

PSALM 32

THE BLESSEDNESS OF FORGIVENESS

AUTHOR: David

INTRODUCTION: The superscription attributes authorship of Psalm 32 to David, titled "Maschil" (meaning *contemplation* or *instruction*); this is the first of thirteen psalms with this title. There is no explicit indication in the psalm as to the occasion in David's life which gave rise to its origin, although it appears to be closely correlated with Psalm 51 (written after the prophet Nathan confronted David concerning his sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah; 2Sam12:1-12). Following David's confession, Nathan prophesied that, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2Sam12:13). Under the Dispensation of the Law David should have been condemned to death (Rom6:23), but the grace of God forgave David's sins; in this, the "sure mercies of David" are a type of God's relationship with the believing sinner during the Dispensation of Grace (cf. 2Sam7:15; Isa55:3; Act13:34). This psalm exalts the blessedness of forgiveness that comes upon confession of sin (cf. 1Jn1:9) – for David, for those who live during the Church Age, and for the nation of Israel when it is brought into the New Covenant during the Tribulation (cf. Jer31:33-34).

- [1] Under the Law of Moses, one's sins could never be "forgiven"; that benefit awaited the New Covenant (Jer31:33-34) made possible by the propitiatory work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, the Hebrew word translated "covered" is not the word normally translated as *atonement*. The parallelism in this verse demands that "forgiven" and "covered", as used in this context, be synonymous. This verse is quoted in Romans 4:7.
- [2] Imputation is *to set to the account of* (Noah Webster 1828). Personal sins are either imputed to the sinner (which results in an eternity spent in Hell) or to Christ (which makes forgiveness possible; cf. Isa53:6; Rom5:13; 2Cor5:21). To be free of "guile" was Jesus' commendation of Nathanael (Jn1:47). This verse is quoted in Romans 4:8.
- [3] David describes the physical effects of unconfessed sin, presumably his sins of adultery and murder (cf. 2Sam12:13).
- [4] David metaphorically describes God's chastisement on him for his unconfessed sin. Typologically, the chastisement of the nation of Israel during the Tribulation for its unconfessed sin of rejecting the Messiah is in view (cf. Hos5:15).

Note on "Selah". "Selah" occurs 79 times in the Psalms and 3 times in Habakkuk 3 (which is also a song/psalm). It is assumed by most to be a musical term directing a rest in the song (perhaps a pause for contemplation/meditation). "Selah" occurs once outside of a musical context in 2 Kings 14:7, where it appears to be the ancient name for the location that comes to be known as Petra, the place in the land of Edom expected to be the place where God will supernaturally protect the believing remnant of Israel during the Tribulation (cf. Isa63:1-6; Rev12:6,14); indeed, "Selah" means *the rock*. Wherever "Selah" occurs in

a musical context, the textual context is consistently that of the coming Tribulation.

- [5] David's "sin" was forgiven upon his confession (1Jn1:9). Typologically, God will forgive Israel's "sin" of rejecting the Messiah upon their confession during the Tribulation (cf. Ezek39:29; Zech12:10-14).
- [6] Typologically, the "floods of great waters" may be a metaphorical reference to the persecution of Israel by the Dragon (i.e., Satan; Rev12:9) that begins in earnest at the midpoint of the Tribulation (Cp., Rev12:15-17).
- [7] Reference to "my hiding place" may be an allusion to Selah-Petra (cf. Isa26:20-21), and "trouble" may allude the "the time of Jacob's trouble" (i.e., the Tribulation; Jer30:7).
- [8] "I will instruct thee and teach thee" is the theme of this psalm (i.e., "Maschil"), and may represent a fulfillment of Psalm 51:13. "I will guide thee with mine eye" suggests that converted and forgiven individuals will be so sensitive to the leading of the LORD that they can be guided/directed by mere movements of the eye.
- [9] In contrast to v8, unbelievers are likened to the "horse" or "mule", examples of creatures not easily guided and require "bit and bridle".
- [10] The nomenclature of the O.T. tends to be "trust" and "mercy", in contrast to "believe" and "grace" in the N.T. Trust and belief should be considered synonymous. Mercy and grace are not synonymous, but closely related. Mercy is the withholding of deserved judgment; grace is the bestowing of undeserved favor. In the O.T., saints longed for God's "mercy" under their condemnation by the Law of Moses. In the N.T., saints are granted forgiveness of sins and bestowed with eternal life.
- [11] Justification is a forensic declaration of "righteous[ness]" (i.e., positional sanctification) that comes as a result of personal faith in Christ (cf. Rom5:1), which brings "glad[ness]" and "joy" to the believer. It is possible for God to justify a believing sinner (Rom3:26) since the "righteousness of God" (i.e., Christ) has been imputed to them (Cp., v2; Rom1:16-17; 2Cor5:21).