

The Joys of Forgiveness

by Stuart Briscoe

The sermon explores the joys of forgiveness, emphasizing the importance of recognizing sinfulness and experiencing the total forgiveness that comes from knowing we are carried away and left totally out of sight and reckoning by God.

Duration: 40:43

Scripture: Psalm 32:8-9, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Forgiveness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of admitting and confessing one's sins to God. He outlines four steps to receiving forgiveness from God. The first step is to acknowledge and admit one's sins. The second step is to ask for forgiveness, recognizing that only God can forgive sins through the work of Jesus Christ. The third step is to believe that one is forgiven, having faith in God's ability to forgive. The speaker also highlights the joy and exuberance that comes from experiencing God's forgiveness and encourages listeners to rejoice in the Lord.

Transcript

Psalm 32. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is forgiven. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord reckoneth 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. That means, think of that. 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. For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto thee in the time when thou mayst 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. 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. May God bless this passage of scripture to our hearts. This psalm is written deep from the heart of the psalmist, as of course they all were, but as we read some psalms we get the impression that there's a deep personal experience in a very special way that has been portrayed for us in the words.

And Psalm 32 in all probability is recording something of the experience of David after he had sinned, his particularly great sin with Bathsheba, and had been under tremendous conviction for the things that he knew that he had done wrong. And then as time had come along of course Nathan the prophet had come to him and exposed to him the nature of his sin as a messenger of God, he had repented, and he had known what it was to be forgiven, and an unbelievable exuberance had taken hold of him, and he was just absolutely thrilled, he just could not contain himself. And having outlined what it meant to be forgiven, he comes out with a great shout of praise at the end and exhorts other people to do the same.

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart. I wonder how many of us here can honestly look back to the time when we have just out of the sheer exuberance of our spiritual experience just stood and shouted for sheer joy. I wonder how many of us have really let our evangelical hair down and got thoroughly excited about what it really means to be forgiven.

Well of course I know that that isn't quite the thing, that we've got to be cool and calm and collected, and we've got to be very careful that we don't overdo it, and of course we have to be very much careful of not going to excess or abusing our spiritual experience. But I think that sometimes one of the things that is lacking in the Church of Jesus Christ today is the sheer joy and exuberance and exhilaration that comes from knowing that you are really, thoroughly forgiven. And as we look into this psalm this morning, I want us to talk about the joys of forgiveness.

Now the first thing that we've got to notice of course is this, that only God can forgive sins. When the Lord Jesus Christ one day dealing with somebody said, thy sins be forgiven thee, the people who were his critics looking on said, who can forgive sins but God only? And they were right, only God can forgive sins. And this is something that we have got to be alert to all the time.

But always remember this, whilst it is so to say that only God can forgive sins, only human beings can experience forgiveness. It must be fun to be an angel, whatever an angel is and whatever an angel does, it must be great. I am a long way from being one, I don't ever expect to be one and I'll tell you something else, I don't want to be an angel.

And I'll tell you why. There's one thing that an angel can never experience that you can. An angel can never experience forgiveness and therefore an angel must always be limited in his spiritual experience.

You see, there is absolutely nothing quite like knowing that you are totally forgiven and only sinful human beings can experience that. And therefore, if only God can forgive sins and only human beings can be forgiven, the person who is forgiven and knows it is a very special person and has a very special experience and experiences a very special kind of joy. He shouts aloud, he is glad in the Lord, he rejoices for the sheer exuberance that is his.

He is utterly and totally forgiven. Now the psalmist deals with many things in this psalm and I believe that they progress logically one from the other. And so I'm simply going to go quite quickly through them this morning and I hope that you spend more time looking into this psalm.

First of all, he talks in the first two verses about the sinfulness that necessitates forgiveness. When we talk about forgiveness, obviously we're presupposing sinfulness. Unfortunately, some people don't recognize their own sinfulness, therefore they don't qualify for forgiveness.

Some people say that the trouble with the Church of Jesus Christ is that it is full of inadequate people. Well, that's not the trouble with it, that's the secret of it. The secret of humanity is that man is incapable and that only the person who knows he's incapable and knows he's sinful can ever know the capacity of God to fill his incapability and can only know the ability of God to forgive him his sin.

So never feel bad if you feel inadequate. Never feel bad if you feel sinful. That qualifies you for an experience of God in your life.

