

Psalms 19-02-07a

This is Thursday, the 7th of February, 2019, and we continue our study in the book of Psalms. We saw Psalm 31 last time, and we're going to look at Psalm 32 tonight. Psalm 32 is a very powerful set of revelations and principles having to do with the forgiveness of sin, confession of sin, the nature of our sin, the blessing that comes from having our sins forgiven.

And it is almost essential to cover it before we arrive at Psalm 51, which is another great penitential psalm about confession of sin. But this is one of the basic skills in our life as believers, certainly in a Christian life, understanding how forgiveness of sin works is critical. It's a life skill.

It's something we use every day because we tend to sin every day and come in contact with sin every day. So it's a great portion of Scripture to be looking at together. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our study, and then we'll begin.

Father, we are grateful for Your many expressions of grace toward us, Your provision, Your orchestration of the circumstances of our lives, in some cases to challenge us, always working together for good to bless us and to bring us forward to the place where we can appreciate You more fully and serve You more effectively. We pray that as we look at this portion of Your Word tonight that the Holy Spirit will illuminate the page, will help us to understand what it is saying and what that means to us individually and as we endeavor to perform the one another commands and to work together as well as in our own souls and our own hearts to draw closer to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, to follow in His steps, to take up our cross and go where He went so that we can share and reflect the glory in the future coming age when we will be in Your presence. So we ask Your blessing on our fellowship and our time of study.

In Jesus' name, amen. Well the Psalms of course were hymns. They were sung.

They were performed. So this Psalm begins as a Psalm of David, a Maschil, M-A-S-C-H-I-L. And as with many of these terms, silah and other terms that we've seen in the superscription, there is some uncertainty as to the exact meaning of this, but it is related to words for instruction and contemplation.

And the idea here is that this is sort of a teaching song. If you ever, after my generation when PBS and the little magic school bus and the bird and the frog and the rest of them were on TV teaching elementary principles, I've seen more recent programs where they even teach Spanish. But educational television, I've seen in the past where they actually had educational programs on there for children.

And they would review the vowels or some other thing about the Constitution, a little song about the Constitution. And they set it to music to help reinforce a child's memory and grasp of particular concepts. I've told you many times in the past that I had a Sunday school teacher who found tunes or set to music a number of memory verses that are with me to this day because

they have the added memory component of a tune, of music.

And so Maschils in particular, you can have celebration songs, you can have worship songs, you can have occasional songs, songs of the season for Resurrection Sunday or for Christmas. But a Maschil seems to have been an instructional song that is kind of like these I'm describing. It was designed to bring important spiritual principles to mind in a memorable way.

And so most often when we find a song that's labeled Maschil, it seems to partake of that. It's got some pretty good grist for the mill. So we try to hit those as they come up in the sequence, and this is one here.

So it is a Maschil of David, and it reads in your New King James, Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and whose spirit there is no deceit. Right off the bat, let me just point out in passing, we've already got three different words in English reflecting three different words in Hebrew for the idea of sin, iniquity, transgression.

What's the difference? We're going to be watching for that, and watch as we go forward here for the recurrence of these terms, because your New King James is almost remarkably consistent here in keeping these Hebrew terms straight. When you see transgression, it's the same Hebrew word. When you see sin, it's the same Hebrew word.

When you see iniquity, it's the same Hebrew word. And they cover different aspects, different areas. So watch for those as we go forward.

I'm going to read the first one again. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones grew old, through my groaning all the day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me, my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

I acknowledged my sin to you, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. For this cause, everyone who is godly shall pray to you, in a time when you may be found.

Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him. You are my hiding place, you shall preserve me from trouble, you shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go, I will guide you with my eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him.

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Fascinating psalm, a great collection of ideas and communication of divine truth in a poetic and artistic presentation. Let's begin at the beginning here.

It says, blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. You notice all the italics there, because you actually have no pronouns referring to a person there at all. It literally says, you got two words here, which is La Dawid Maskil, which is of David Maskil.

