lying upon us and he lifts it away so that it no longer applies.

And one of the great demonstrations of that is in the Old Testament, something that happened on that particularly important day, the Day of Atonement, once in a year in the experience of Israel, Leviticus chapter 16, if you read through it, you'll know, I'm sure, that there were two goats used as part of the procedure or the ritual on that day.

The first goat was killed to be a sacrifice, its blood was then used before God in the innermost holy place. And the live goat, having had the high priest place his hand upon its head and confessing over it, the sins of the people of Israel, it was led then by somebody who was chosen specially to take that goat away into the wilderness to a distance from which it could not return.

[20 : 40] It could not return. And that's why it came to be called a scapegoat. The scapegoat. The scapegoat initially meant that particular goat that took symbolically the sins of Israel away from the camp into the wilderness to be lost there.

That's essentially what God does in forgiveness as well as it comes to the next word is to cover. Blessed is the one whose sin is covered and that literally means covered from sight.

It's no longer visible to God. And there's a word used to, we've done a wee series recently on the word remember in scripture.

If I remember rightly we looked at where God does not remember in the sense in which he does not apply something against us that he could. And for the sake of Jesus and through what has happened in Jesus to take our guilt and our sin to himself, God does not remember our sin against us.

Now God ultimately doesn't forget anything of course in the sense of forgetting something and not having it at all in his memory, that of course doesn't apply to God.

[22 : 00] But when he uses this term he does not remember. Hebrews chapter 8 verse 12 going back to the Old Testament again which says, I will be merciful or gracious to their unrighteousness and their sin I will remember no more.

Same as Psalm 130 which we sang also, if you were to mark iniquity, who could stand Lord but there is forgiveness with you.

God remembering sin in this sense is marking it up against us. Instead of doing that he covers it. It doesn't appear before him to accuse us anymore.

Forgiveness covers our sin from his sight. And not only does that take place, it takes place once and for all.

For those who have their sin forgiven, whose sin is covered, it will never again be uncovered. The only way it could become uncovered again and exposed to accuse you is if the work of Jesus somehow failed.

[23 : 16] if something was found wrong with it, if God came to cease to be pleased with it, and you know that's not going to happen.

That's why he says blessed, because blessed has the dimension of eternity in it. It's not blessed just for a while, it's not just blessed for a few years, it's blessed forever, in the sense of always will have their sin covered.

And thirdly, he talks about iniquity not imputed or not counted against him. And that takes us from the imagery of lifted away and of covering to the account books.

The imagery of God the accountant, if you like, having a look over the records, and looking as to what is marked up against us. And forgiveness means that what was once there in the account book against us, which was nothing but debt, nothing but debt that we could never clear ourselves, instead of that, God has wiped that clean, but he hasn't just left it as a blank page, he's replaced it. And what has he replaced it with? He's replaced it with the righteousness of Jesus. He's replaced it with the standard that you find in Christ himself, so that when God takes away the guilt of our sin, the record of our sin from his own account book of our life, he replaces that debt with the positive righteousness of Christ.

[25 : 05] That's what justification is. It's not just forgiving sin in the sense of wiping it clean, it's replacing it with the righteousness of Christ.

And you can see in all of that how important Jesus is, how indispensable Christ is to a human life. If we would know this relationship with God restored from what it is as we come into the world, world, because as sinners we transgress and sin and have a twistedness inwardly, but in his grace, mercy, forgiveness, God lifts away, God covers, God does not impute.

What a wonderful thing sin is, what a wonderful thing the forgiveness of sin is, against the grotesque thing that sin itself is. And what a wonderful God to have provided forgiveness for such people as we sinners are.

But then there's the way to blessedness. The blessedness spoken of, we spent quite a bit of time on that, as we said, it's important to know this description of sin and the completeness of the description and then the completeness of this description of pardon, forgiving, covering, not imputing sin.

So that all aspects of sin are dealt with in God's forgiveness. But how do we come to this blessedness? Well, first of all, you notice he talks about the pain of retention.

[26 : 52] Verses 3 and 4, when I kept silent, my bones whisted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

What's he talking about? Well, he's talking about the retaining of this sense of sin and of this guilt that he knew of that had been building up as he came to know these aspects of sin that applied to

himself.

Instead of opening up and confessing it, there was a while, he said, I kept it in. And while I kept silent, while I didn't confess this, my bones wasted away because, you see, when you know the hand of God upon you, and when you know the gospel is touching your heart, it's touching your conscience, and when your heart and your conscience are touched, then you know what guilt is, and you know what personal guilt is, and you know your own guilt in the presence of God, that it is God, as David is saying, whose hand is upon you.

And to know the guilt of sin is sore, it's painful, it's something you don't want to live with. The degree to which we know that differs one person from another, some people have much less of that sense of guilt than others have, that's not the point.

The point is that God, in bringing us to know the nature of sin, and the nature of sin as our sin will, to some degree at least, make us to know the pain of guilt.

[28 : 25] That's his way of dealing with the problem. Not leaving us alone, not leaving us to think it's not really serious, not leaving us to put it off to another day and thinking somehow or other it'll work out all right in the end.

No, God actually brings us to know that we are guilty, and the guilt of sin is sore. And in fact, what David is saying is the more that goes on and builds up within you, the more it weakens you, the more it makes you conscious of what he's saying here, almost in this groaning and in this strength being dried up in a spiritual and moral sense, that's what happens.

