

# Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School  
Placerita Baptist Church  
2004

by  
William D. Barrick, Th.D.  
Professor of OT, The Master's Seminary



## Psalm 32 — Confession of Sin

### 1.0 Introducing Psalm 32

- Psalm 32 is the second of those traditionally identified as penitential psalms: Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143.
- The occasion for this confession is probably identical to that for Psalm 51: David's adultery with Bathsheba and his arranging for the killing of her husband Uriah (2 Samuel 11).
  - ◆ Psalm 32 may be later than Psalm 51 and could be the fulfillment of David's promise in 51:13 ("Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You").
- A link between Psalms 31 and 32 is the LORD being the psalmist's hiding place (31:20; 32:7).
- Psalms 32 and 33 are also linked since the former concludes and the latter begins by addressing the "righteous" and "upright" (32:11; 33:1).
- "This was Saint Augustine's favorite psalm. Augustine had it inscribed on the wall next to his bed before he died in order to meditate on it better. He liked it because, as he said: *intelligentia prima est ut te noris peccatorem* (the beginning of knowledge is to know oneself to be a sinner)." — James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994), 1:277.

### 2.0 Reading Psalm 32 (NAU)

**32:1** *A Psalm* of David. A Maskil.

How blessed is he whose **transgression** is **forgiven**,  
Whose **sin** is **covered**!

**32:2** How blessed is the man to whom the LORD **does not impute iniquity**,  
And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

- 32:3** When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away  
Through my groaning all day long.
- 32:4** For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was drained away *as* with the fever heat of summer. Selah.
- 32:5** **I acknowledged** my **sin** to You,  
And my **iniquity I did not hide**;  
I said, “**I will confess** my **transgressions** to the LORD”;  
And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.
- 32:6** Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You  
in a time when You may be found;  
Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.
- 32:7** **You are my hiding place**;  
**You preserve me** from trouble;  
**You surround me** with songs of deliverance. Selah.
- 32:8** I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go;  
I will counsel you with My eye upon you.
- 32:9** Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding,  
Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check,  
*Otherwise* they will not come near to you.
- 32:10** Many are the sorrows of the wicked,  
But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him.
- 32:11** **Be glad** in the LORD and **rejoice**, you righteous ones;  
And **shout for joy**, all you who are upright in heart.

### 3.0 Understanding Psalm 32

#### 3.1 Outline

- I. The Blessedness of Being Forgiven (vv. 1-2)
- II. The Results of Not Confessing Sin (vv. 3-4)
- III. The Testimony of Confessing Sin (v. 5)
- IV. The Results of Confessing Sin (vv. 6-7)
- V. The Exhortation to Confess Sin (vv. 8-10)
- VI. The Joy of Being Forgiven (v. 11)



#### 3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “A Maskil.”
  - This is the first occurrence of this term in a psalm heading.
  - It occurs in the headings to thirteen psalms: Psalms 32, 42, 44, 45, 52, 53, 54, 55, 74, 78, 88, 89, and 142.

- The meaning is best taken as an artistically molded song in keeping with the principles of wisdom. See the use of *maskil* in Psalm 47:7 and in 2 Chronicles 30:22 (ESV: “who showed good skill”).
- v. 1 “How blessed is he”
  - Literally, “How blessed is (any) one” or “(every) one.”
  - Unusual indefiniteness. Compare Psalm 1:1, “How blessed is **the** man.”
  - The same kind of beatitude occurs more often in wisdom literature.
    - Proverbs 3:13; 8:34; 28:14 – all these verses should be translated “a man” or “(any) one,” not “the man.”
    - Such a general beatitude does occur in Psalm 84:5, 12. The first of these verses is the only one which other translations have attempted to translate more accurately as “Blessed are those” (e.g., ESV, NIV).
  - This general beatitude is particularly suited for citation in the New Testament in making a broad reference to anyone who has faith.
    - See Romans 4:7-8. Paul’s quoting of Psalm 32:1-2 focuses on the divine gift of grace (forgiveness) on the basis of faith alone.
- vv. 1-2 “transgression ... sin ... iniquity”
  - “Transgression” emphasizes an individual’s rebellion against the law of God.
  - “Sin” implies a turning aside from the right path of obedience.
  - “Iniquity” focuses on something evil, perverted, disrespectful of God. It also means “guilt” (v. 5).
  - These three terms are employed to emphasize the concept of sinfulness and guilt. They are not intended to identify specific sins from each of three different categories. The psalmist seems to be addressing the topic of sin comprehensively — no sin of any kind is excluded from this presentation of confession and forgiveness.
- vv. 1-2 “forgiven ... covered ... does not impute”
  - “Forgiven” is literally “lifted” — the burden of the guilt of sin is removed.
  - “Covered” refers to God’s refusal to consider that sin any further in judgment — it is stricken from the court’s record.
  - “Does not impute” uses an accounting metaphor to emphasize the previous concept.
  - These three terms are employed to emphasize the concept of forgiveness. They are not intended to identify stages or types of forgiveness. The psalmist again seems to be addressing the topic comprehensively — the forgiveness is absolute and complete.