And before we can understand forgiveness, we've got to understand sinfulness. This is the thing of which he speaks, first of all, in the psalm. Now, there are four things, four different terms that he uses to describe the sinfulness of man that necessitates forgiveness.

First of all, he talks about transgression. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. Then secondly, in the same verse, he uses the second word, sin, whose sin is covered.

And then in the second verse, he says, blessed is the man unto whom the Lord will not impute iniquity. There's a third word, and in the same verse, and in whose spirit there is no guile. So in other words, explaining the sinfulness that necessitates forgiveness, the psalmist uses four totally different words.

Transgression, sin, iniquity, and guile. And we're guilty of all four, and all four have to be dealt with. Transgression means doing that which is forbidden.

Sometimes we are familiar with the word trespass. I can never remember whether in America they use the word trespass in the Lord's Prayer, or if in England. In some countries, they use the word debt, and debtors, and in others, transgressions and transgressors.

But the idea of transgressing, or the idea of trespassing, is basically the same. I don't know if you've ever been walking along on a country road, and you've seen a lovely field and a mountain behind it, and you've thought to yourself, I know, we'll climb over that wall, and we're going to go right into that whole area and thoroughly enjoy it. And then maybe you came across a sign that said, trespassers will be prosecuted.

I remember as a little boy seeing one of those signs, and I asked my dad, hey dad, what does that mean? They said, that means that people who climb that wall will be propped up and shot. And therefore, I always had a healthy respect for that sign, until an attorney friend of mine pointed out that that was something that just would not hold up in court, and there's no way that you could prosecute a trespasser. But we don't need to get into that at the moment.

The whole business of trespassing is this, you go and stand in areas where you have no legal right to be. A trespasser is a person who commits trespasses, and that is basically what transgression is. David said, oh God, do you know what I've done? Over and over and over again, I have stood in forbidden territory, I have gone outside your rules, I've climbed over your limits, I have gone into territory where I ought never

to have been.

This is the measure of my sin. Now I don't know if you've ever been made painfully aware of the limits that God puts upon you, but he does, and he's every right to do it. And I don't know if having been aware of the limits that God puts upon you, you've ever carefully checked to find out to what extent you have gone over the limits, you've gone into forbidden territory.

But the thing to remember is this, every single time you put one foot outside divine limits, you are guilty of trespass. You are a transgressor, and that is one aspect of sin. This sinfulness qualifies you for forgiveness.

Secondly, he uses the word sin. Now the word sin is quite different from the word transgression. For if transgression means doing what is forbidden, sin means not doing what is commanded.

And of course there's all the difference in the world. It is one thing to do what you've been told not to do, it's an entirely different thing to fail to do what you have been commanded to do. In the Episcopal service and the liturgy, which I personally love and always thoroughly enjoy the opportunity of sharing in the Episcopal service, there's one part of the liturgy that I find tremendously helpful and tremendously challenging every time I hear it.

In the liturgy we repeat these words, we have done those things which we ought not to have done, that is transgression. And we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, that is sin. And you see, one of the things that you begin to discover about your own intrinsic sinfulness is this, you have a bent to doing what is forbidden, and also a lack of power to do what is commanded.

And this is the measure of our sinfulness. The technical term is this, when I fail to do what I have been told to do by God, that is a sin of omission. I omit to do what I've been told.

But when I do what I have been told not to do, that is a sin of commission, and I am guilty of both. There is no health in me demonstrated by the fact that I do what I've been told not to do, and I don't do what I've been told to do. If you're in any doubts, just check on what God has told you to do.

And one of the awful things, one of the appalling things, one of the heavy depressing things that will become upon your heart is this, how often you transgress, and how often you sin. Then thirdly, he comes up with the word iniquity. The word iniquity means a perverting of that which is right.

Iniquity is something that is just intrinsically wrong in itself. It has an air of perversion, it has an air of rottenness about it. Now I know that we're all perfectly respectable, and I know that we're all desperately law-abiding, and I know that we don't get ourselves dragged into court, and I know that in all probability, most of us have never been in jail, not even to visit anybody in jail, which just shows what wonderful, wonderful people we are.