Those are two words, and then the psalm launches right out, and it says, and here is the word order. I'm not going to give you all of the Hebrew, I'm just going to give you the word order. It's blessed, and this is plural.

This is, oh the blessednesses, the blessednesses, it's plural, asherah. So, of David Maskil, blessednesses, forgiven, transgression. That's the word order, blessednesses, forgiven, transgression.

We fill this in a little bit, but not as much as your English does here, oh the blessednesses of forgiven transgression. There are multiple benefits, but he moves forgiveness ahead of transgression, because the blessedness is the result, forgiveness is the means, transgression was the problem. So it's in reverse order, and we're looking back in relief, it would be something else to say, there's a transgression, I need forgiveness, wouldn't it be many blessings if I had it.

But this is retrospective, it's already happened, and this is a celebration of God's grace. Oh the blessednesses, forgiven transgression, and it's powerful in Hebrew, it just smacks you like a left, a right, and an uppercut. It's just blessednesses, forgiven transgression.

It's like when Paul is very energetic in presenting something, and he starts getting elliptical and leaving words out, that's what this is, blessednesses, forgiven transgression. Then you just have two more words, covered sin. That's the whole thing in Hebrew, blessednesses, forgiven transgression, covered sin.

Forgiven and covered precede the direct object. Now you'll also notice that we've got two of our three words talking about something that is unrighteous. The first one is transgression, and this is Pesach, P-E-S-H-A-C-H.

And then there's a guttural on the end of that, you've got a vowel, A, and then you've got the ion after it, and it's the evil ion, and in so many of these words you find ion showing up, and it's the evil ion. So P-E-S-H-A, Pesach, translated transgression. Now this word is a particular kind of sin.

It is one in which our will is implicated in a causal way. This is sort of a premeditated sin. It is a sin where you either do no better or should no better when you do it.

You're not a hapless, ensnared victim, sin was crouching at the door and it pounced on me kind of a thing. This is more like you went out and said, here sin, here sin, I've got a bone for you,

come here, and when it came, you cooperated with it. This is, it's not quite sin of the high hand, but it's, I made the decision with my eyes wide open.

I went on this date, and when he said, let's get frisky, I said fine, and we weren't married and things ensued, but I was fully complicit, involved, I went into it with my eyes open. Pasha, this is sort of a rebellious sin. I encourage you, if you're going to do what I suggest and what scripture suggests you do, which is reflect back on this study in coming days, get yourself a Strongs, go online with your computer, and look up the Strongs number for Pasha, and look at the way it is used in scripture.

It comes up in Genesis chapter 50, talking about the transgression of the brothers of Joseph. Well, did they not know that selling their brother down the river to the caravaneers into Egypt, that's not, oh, I don't know, I got a little drunk and the next thing I knew the camels were over the hill and Joseph was gone. You might still be culpable, but it would be more like negligence or kind of a hapless villager sort of a sin.

No, this is, let's get rid of this rascal, look, let's do this, we'll tell dad that this happened, and it's malice aforethought, there's thought that goes into it. Pasha, let me see if I can find maybe one good, well, I'll give you just that reference. It's Genesis chapter 50 verse 17.

When Jacob is talking to Laban back in Genesis 31, and he says to Laban, what is my Pasha? What is my culpable willful sin that you're all angry with me here? I'm an aggrieved party here, I didn't set out to defraud you or embezzle things from you. What is my transgression? I have done no willful sin. That's 31, 36 of Genesis.

And the other one is Genesis 50 verse 17, talking about the transgression of the brothers. So that gives you the idea. So that's the first one here, oh the blessedness, forgiveness of willful sin, we'll just call it willful sin, your will was involved.

And then of covered sin, blessedness of forgiven transgression, transgression meaning you transgressed on purpose, covered sin. Our second word here is sort of the standard generic word that pretty much has the same value that sin does in English. This in Hebrew is kataah, C-H-A-T-A-H, kataah, C-H-A-T-A-H, kataah, A-H.

And it doesn't have an evil ion in it, it's got an aleph, but it's the standard word. And so forgiveness is applied to transgression. Forgiven transgression, sin is covered.

