

Psalm 32 ~ Durham Nc-1949

by Harry Ironside

The sermon explains the blessedness of transgression forgiven and the importance of trusting in God for forgiveness and guidance.

Duration: 46:44

Scripture: Psalm 32:1, Psalm 32:10-11, Romans 4:3

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a man who had robbed a jewelry store and later found salvation while in prison. The preacher emphasizes the urgency of accepting salvation and warns that delaying it may lead to missing the opportunity altogether. He encourages those who have been putting off accepting Jesus to do so now, as there is no guarantee of tomorrow. The preacher also shares a personal anecdote about playing with his son and relates it to the concept of finding a hiding place in God.

Transcript

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

For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not gave. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found. 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. 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, else they will not come near unto thee. I'm using the revised version there.

Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusteth in the Lord in 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. This thirty-second psalm, you'll remember, is referred to in the fourth chapter of the Epistles to the Romans as

corroborating the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, which the apostle had just set forth in chapter three.

For upon the proven unrighteousness of all men, the apostle Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, undertook to show that God had a righteousness for men who acknowledged that they had none of their own. And when men turned to God, they found in him perfect righteousness imputed to them because of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Now, says the apostle, the righteousness of God is manifested without the law being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

In that verse, he is using the word law in two different senses. When he speaks of a righteousness of God without the law, he means a righteousness of God which is conferred freely upon men altogether apart from any effort of their own, that is, apart from law keeping. For by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.

We often hear people say, I think if I just keep the law and live up to the Sermon on the Mount and observe the golden rule, that's all that can be required of me. Well, that's quite a bit, you know. Did you ever know anybody who lived up to that? Did you ever know anyone who kept God's holy law given at Sinai perfectly, and who lived up to the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, and who fully carried out what we call the golden rule? Why, dear friends, as you measure, try to measure up to these principles, they only expose one sinfulness and give us to realize more than ever that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

But God has a righteousness for sinful men without the law, a righteousness that they do not work for, that they do not obtain by any meritorious deeds of their own. But then the apostle adds, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Now he is using the word law in a different sense, the law and the prophets.

These were terms that were used by the Jews to indicate the two different portions of the Old Testament. The law, the Torah, the five books of Moses, the prophets, all the rest of the Old Testament. For even the other historical books were written by prophets, you know, and the Psalms were written by prophets.

And so what he's saying is this, that this precious truth, that God has a righteousness for men who have none of their own, is borne witness to in that part of the Old Testament which is called the law. That is, the books from Genesis to Deuteronomy, and in the rest of the Old Testament which is called the prophets. Now if we had an Orthodox Jew here who was thoroughly familiar with his Bible, and we were to put the question to him, who is the most important character in the books of the law? Undoubtedly he would reply, our father Abraham.

For to him, with him the covenant was made, in thee and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed. Well the Apostle Paul says, look at Abraham. How was he saved? How was he justified before God? And he goes back to one of the books of the law, the book of Genesis, and there we find the words, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.

So Abraham bears witness to the fact that the righteousness of God is imputed to the man of faith. And then if we had our Orthodox Jew here and we asked him, who is the most important human personality in all the rest of the Old Testament? Without a moment's hesitation he would add, our great King David, to whom the promise of the coming Messiah was confirmed, so that we, God speaks of the sure mercies of David. Very well the Apostle Paul says, let's listen to David.

David also declareth the right, the blessedness of the man onto whom God imputeth righteousness without work. The Old Testament may be silly. He says, when I'm guilty, have you ever taken part in my sin? Has no fear of God.

He could see right into his heart, and he could see every sin. He tried to help him but, and he gave a very. The old beetle said, you're not afraid of him.

You might well be afraid. I'm going into heaven. And the old beetle said, and how do you make that out? Well he said, you have to die.

I'm explaining it to you because I'm afraid some of you, your education has been so neglected. You didn't attend the great big white death. That was his idea of the great white throne.

And on the desk he'll have a great big bible book with the names of all. Little John comes in the page with his name at the top, and all the sins that little John has ever committed. And just as God is going to read them, Jesus Christ will be there with bleeding hand, and he'll put it down quick.

And God will look at it and say, little John gang into hell. And wait till the day of judgment to have the sin blotted out. But right here and now, when we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, we may know the blessedness of transgression forgiven.

The blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanseth us from. I have blotted out as thy transgressions like a thick cloud, and as a cloud thy sins. And then the psalmist adds, blessed is the man in whose spirit there's no guile.

Now a man in whose spirit there's no guile is not exactly a sinless man, but he's a man who's nothing more to hide. Everything has come out. You've heard the story of the man who had robbed the jewelry store, a wholesale jewelry store, and he's not been found.

But for another crime, he was sent up to the penitentiary. And while he was in the penitentiary, through the offices of some godly people who came to hold meetings, this thief, this burglar, was converted. And after he'd served his time and got out again, he went to find the officials of this big jewelry establishment that he had burglarized some years before.

And when he was ushered into the office of the manager, he said to him, at such a date, this place was burglarized. Yes, said the other. And do you know anything of the particulars? We've been trying to find the perpetrators of that for years, but we've never been able to get them.

Well, he said, I'm the man that did it, and I've come to confess it to you. And the other said, you have? And what do you want us to do with you? Well, he said, I'm ready to go back to the penitentiary if you want to send me there. I've just got out.

I've been in the penitentiary for another crime, and while there I was converted. I was born again, and now I want to have everything right with everybody. So I've come to you to tell you that I'm the man that burglarized this establishment.

And the manager looked at him and took him by the hand. He said, my friend, I too am a Christian, and I know it's taken a lot of courage for you to come to me like this. Now, it's not for me to say what to do about it, but I'll call a meeting of the board, and we'll see.

And they called a meeting of the board, and then they called him in, and the board directed the manager to offer him the position of night watchman for that establishment. And he had to be sworn in as an officer, deputy sheriff, in order to be night watchman of that establishment, the man who had burglarized it. And so for months he was working there, and one night as he was making his rounds, his ear caught the sound of one of those little fine steel saws cutting away at one of the bars of the window.

He slipped along, and he got right underneath and saw a dark form up there, reached up and took him by the shoulder and dragged him down and said, you're under arrest. The other struggled and turned, and then as the moon shone out, he got sight of the face of the man who had captured him. Why, he burst into a laugh.

My, he said, how you frighten me. I thought I was in the hand of the bulls. He said, it's you, is it? Are you and I both on the same job tonight? Yes, the other said, we're both in the same job, but in a different way.

Said, I'm the night watchman here, and I'll have to turn you over to the authorities. Why, the other said, do you, you dare do that? You turn me over to the police? Do you think I don't know that you burglarized this place some years ago? I'll tell on you if you turn me over, and you'll get sent up. He said, my friend, you're too late.

They know all about it already. I've made a clean breast of everything, and they've forgiven me, and they've entrusted me with this position as night watchman. Don't you see, he was a man in whose spirit there was no guile.

There was nothing to hide, because it had all come out. And oh, it's a wonderful moment in the soul's history, when one just takes his place before God as a confessed sinner. There's nothing more to hide, and he's ready to be saved by grace alone.

Blessed is the man in whose spirit there's no guile. I see that I've slipped over one part. I didn't mean to do it.

He also says, blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputed not iniquity. What does it mean to impute iniquity? Well, it means to mark it down against us. Maybe some of you, I don't know, maybe some of you in the habit of running a bill at the grocer's or the department store.

You go in, and you purchase certain things, and you say, now just charge it. And they put it down against you. They impute it to you.

And then at the end of the month, they send you a bill, and you go in and square it all up. Now that's no longer imputed to you. But you start running another bill right away, and that's imputed to you, until it's settled.

Well, you know, down through the years, God was marking down our sins against us. But when we came to him in faith and trusted the Lord Jesus, God destroyed the record. He said, I'm through with that forever.

And he doesn't impute iniquity to the man who's trusted his blessed son. You say, what do you mean? Do you mean to say that if I become a Christian, I can sin all I want to? If you become a Christian, you won't want to sin. But if you do sin, then won't God impute it to you? No, God won't impute it to you, because he already imputed it to his beloved son.

He bore on the tree the sentence for me, and now both the surety and sinner are free. But then you say, doesn't it make any difference if I as a Christian sin? Ah, it'll make a great deal of difference in connection with your fellowship with God. You see, what we need to understand is this.

The moment we trust the Lord Jesus Christ, I'll put it in the first person. The moment I trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, sixty years ago, that moment, my responsibility as a sinner, having to do with the God of judgment, ended for eternity. See, for eternity.