What it shows, simply, is this, that we have a remarkable ability for keeping within the law, but we also have a remarkable ability for covering up our intrinsic rottenness. Now, don't assume, of course, that because a person has never been in jail that he's just absolutely fantastic, because he just isn't. In the Royal Navy, they give a man who's done 21 years a medal, and it's called the Blue Peter, and the Blue Peter is something that, well, I remember as an 18-year-old looking at a guy getting up and thinking, wow, he's 39, he's ancient, I wonder why someone doesn't help him, you know, to stand up there while they pin that medal on his chest.

21 years, and then I listened to what the medal was, and I learned it by heart, and this is what it said, this man was getting his Blue Peter for 21 years continuous good service and undetected crime. Now, that's what you get it for. They don't give you the credit of never having done anything wrong.

They're pretty wise in the Royal Navy. The only thing about it is this, he wasn't caught. Now, I believe this is very, very important.

A lot of people think that because they have either never transgressed the law of the land or have never been caught, that means that they are superior to other people who have and have been caught. Not necessarily, because we have a different judge and we have a different set of values, and what it says in the Bible is this, there is something intrinsically warped and intrinsically perverted, and we have an ability within us to pretend that something is right when deep in our hearts we know that many things are all wrong. That is iniquity.

But then fourthly, he uses the word guile. And not only do we think in terms of transgression and sin and iniquity, but now we think in terms of guile. And that means the ability to project what is false, to be a total actor.

I know that most of you are familiar with the fact that the Greek word for actor is the word from which we get hypocrite. And the word hypocrite is always being kicked around in church circles and by people outside church circles concerning people in church circles. Well, I go along with that.

I think it's a very valid word. I think it applies to every human being I've ever met, not least me, because every single person I ever met has got a remarkable ability to put up a front, a remarkable ability to pretend that things are not as they really are. And the essence of guile or the essence of hypocrisy is to project what is false or not to let hang out what is really true.

Now, of course, we do this for a variety of reasons, and we don't have time to go into them this morning. But if we can just try and visualize how God looks at our lives, I think we'll begin to get some conception of our sinfulness in the eyes of a holy God. First of all, we transgress, we do what is forbidden.

Secondly, we sin, we don't do what is commanded. Thirdly, we have an ability deep in our hearts to pervert what is right. And on top of this, we are guilty of guile for we constantly project that which is false.

This is the measure of our sinfulness. Now, if that was all I had to say this morning, I wouldn't have come to church, because who wants a club of people over the head with their sinfulness? But you see, what I have to say this morning is this, that sinfulness, when it is recognized and dealt with, leads to forgiveness, and it is forgiveness that leads to real joyfulness. So I've got to start here.

We've got to lay the solid foundation for the only person who really knows what it is to shout aloud with joy, is the person who deep in his heart knows his sinfulness and has found forgiveness. The sinfulness that necessitates forgiveness. Now secondly, he talks about the forgiveness that leads to blessedness.

And there are three words that are used in verses one and two again. Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, that's the second word. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not, that is the third word.

Three words that describe the sheer essence of forgiveness. What is involved in forgiveness? Number one, the word forgiven. Blessed is the man, or blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven.

The word forgiven means carried away and left totally out of sight and reckoning. Now of course, this is something that we human beings have an awful problem with. We sometimes talk in terms of, well, if you forgive, you forget.

But I don't know about you, but I have an awful problem forgetting sometimes things that I've forgiven. And it almost seems to have all kinds of things militate against me forgetting these things. And I'm forgetful by nature, but boy, I can remember the things that I'm supposed to have forgiven.

But the lovely thing about God is this, that when he forgives, he forgets. But don't think for a moment that that means that God is forgetful. Your sins and iniquities, the Bible says, I will remember no more.

And I remember being quite thrilled one day when, as a kid, I heard one of my young friends preaching. We were just learning to preach together at the same time. We used to listen to each other occasionally.

And he came out with something, and I'm not even sure if it's theological accuracy, but I enjoyed it so much I didn't bother to look into it, and I never have. He said, God didn't say, your sins and iniquities I will forget, because if he'd said that, we might have thought he was forgetful, and we could get away with murder. He said, your sins and iniquities I will remember no more.

In other words, this is a definite act of the will of God who refuses totally, point-blank, to remember my sins. They are totally carried away. Now do you begin to see why a person can be joyful? Now do you begin to see the sheer blessedness of being forgiven? To begin to understand that I'm answerable to God for all my sin, that he is fully aware of all my sin, but now he has acted in such a way that he picked it all up and carried it away, and it is dealt with once and for all.