And the word for covered here means to conceal, to hide, to conceal. Hide, to make secret, it's not visible, it's not an issue. There might be somebody hiding in the bushes but if you don't see them you're not afraid, you take no precautionary steps, it's not a factor.

And let me say because we're going to have to move quickly to cover the psalm and I don't have time to do a detailed study, you have probably heard as I have heard growing up and over the years that, well, in the Old Testament sin was just covered but it wasn't really forgiven. It's difficult to defend that, but these are the kinds of passages where it comes from. But notice

transgression, willful sin, is forgiven, it is absolutely forgiven.

The word here for forgiven means to be born away, to be taken away. You put it on Azazel and send it in the wilderness and it's gone. It's no longer considered, it's no longer a factor.

Something that is covered over, sin being covered doesn't mean that, well, there's still this festering sin and you just put a band-aid over it so it didn't show. You've got a horrible skin cancer but you just put cosmetics on and hid it. Covered is covered in the sense that it is not a factor in God's calculations.

It's similar to, we don't have it here, but we may come soon to some psalms that talk about how God remembers our sin no more. Now ask yourself, is it possible for God to actually forget a sin? He's omniscient, he knows everything and he's not a hard drive where you can just erase the file and it's as though it was never there. What does it mean when it says that God does not remember our sins? He does not remember them in terms of justice, judgment, reaction, discipline.

It is not a factor in his calculations. You can remember a wrong in the past without feeling the need for vengeance or retaliation or heaping scorn or abuse or something on someone. You can remember it but it is an inactive memory.

It doesn't produce any results. This, by the way, is also my suggestion to you about no more tears in the eternal future. Well, how could we not cry if we remember people that we loved who did not make it to eternal life? How can we not have tears when we look at the glory of the beauty of Christ's holiness and we think about our sins and our failures and how many opportunities we miss in this life? It is possible to remember without result, without a negative impact.

You can be aware of something but you have a perspective on it. There are surrounding truths that balance and inform it and prevent it from being an issue. You can remember it but it's not an issue.

God, of course, remembers every sin that's ever been committed, past, present, and future. Otherwise, he'd be scratching his head saying, now why did I send Jesus to the cross again? I have no memory of these. Of course he remembers them but he does not remember them against us.

He doesn't remember them for ill. In the same way, covered sin is the same as forgiven sin in the sense that once it is covered it isn't brought back as a factor. Now there are conditions under which a sin can be uncovered.

There are conditions under which forgiven sin can be unforgiven. That forgiveness can be removed. The covering can be removed.

And Jesus talked about that. We don't have time to look at it tonight but you know the parable

of the steward who was forgiven a huge debt and then he would not forgive his underservant a small debt and when the master heard about it he said, guess what? The debt of yours that I forgave is unforgiven and you're going to go to the poor house and it is held against you until payment of every penny is made. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

You can confess sin and have it forgiven this week and if next week you fail to forgive someone, this week's sin, forgiveness, can be revoked. Forgiveness and covering are contingent on God and God's reckoning which we're going to see in this psalm and more about that when we get to the reckoning phase. But for now, let's just notice, forgiveness is something that is carried or borne away, the root of the verb from which nasa comes, N-A-S-A.

It means to lift up, to bear up, to carry or to take. So here is this burden, here is this rebellious sin, this willful sin and it is lifted off and it is carried. Lifted off and carried.

It's borne away is sort of implied. So, you commit a willful sin but we don't bear it, God bears it and there is a subtle anticipation of Christ bearing our sins. Oh the blessedness of borne sin.

It's not just canceled out of the ledger in this statement. This means God has put a shoulder under it and lifted it off. And why would He do that? You did it on purpose but He has borne that load.

He has lifted it up. It gives you grist for the mill thinking about the literal nature of the death of Christ, of all of the possible forms of execution, He is lifted up. If I be lifted up I will draw all men.