But that same moment, my responsibility as a child, having to do with my Father, began. See? Now, as a poor lost sinner, I had to do with God as the God of judgment. But when I trusted Jesus as my Savior, he who had been my judge became my Father.

And now if I fail, what about it? Well, now he deals with me as a father deals with his children. Whom the Lord loveth, he scourges. And whom the Lord loveth, he chastens and scourges every son whom he receiveth.

You know, did I use this illustration the other night? Maybe I did, but I think we need it again to clear this up. Suppose that here's a roffin of a felon, he's angry with me about something, and he throws a stone right through. We'll say that I've got a beautiful plate glass window in front of my house.

I haven't, you know. But we'll put it that way in the story. It's easy to do.

It doesn't cost any more. But he throws this stone right through the plate glass window. Well, I come out to find out what's the matter, and he turns on me, and he curses me, and he's very, very rude.

I'm perfectly justified in calling for the police and swearing out a warrant against it. But now suppose a few weeks later my own son is out there in front of the house, and he's having an altercation maybe with a neighbor's boy. And he gets angry, and he picks up a stone, and he goes to talk to the neighbor's boy, but it goes off the wrong way like a girl throwing a stone.

And it goes right through my window and breaks it all to pieces again. Now what am I going to do? Do I call the police? Oh no, I call my son, and I take him out to the woodshed, and I have a fiance with him out there. You see, I deal with him as a son.

The other one was a criminal, and in my unsaved state I was a guilty criminal. But when I came to God and confessed myself a sinner and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ, I became a child. And so now God doesn't impute iniquity to me.

No wonder then that David in the exuberance of his soul cries out, For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest fear. You know, a lot of people put prayer in the wrong place. When sinners are anxious to be saved, they say to them, Now you must pray, and you must pray through.

Pray until you get the right kind of a feeling. Pray until you know that you've been accepted by God. You never get anything like that in Scripture.

Nowhere in the Bible are sinners told to pray to be saved. They're told to believe the gospel. I remember in my own case when I knelt before God a poor sinner sixty years ago, and I began to pray to be saved.

And nobody was there to tell me what the Holy Spirit seemed to say to me. What are you praying for? You're asking God to do something he's been following you up wanting to do for you for years. Why don't

you just accept it? And I turned to his word, and I read, He that believeth in the Son is not condemned.

He that believeth not is condemned already. And I said, Lord, I do believe. And I knew I was free from condemnation.

No, sinners are not told to pray to be saved. Oh, don't misunderstand me. I wouldn't stop a sinner praying.

If a sinner's broken down before God, it's a natural thing that he should commence to pour out his heart in prayer and cry with the publican, God be merciful to me, a sinner. But the salvation doesn't come through praying. He's saved when he believes the gospel.

But it's after he's saved he's on praying ground. For this, because he knows the blessedness of transgression, forgiveness, and sin covered, for this shall everyone that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found. Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto thee.

And then David says, Thou art my hiding place. Thou shalt preserve me from trouble. Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

You see, in the earlier part of the psalm, David was hiding from God, but now he's hiding in God. Which are you doing tonight? Are you hiding from God, or have you found a hiding place in God? My eldest son taught me a lesson in this line when he was just a little boy. He was six years old before his brother came.

And so when I'd be at home from evangelistic meetings I had to try and be a big brother to him and amuse him as best I could. So I used to play with him hour after hour. And you know when he was a little fellow about four and five years of age there's nothing he liked to play better than bear.

Did you ever play bear? Well you know the way we did. We put some chairs in the corner of the living room and an opening between them and that was the bear's den. And then I was the bear.

I had to get down on all fours with a big shaggy overcoat over me and I had to grab all fours until it ran him into a corner. And so he dodged the corners and the bear after him. But I remember the last time I ever played bear with him.

We ran from room to room and finally in his excitement he dodged out into the kitchen and right into a corner and the corner wouldn't open up. And there he stood and that savage brute right after him. And you know how real these things are to little fellas, little children.

He was just screaming in his excitement and the bear got closer and closer and finally it got up on its hind legs and it was just about to grab him with those awful claws you know. When the little fellow wheeled right around and he caught his breath and said, I'm not a bear afraid. I'm not a bear afraid.

You're not a bear at all. You're just my own dear partner. And he jumped right into my arms.