Now in the Old Testament, there's something called the scapegoat. And scapegoat is a word that everybody uses. When something goes wrong in the business, they've got to blame somebody.

When a ball club can't win, they fire the coach. I can never understand that, but that's by the way. The coach is the scapegoat.

He is the guy who is carrying the can, he is picking up the tap. Do you know what the scapegoat is? Do a Bible study on it. The Bible will show you that a scapegoat was an animal, a goat, that was used as a basis of sacrifice, and the sin of the people was transfigured, or was placed on him figuratively by the placing of the high priest's hands on his head, and then it was led out into the wilderness and left there, and it was taken completely away.

That's the biblical meaning of scapegoat. It is a picture of forgiveness. The forgiveness that means a total carrying away of my sin.

Now if you really want to talk about a scapegoat, I'll tell you the greatest scapegoat there ever was. Jesus Christ was his name. And he was the one who on the cross of Calvary had our sin transmitted to him by God placing it upon him, and then he went away into the total depths of death and hell.

And there he carried away my sin. And this is the basis of forgiveness. But the second word that he uses is covered.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Now in the Old Testament, over and over again, you'll hear this idea of sin being covered. The idea of the blood being placed on the doorpost.

The idea of there being sin splashed on the place of offering, etc, etc. We don't have time to go into that now. But when you get into the New Testament, the story of the Lord Jesus, the story of the Lord Jesus is this, that when he died on the cross, our sin was totally covered, but it was totally blotted out.

It was absolutely eradicated. There was no way that it could be dragged into existence again. What an exciting thing it is to begin to be aware of my own sinfulness, and then to begin to understand that what God through the Lord Jesus has done with my sinfulness, he has brought total forgiveness to bear.

That means he has carried it away. That means he has totally covered it up, blotted it out, so that it is no longer in existence. And the third word that gives me an idea of what it means to be forgiven, is that my sin is no longer imputed to me.

And that means it is no longer put to my account. I remember a young friend of mine over in England, who got a job working digging ditches with some pretty rough, tough characters. And he was a Christian, and he was a guy who had a remarkably fearless testimony, even with these people.

And I think perhaps I've told you about him on another time. Because once when he was sitting in a little hut while it was raining, and they couldn't work, they were all playing cards and boozing, and he was reading a book. And one of the fellows said, what are you reading? And he said, Moody's sermons.

And they said, what's that? And he said, it's sermons by a fellow called Moody. And they said, well, is that his name, or what was wrong with him? And, you know, they kidded him about it. And one of them said, why don't you read it to us? So he said, all right.

They were kidding, and he wasn't. He read a sermon to them. At the end he clapped.

They clapped him. So the next day they said, hey, read us another sermon. So he went on and read them another sermon.

And then in the end they used to have their lunch quickly so he could read a sermon to them. And they liked his sermons. Then one day he forgot his book, which was typical of him.

You know, whatever else you forget, you don't forget your book when you've got guys like this wanting to read sermons to them every day. And they said, come on, Graham, it's time for our sermons. He said, I forgot my book.

And they said, one of them said, well, you'll have to preach one of your own then, won't you? He said, all right. Completely took the wind out of their sails and got up and preached to them. Without any warning, just got up and preached to them.

I said, what did you preach? He said, hell. H-E-L-L. Hell.

I said, Graham, of all the things you could have chosen to preach to a gang of fellows like that, you chose hell? He said, yeah. I said, what on earth did they say? He said, they said they liked my sermons better than Moody. So every lunch hour he preached to these men.

And one day he did something that was absolutely tremendous. There was one fellow in that work party who was totally despised by everybody. He was a total rogue and none of the guys would touch him in the ten-foot pole.

And they had in the place where they used to have their lunch, they had a choke board where they used to choke up their debts. And this guy who was totally despised by everybody, he just got so many debts choked up against him for his liquor and for his coffee and for his cigarettes and his lunches and all this sort of thing, that they wouldn't sell him anymore in the place. And none of the guys would help him.

They totally despised him and he sat on his own and they would have nothing to do with him. And one day Graham went in there with all the fellows there and he got a piece of chalk and he added up the sum total of all the debts against this guy. And when he got the sum total, he got a rubber and he rubbed the whole thing out on the chalkboard in front of everybody.

And he got that total and he wrote it against his name. And all the fellows looked up and they said, Graham, you're crazy. And he said, no, I'm not crazy.