- vv. 3-4 “When I kept silent *about my sin* ...”
  - “The guilt that is retained in humans and passed over in silence has a deleterious effect on physical well-being.” “It is obviously an archetypal psychological experience of man that hidden and encysted guilt disturbs all of life from deep within and possibly manifests itself in the processes of physical illness.” — Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, trans. by Hilton C. Oswald, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993), 369, 370.
  - Proverbs 28:13
  
- v. 5 “I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’”
  - “Not only does the psalmist confess to God (32:5), but he makes that confession within the hearing of the worshiping congregation. ... For the psalmist to make public confession in this way is both instructive to the community (32:1-2, 6, 8-10) and supportive of him as the community surrounds him with ‘songs of deliverance’ (32:7c, 11).” — Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 551.
  - Why are we so reluctant to confess sin publicly?
  - 1 John 1:9
  
- v. 7 “You are my hiding place”
  - See Colossians 3:3.
  
- v. 8 “with My eye upon you”
  - God promises to watch over us, to “keep an eye on” us.
  - Perhaps this means that a look is enough, rather than bit and bridle.
  - God seeks to preserve us from falling into more sin.

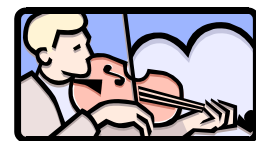
#### 4.0 Singing Psalm 32

##### *Jesus, Lover of My Soul*

Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high.  
Hide me, O my Savior, hide, till the storm of life is past;  
Safe into the haven guide; O receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on Thee;  
Leave, ah! Leave me not alone, still support and comfort me.  
All my trust on Thee is stayed, all my help from Thee I bring;  
Cover my defenseless head with the shadow of Thy wing.

Wilt Thou not regard my call? Wilt Thou not accept my prayer?  
Lo! I sink, I faint, I fall—Lo! On Thee I cast my care;  
Reach me out Thy gracious hand! While I of Thy strength receive,



Hoping against hope I stand, dying, and behold, I live.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want, more than all in Thee I find;  
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint, heal the sick, and lead the blind.  
Just and holy is Thy Name, I am all unrighteousness;  
False and full of sin I am; Thou art full of truth and grace.

Plenteous grace with Thee is found, grace to cover all my sin;  
Let the healing streams abound; make and keep me pure within.  
Thou of life the fountain art, freely let me take of Thee;  
Spring Thou up within my heart; rise to all eternity.

— Charles Wesley

### ***Rock of Ages***

**1** Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy wounded side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure;  
Save from wrath and make me pure.

**2** Not the labor of my hands  
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

**3** Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to the cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress;  
Helpless look to Thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

**4** While I draw this fleeting breath,  
When mine eyes shall close in death,  
When I soar to worlds unknown,  
See Thee on Thy judgment throne,  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.

— *Words:* Augustus M. Toplady  
*Music:* Thomas Hastings



### ***You Are My Hiding Place***

You are my hiding place,  
You always fill my heart with songs of deliverance,  
Whenever I am afraid I will trust in You,  
I will trust in You,  
Let the weak say, "I am strong in the strength of the Lord."

You are my hiding place,  
You always fill my heart with songs of deliverance,  
Whenever I am afraid I will trust in You,  
I will trust in You,  
Let the weak say, "I am strong in the strength of the Lord.  
I will trust in You."

— Michael Ledner  
© 1981 Maranatha! Music

***Come and Rejoice***

- 1** Come with rejoicing, the Father is calling  
Those who would worship in spirit and truth.  
Come with your singing; come with thanksgiving.  
Jesus, our Savior has made all things new.

**Chorus:** Come and rejoice, O holy nation  
Come and sing praises to Him  
Come and bow down, worship before Him  
Jesus, the King of all kings (repeat)

- 2** The Lord of creation is full of compassion,  
Seated in splendor adorned with all grace;  
Majestic and glorious, reigning victorious,  
Now and forever enthroned on our praise
- 3** With the sound of the trumpet  
He summons the nations,  
Calling a priesthood to go in His name,  
To show forth His power to this generation,  
To worship before Him, a Kingdom of praise.

— Don Moen & Gerrit Gustafson ©1989 Integrity's Hosanna! Music

**5.0 Praying Psalm 32**

- Father, thank you for forgiving my sin! [v. 1]
- Teach me to confess my sin rather than to remain silent. [v. 3]
- I ask that others might come to You in prayer for forgiveness. [v. 6]
- O God, You are my hiding place, my shelter. [v. 7]
- Thank You for teaching me how to live. [v. 8]
- 
- 



**6.0 Applying Psalm 32**

- Public confession of sin is an obligation, not an option.
- Forgiveness is the greatest of all blessings.