And you know as I walked up and down oh that little heart would just beat like a trip ham. And he was sobbing in his excitement and I said to myself I mustn't play this with him anymore. He gets too excited.

But as I walked up and down with him I thought dear me isn't that just the way I was treating God. In my unsaved state I was running away from him as though he were my enemy. As though he wanted to do me harm.

And one never to be forgotten night he ran me into a corner. And that night when I saw nothing but judgment ahead of me through infinite grace I was led to write about faith and to look up into him. And if I didn't use my little boy's words I meant something very like them.

Oh God I'm not afraid of thee. Thou art not mine enemy. Thou art a tender loving father.

And I cast myself into his arms and was saved for eternity. And ever since my heart has been able to cry a rock of ages cleft for me. Grace hath hid me safe in thee.

Water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed are of sin the double cure. Saving from its guilt and power. It's a wonderful thing to be hiding in God.

To be able to say thou art my hiding place. And then you know we have the Lord to look after us and direct us. And so in response to David's cry the Lord says I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.

I will guide thee with mine eye. Mine eye upon thee. Be ye not as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding.

Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle or they'll not come near to you. You know the difference between the horse and the mule. The horse gets the bit in his teeth and says I will.

And away he goes. The mule settles his feet and says I won't. And the Lord says to Christians to believers don't you be like either of them.

Don't be like the horse just running off at your own taking your own way. And don't be like the mule just getting soft and stubborn. But be willing to be guided by the Lord himself.

And then as we come to the close of the psalm he has a word for the unsaved. And oh Christless one of you here tonight listen to it. Listen to it.

This is God's word to you who do not know the Lord. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.

But he that trusteth in the Lord mercy shall embrace him on every side. What a contrast. You know all the pleasure that the unsaved are ever going to know is the little bit they get in this short life.

When they leave this world out of Christ there'll be no more pleasure, no more joy, no more happiness forevermore. Hell is darkness deep and awful. Turn poor sinner, turn and flee.

Deeper down than Tyre and Sidon must the Christ rejecter be. All the sorrows that God's people will ever know they get in this life. There'll be nothing but joy and gladness and blessedness for all eternity.

What a contrast. Would you choose then the path of the wicked, the path of the Christ rejecter? Then you're choosing for yourself the many sorrows that are laid up for the wicked. A dear young fellow sat in a meeting one night and on the wall was just a motto and he got looking at it.

He had been thinking of becoming a Christian but he kept putting it off. But the motto said this, remember it must be Christ or hell and to neglect the one is but to choose the other. And you know God used that to bring him to a decision.

He said, then tonight I'll accept Christ. Will you do it? He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy embrace of him on every hand. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice ye righteous and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.

Oh God our Father, we never try to give out thy word but we're conscious how inadequately we do it. But thou knowest we've tried to give it out in faithfulness and independence of thyself tonight. And we pray that thou wilt use it for the awakening and salvation of lost men and women.

Give them, oh God, to see the folly of turning away from thee, of taking their own way. And may they be led through grace to turn to thee instead of hiding from thee to find a hiding place in thee. And so to know the blessedness of transgression forgiven and sin covered.

Lead them to decision tonight to settle it before they leave this meeting. We ask in the precious name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Our closing number, number 136. Number 136. In an audience such as this, I am sure there would be at least one soul whom God has been seeking for many days.

And perhaps he has brought you to the very place tonight where you could honestly say if your heart were allowed to speak, your heart would say I've been searching and longing for peace, for satisfaction, for a knowledge that my sins are forgiven for many days. And if it's possible to know, I must know tonight. I trust the word of God has so cut your heart that you've been brought to that place.

We're here to help you. And as the meeting closes, either after the meeting is dismissed or while we sing this hymn, we'd love to take the word of God and show you how you could be saved tonight and know it. I have often said all that you need to know is I know that I want to be saved tonight.

That's all you need to know. Those who are not saved, I'm sure you can say I want to be saved before I die. You've said that for years.

And if you won't do anything about it, when you hear his word, you know what's going to happen. You're going to keep on rejecting him until it will be too late. You'll agree with me, it'll have to be sometime.

And there could be no better night than tonight. Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation.

You have no lease on tomorrow's time. I trust while we sing this hymn, you'll find your way to the front and give us the privilege of showing you how you can be saved and know it. If you'd like to wait till the meeting is dismissed, we leave that up to you.

We sing these three verses at number 136.

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