And He is lifted up as He literally becomes the means of forgiveness of sin. You remember in Ephesians 1.7 and Colossians 1.14 both in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin. And even in Greek there is an idea of bearing and carrying in the verb for forgiveness.

So, blessedness is forgiven transgression covered sin. That's all of verse 1. So we now know that sin is the general idea of missing the mark. This was also used of a sin offering.

When you get to the whole burnt offering, the sin offering in Leviticus, this is it. It is the kata'a or kata'at, sin or sin offering. And let me just give you of many, and again you can look this up in Strong's and trace it through.

The first one we looked at was Pasha and that was Strong's 6588. It's got a high number because it's down in the P. It's very nearer the end of the alphabet. Pasha, this one is kata'at and it's khet so it's got a lower number and this is 2401 in Strong's.

Just take a look at the passages where these are used. I'll give you one for kata'at and this is 2 Kings 17.21. And the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers until He had cast them out of His sight. We just went

through 2 Kings recently.

Remember Kings and Prophets? 2 Kings chapter 17. We're getting close to the end of the whole story. You've got the Assyrians taking out the northern kingdom.

You've got the Babylonians taking out the southern kingdom. What is He talking about here? The Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel, took the kingdom away from them, took their king away from them, revoked the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob and to David, set them all aside because they were in violation of their side of that covenant and those covenants. Covenant of the land, covenant that through them all nations would be blessed.

They were out of compliance and the second part broke the covenant. The first part says, I'm suspending my side of the bargain. So no longer do you have a king, no longer do you have a land, no longer do you have hegemony and independence and I'm fulfilling all of the curses that were given to you back in Deuteronomy.

I told you what would happen if you did not keep my statutes and my covenant laws. So verse 20 of 2 Kings 17, the Lord rejected the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers until He had cast them out of His sight. When He had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king.

Remember Jeroboam up there, Rehoboam in the south? Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the Lord and made them commit a great kata'at. Jeroboam led them astray. Jeroboam ensnared them, encouraged them, instigated them.

This is the kind of sin that Eve committed in the garden. Eve's sin is kind of a kata'at because she was deceived. Adam was pasha.

He knew exactly what he was doing when he said, give me some of that. I'll go wherever the Lord is sending you. I don't want to do without you.

So even in the garden you have both kinds in view, although you don't have the vocabulary necessarily pressed in that case. But in verse 22 here, the sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did and they did not depart from them. Even when the prophet stood up and said, this is wrong.

Once their eyes were open, they still did not abandon those sins and they kind of move from, okay, so you failed, but you can recover. But when the offer of recovery is given, they don't. And you move from simple sin into transgression, willful transgression.

Well, that gives you just a flavor here and we're only one verse in. So the third word is coming up in verse 2. And in your English it says, blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, there's our third word, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. The Hebrew word order here is asherah, same one we had in the first one, the blessednesses.

Now we have adam, asherah, the blessednesses of four or two, adam, the man. And adam is man the way God created him. This is a restored man.

Adam was made in the image of God. Later on, you have the pronouns that are used for man in his less great state. But adam is man as God intended him to be.

Blessednesses to the adam, to the man, not imputed by the Lord, not imputed by the Lord, not imputed by the Lord, but to him iniquity. Not imputed by the Lord to him. And again, you have the order of importance here.

Blessednesses to the man, not imputed by the Lord, to him iniquity. Forgiveness, covering are given ahead of the transgression and the sin. Here, lack of imputation.

This is something that is not done. Forgiveness is an act. Covering is an act.

This is a non-action. God does not, and the word here for impute means to account. This is from Kashav, K-A-S-H-A-V.

Kashav. And in modern Hebrew, a form of this word means a computer. It means a thing that calculates, that reckons.

There is a reckoning. There is a day of reckoning. Well, I reckon he's had enough of that.

We use I reckon. I calculate. I figure.

And all of those are perfectly good translations of Kashav. The Lord doesn't figure. He doesn't reckon.

He doesn't account. Impute is sort of a theology word anymore. We use compute and dispute.

We don't use impute very much anymore. It's kind of in the realm of the Bible. But he doesn't reckon.