I'm a Christian. He said, the greatest thing that ever happened to me was to begin to understand that God had totaled up all my debt and reckoned it to Christ and it totaled up all the righteousness of Christ and reckoned it to me. And he said, do you think for a minute that that hasn't changed me? He said, the greatest joy in my life for this totally despised man is to get the sum totality of his debt and put it to my account and just give him a new start and a clean sheet.

This is my joy. And that was when things began to happen among the group. The preaching shook them.

But to be able to show practically how you can reckon somebody else's debt to you and accept it really got to them. And when he explained that he was forgiven and that helped him to forgive, that his debt was no longer reckoned to him and that was why he could take somebody else's, that was when the message got across. That's what it means to be forgiven.

To have it totally carried away, to have it utterly covered up and to know that it is no longer reckoned to my account but is reckoned to the account of Christ and he has paid by his death on the cross. Now can you understand why the person who is a forgiven human being streaks ahead of an angel? Because an angel can never get excited about being forgiven. He never had the chance.

Thirdly, this psalm talks about the blessedness that produces prayerfulness. Now notice very carefully what he talks about here. How he comes to his experience of forgiveness.

How he comes into this blessedness as he talked about it. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.

How do you come to this blessedness? Well in verses three through five he tells us, 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. The first step to the blessedness of forgiven is this, don't evade the issue. Now what he's saying in very poetic language in verses three and four is this, I tried to evade the issue when I kept silence.

In other words, when I refused to tell God about my sin. When I refused to admit to God the truth. When I did all that I possibly could to pretend all was right and it wasn't.

When I did all that I possibly could to pretend that I was being obedient when I was disobedient. And pretending that I was fulfilling his commands when I was falling lamentably short. When I kept silence and refused to admit it, it was murder.

Look how he describes it. He said my bones were just crying out within me. He said day and night the hand of the Lord was heavy upon me and he said I just dried up inside.

No joy, no peace, no thrill, no exuberance, just heavy depressed defeat. I refused to come clean. He said I evaded the issue.

If ever you want to come across the reason why some people are depressed, the reason why some people have lost all sparkle and exuberance and their life is heaviness, you don't need to look very far in many instances. You can simply put your finger right on it and say my dear friend your problem is this, there is sin in your life that you are refusing to put right. The hand of the Lord is heavy upon you, you're drying up inside, your very bones are crying out and you are totally depressed.

Well the first step to the blessedness of forgiveness is this, don't evade the issue. Some people think some preachers are a bit too forceful. Perhaps they are.

They think some preachers get to the point a bit too much. Perhaps we do. But I want to say this, that if a person is going to miss the sheer blessedness and joyfulness of forgiveness through being unwilling to face up to the fact, you can't be too forceful with that person for his own good.

You can encourage him and cajole him and do anything you can if only to get him to the point of coming clean about the whole issue. Does that give you a clue to why the joyfulness isn't there? Why the blessedness isn't there? Because you're just putting up a big act. Don't evade the issue.

The second step is this, do admit the sin. Now notice what he says in verse five, I acknowledge my sin unto thee. There was a time when I kept silence.

There was a time when I refused to speak. There was a time when I covered it up. After his experience with Bathsheba, in all probability according to some scholars, twelve months elapsed before Nathan came to him.

Twelve months went by when his bones roared within him and the hand of the Lord was heavy upon him and he dried up inside. Twelve months he refused to admit his sin. You say, wow, fancy going on that long.

Oh, don't say that. There's some people you'll meet who've gone on seventy years like that. And there's no joy and there's no blessedness and there's no fullness of all that God has for them.

But he came to the point of admitting his sin. There was a breaking, there was a yielding. He came clean about the whole thing.

The steps of blessedness don't evade the issue, one. Do admit your sin, two. The third step is this, then ask for forgiveness.

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. In other words, don't evade the issue.

Do admit your sin and then say, God, you alone can forgive sin through the work of Jesus Christ on my behalf on the cross. I ask you to forgive me. I ask you to restore me.

I ask you to reconcile me to yourself. I ask you to justify me. I ask you to give me the works.

And the fourth step is this, do believe you are forgiven. There is no point coming to God in repentance and confession and asking forgiveness if you don't believe he's going to. And there is no point claiming his promises if when having claimed them you don't believe he's done what he said.

But the psalmist did. I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord and you forgave me. And you forgave me.