It innervates, it almost numbs you in a moral and spiritual sense. And when you don't repent of sin, what you're doing is just building up more pain and more difficulty for yourself.

Then he comes, you see, to the relief of confession, or relief by confession. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity.

I said I will confess my transgressions, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. And you notice, not only is sin defined in these three elements, not only is forgiveness defined by using these three elements to describe sin, but so too is confession.

[29 : 57] Confession has taken account of what God says sin is. And confession is not content if it's true and genuine confession that seeks forgiveness. It's not content just to use one or two aspects of sin and confess that to God, but not be prepared to confess the other parts.

You see, confession is not just coming to God and say, I'm sorry I did this, Lord. It's more than that. It's coming to God and say, yes, Lord, I'm sorry I did this, I regret that I've done this, but I'm sorry that I am what I am, that I am inwardly the sinner that I am, that my heart is twisted.

So create in me a clean heart. Give me, I pray, the power of your grace to straighten me out. Deal with me from what's within so that it will work out from there.

And confession, you see, is also he's saying here something remarkable really and important where he says, I acknowledged my sin to you. I did not cover my iniquity. I did not cover my iniquity.

Because that's what we try to do, isn't it? That's what Adam and Eve tried to do in the first place. when they came immediately to know that sense of guilt and nakedness in the presence of God, they tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves, but spiritually and morally they were still naked.

[31 : 22] And they tried to hide from God amongst the trees of the garden, amongst the bushes of the garden, from which God called them out. It doesn't matter how you try and cover your sin, your iniquity, your inner twistedness, you'll never succeed without Jesus.

And whatever habits of life we formed, whatever excesses we're prone to, and how much help we can get and should get with these, and it's great to see people getting help with certain aspects of their living that they need help with, certain excesses addictions, etc.

It's certainly true that only God can straighten us out fully because He does it from inside. He begins with our heart.

And so we come with our confession and confess, Lord, I acknowledge my sin to You. I'm not going to cover my iniquity. I'm not going to try and cover it. I want You to cover it.

And I'm going to confess, I confess my transgressions to You, Lord. And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

[32 : 50] Confession, you see, brings God's covering. There's a wonderful version, Proverbs. Proverbs is a book full of wonderful verses. We don't go into it often enough, I'm sure. Proverbs 28, verse 13, which says that whoever covers his sin shall not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes it shall have mercy.

Whoever covers his sin shall not prosper. We try and cover sin ourselves, we don't succeed. but whoever confesses and forsakes it, whoever comes to God with it and confesses it and says to God, I want to be done with it, he shall have mercy, he shall obtain forgiveness, acceptance with God.

That's the blessed person, man or woman, whose sin and transgression and iniquity is forgiven. And all of that is only possible in Christ.

If you go back to the verses we quoted at the beginning from Ephesians and Colossians, blessed in the beloved, he has blessed us in the beloved in whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sin.

What is the opposite of blessed or blessed? Well, it's very obvious to anyone who knows the Bible, the opposite of blessed is cursed. And we are either one or the other today as we relate to God.

[34 : 39] And whether we are one or the other depends on our relationship to Jesus, where Jesus is or isn't in our life. that's why you find Jesus himself in Matthew 25, which really speaks about the solemnity of the final judgment, where he says, as he himself describes it, the sheep on one hand and the goats on the other.

and in line with what we've seen today, you now understand why Jesus says what he says in relation to that event.

He will say to the one, come, you blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom laid up for you. he will say to the others, depart from me, you cursed into everlasting fire.

That's not a preacher's idea that's come to light in the scriptures. That's not the church's theory of what might happen in the judgment of God.

That's the Savior's own knowledge, the Savior's own teaching, the Savior's own presentation of the day of his judgment.

[36 : 01] And that's why the chapter ends as it does, where it speaks firstly about those who are cursed, those who are sent away from the presence of Christ. These shall go away into everlasting punishment.

But the last word is with the blessed. but the blessed into life eternal. Because they are forgiven, they are blessed, they know God as their Savior.

Have you received, have you asked, have you still to ask for God's forgiveness forgiveness, for your sin to be dealt with, in your heart as well as in your actions.

Are you today among the blessed? And am I? Let's pray. we thank you, Lord our God, for that state of blessedness into which you are pleased to bring us through your forgiveness.

We thank you, Lord, for that blessedness that it continues, that it will last through eternity, that you will always regard your people as blessed, because you have removed the guilt and the power and ultimately the presence of sin from them.

[37 : 33] we thank you today, Lord, for the prospect of that eternity of eternal life in relationship with you through the forgiveness we receive in this world.

Bless us, we pray then today, and grant us forgiveness as we confess in you our transgression, our sin and iniquity to you, and all for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Our final singing is in Psalm 103, Psalm 103, and at verse 12, that's on page 369 in the Scottish Psalter.

June is Belerma, singing verses 8 to 12, Psalm 103, The Lord our God is merciful, and he is gracious, long-suffering and slow to wrath, in mercy plenteous.

So that's verses 8 to 12, Psalm 103, on page 369, The Lord our God is merciful. The Lord our God is merciful, and he is gracious, long-suffering, and slow to wrath, in mercy let he us.

[39 : 16] He will not try continually, nor keep his anger with us he dealt not as we sinned, nor did we quite our ill for us as the heaven in his tide the earth surmount afar, so great to those that do him hear, his tender mercy is is as far as east is distant from the west so far at thee from us us remove it in his love all our iniquity

I'll go to this side door here this morning. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always.

Amen. Amen.