Now, some people would say, you are extremely arrogant to get up there and say, I am forgiven. All right, listen to this for arrogance. I am forgiven.

Totally forgiven, which presupposes I need it. And that is a confession of sin. But it is also a confession of the fact that I have come to God in repentance and confession and in faith, and I have asked God to do what he said he would do, which is forgive me.

And now I'm not arrogant. I'm just believing. In fact, I'll tell you what the arrogance is.

The arrogance is to be in a position to say that God does not forgive sin when God says he does. Because you see, you are contradicting God if you say you can't know you're forgiven when God says you can know. It is not arrogant to believe God.

It is arrogant to contradict God. And here's where the blessedness begins to come. When I stop evading issue, when I do admit the sin, when I ask God forgiveness and I believe that he has done it.

The blessedness that produces prayerfulness. Fourthly, he then talks about the prayerfulness that involves faithfulness. And notice how the person who's really forgiven is not only joyful, but he's prayerful.

This is something we need to be reminded of constantly. The person who is forgiven is not only joyful, he's prayerful. Verse six, for this shall everyone that is godly pray.

For this shall everyone that is godly pray. Now let me tell you something. Many Christians find prayer a total drag.

If you don't believe me, go to any church at prayer meeting time, not least Elmbrook. And you will now come to the desperate discovery that we can rope in a thousand on a Sunday morning and approximately six for a prayer meeting. This is unbelievable.

But if you don't believe me that one of the biggest drags in many people's lives is prayer, there's an instance. And then, check on your own life and find out how difficult it is for you, in all probability, to have a time of prayer. Check out how really systematic you are in prayer.

And I'm talking to me as well at this moment. Do you know what you'll find? You will find that one of the great appalling lacks in the individual Christian's life, and therefore in the corporate life of the church, is the lack of prayer. Now why is it? I'll tell you why it is.

It is, funnily enough, because many people have lost all concept of being forgiven. Did you know that prayerfulness and the knowledge of forgiveness were closely related? Look, for this shall everyone that is godly pray. In other words, when I begin to understand that God is the God who is forgiven, it is because of this forgiving God, and because of His forgiveness, that prayer is stimulated within me.

What kind of prayer? Praise. If you're really forgiven and you really know it, you'll praise Him. If you're really forgiven and you really know it, you will worship Him.

If you're really forgiven and you really know it, you will not only praise and worship Him, but you'll be an intercessor. Because knowing forgiveness yourself, you'll long for other people to be forgiven. And the thing that will lead you to prayerfulness is the sheer blessedness of forgiveness.

Strange, but true. And therefore, the first thing to notice is this, that prayerfulness is stimulated by forgiveness, because I now know who I'm praying to. I'm praying to a forgiving God.

But secondly, this prayerfulness is a prayer that is related to a reachable God. Verse 6, for this shall everyone that is godly pray unto thee in a time when you may be found. A reachable God.

Now, a lot of people don't seem to understand who's reachable. A lot of people haven't got the message that you can actually pray to God, and you're not just reciting little phrases that bounce off an acoustically sealed ceiling. A lot of people haven't got the idea that those who are godly pray to a God in a time when He may be found.

He is totally reachable. He is absolutely available to the prayers of the saints. And He's also absolutely available to the prayer of the penitent sinner.

Now, if I know that He's a forgiving God, and if I know that He's a reachable God, that is going to produce prayerfulness based on the blessedness of forgiveness. But thirdly, I want you to notice that it is prayer to a powerful God as well. Thou art my hiding place.

Why does He say that? Well, in verse 6 He says, surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto thee. Thou shalt preserve me from trouble, thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. What lovely pictures of the power of God, the one to whom I pray and whose ability is released through my prayer.

Now, He doesn't say you won't have floods of great waters. In fact, you will. And He doesn't say that you won't have deliverance problems, because you will.

And He doesn't say that there won't be things from which you want to hide, because you will. What He says is this, you'll have floods of great waters, you'll have lots of things from which you want to hide, and there'll be many, many things from which you'd need deliverance. But God is a God who does not allow the great waters to come to you to get at you.

He does not allow the things that overwhelm you to overwhelm you, and He is the one who constantly can deliver you. Now, when you know who He is, a forgiving, reachable, powerful God, this very blessedness of knowing Him leads to prayerfulness towards Him. The prayerfulness, the blessedness that produces prayerfulness.

The prayerfulness that includes faithfulness. Now then, fifthly, He talks about the faithfulness that brings joyfulness. Because, you see, when you've come across a forgiven person, who's a prayerful person, you'll find a faithful person.

Now, I want you to notice very carefully what He talks about here in verse 8 and 9. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go, I will guide thee with mine eye. Be not as the horse or the mule

which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with a bitten bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Now, for some reason, I'm not quite sure what it is, but most people who read their Bible assume that this is God speaking in verse 8. Now, I don't know why.

He hasn't spoken up till now, and He doesn't speak after it. I think that's taking it completely out of context. Now, God will guide you, and He will instruct you, and He will lead you with His eye.

But this isn't God speaking, this is the psalmist speaking. What He is saying is this, I'm forgiven, I'm prayerful, I'm joyful, now I'm going to be faithful. If God has done this for me, guess what I'm going to do for you? I'm going to teach you.

I'm going to guide you. I'm going to keep my eye on you. Because, you see, having discovered all the blessings of God in my own life, I've got to be faithful to make absolutely certain other people discover them too.

If you want the parallel, check on Psalm 51. Psalm 51, His great prayer of repentance and faith. After He has known what it is to be forgiven again after His sin, He says this, Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

The person who is forgiven is the person who is faithful. The person who knows the measure of God's blessing in his life is the person who has an insatiable desire to be a blessing to other people. You can't be forgiven and not want other people to be forgiven.

You can't really understand what it really means to be forgiven and not be faithful. And you're teaching, and you're guiding, and you're leading, and you're reaching other people. And the two things that he suggests here are that he's going to be faithful in involvement in other people's lives, and he's going to be faithful in instruction in other people's needs.

Now let me ask you something. You dear saints here this morning, you've had your sins forgiven. Is your forgiveness issuing itself out into prayerfulness? And is the blessedness that is yours demonstrating itself in faithfulness? And you are faithfully involved in the needs of others, and you're faithfully instructing those who don't know.

You say, I don't know much. I'll tell you something. If you don't know much, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, and if you don't know much, you still know a whole lot more than the guy who knows nothing.

And all you do is share what you know, and the lovely thing about it is this. The more you share, the more you discover you don't know, and the more you discover you don't know, the more you long to learn. This is what happens.

Prayerfulness includes faithfulness, and faithfulness brings joyfulness. For now, faithfully involved in the purposes of God for my own life, and faithfully involved in the purposes of God for other people's lives, this is where the joyfulness comes. And do you know what I begin to do? Not only do I teach people, not only do I guide people, not only do I have an interested eye on people, but now I exhort them, and I say, oh listen folks, be glad in the Lord.

Listen, rejoice you righteous, and shout for joy, oh ye that are upright in heart. And that's aggressive. That's taking the initiative.

That is exhortation. That is really experiencing joy, and really expressing joy. One of the sad things about many Christians is this.

They're terrified to express their joy, and they'll do all that they can to make absolutely certain that nobody believes they're experiencing this joy. Well, the kids have taught us something. They say, let it all hang out.

If I may use that rather disgusting term and apply it here, let me suggest something to you. If you're aware of your sinfulness, and you're alert to forgiveness, and you're enjoying the blessedness, let it all hang out. And you know what will happen? Joyfulness will result.

Perhaps you're not forgiven. Perhaps you don't think you're sinful. Perhaps you do know you're sinful, and would love to be forgiven.

Well listen, right now in the quietness of your own heart, don't evade the issue anymore. Do confess your sin. Do thank God for giving you Christ.

Do ask him to forgive you, and believe that he's done it. And then shout aloud, even before the benediction, if you so desire. We'll just say amen.

Let's pray. Gracious Lord, we bow in your presence, sinful people, having done those things you told us not to do, and having failed to do the things you told us to do. And on top of this, having pretended that all was right, when deep in our heart we knew we had an unbelievable bent for sin.

But through the Lord Jesus, you're prepared to carry away our sin, and cover up our sin, and no longer reckon it to us, but reckon it to him. And when we confess, repent, and in faith ask you to forgive, you do. And that's when it all starts.

That's when the blessedness comes. That's when the faithfulness comes. That's when the prayerfulness comes.

That's when the joyfulness comes. Because we're forgiven. And so dear Lord, I just pray for each one of us here this morning, that we might know forgiveness, and that then we might express it.

For I ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

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