And this partakes of the first two words, doesn't it? If you have picked up and borne away from someone, the impact of that sin is no longer in their vicinity. If you cover over so that it doesn't become a factor, well now when you reckon what goes to that man, what's covered over and what's borne away, it doesn't figure into your calculations. So there are blessednesses to the man that the Lord has.

In other words, impute sort of covers both of the previous words. Because it's covered and borne away, it doesn't come into the reckoning. And so the Lord, Yahweh, does not reckon to him.

And now our next word, our third word, which is Awon. A-W-O-N. It starts with the evil ion, and then it's got a wow, and then it's got a noon.

Awon. This comes from Awain. Awon is a sin.

And this iniquity is something different. Again, you remember what transgression is, right? There's a willful component there. There's an eyes open, I chose this.

You remember what sin is, Pesah, which is I can be led into it, I can fall into it. I've still got some culpability. I shouldn't be led.

I shouldn't be trapped. I should have had my eyes open. But I didn't set out to do it.

I didn't rationalize. And there's a different degree of complicity in Pesah than there is in... In Pesah, there's quite a bit of complicity, where in Kata'at, it's more I stepped out of bounds. I was blindsided.

I should have known better. I still bear responsibility, but not in the same way as setting out to do so. David with Bathsheba, that's clearly transgression.

He made plans. He continued. He didn't immediately back up and say, what have I done? He continued with all of the machinations that followed.

But this is Awon. A-W-O-N. And this is specifically, and it's used for both of these things, and they're not quite the same, but it's used almost equally in the Old Testament for the guilt of sin, the blameworthiness of it, and the penalty for it, the punishment.

I have brought iniquity on myself. I have brought guilt and blame on myself. And blameworthiness means punishment worthiness.

I am worthy of the penalty. So iniquity speaks of consequence. Pesah and Kata'at are kind of, how did you get into it? They look at the front side.

It's like an ingressive heiress. How did this begin? Awon has to do with the result. Iniquity is the result.

I may have set out to sin because I was just, lust has conceived, brings forth sin, sin when it's finished brings forth death. Well, when lust conceives and we pander and cater to that lust, we're getting into transgression. We are cultivating transgression.

Once it happens, it brings forth death, that's iniquity. Death is the result. All of the wages of sin is death.

Iniquity. I'm blameworthy, I'm guilty, and there is a punishment attached which I deserve. That's iniquity.

So, oh the blessedness of born-away transgression is not imputed by the Lord, not reckoned with guilt and punishment. Makes sense? What's part of the celebration that I'm forgiven and my sin is covered? The Lord is not reckoning consequence. He doesn't look at me as a blameworthy person and he does not look at me as someone who needs that penalty, that consequence.

Well, that's our first two verses. What can we say if we had to stop right here and this is our only Bible class for the night? What's the answer to the question, well, so what? We instinctively know that it is a bad thing dark sobering scary thing to deserve the wrath of God. You read Hebrews chapter 10, if we sin willfully after we come to a knowledge of the truth there remains no more sacrifice for sin but a certain fearful expectation of judgment.

When the rain comes on the field in Hebrews 6 many times and it bears only thorns, it is fit for burning and near to a curse. We instinctively know that something bad deservedly is coming our way when we are guilty and the blessedness David celebrates because you think about this, people always say, oh, you know, Christianity is no different than Buddhism and Muslims and name all of the cults, name all of the religions. I could be a Zoroastrian, I could be a guy following Bob Marley and smoking marijuana, they made a religion.

I could have any number of faiths, I could be a Scientologist, I could be a Christian Scientist, I could be a Jehovah's Witness, I could be a Mormon, I could be anything and they are all pretty much the same, they are just different colors of the rainbow. No, there is no system on earth to include sin in the way of God. There is no secular counseling, secular help, therapies of any kind that can address iniquity.

The guilt that our conscience is aware of, when God puts the knowledge of himself in the heart of every man, that creates conscience and transgression and sin produces a consciousness of wrong and this is why people who are fantastically wealthy and celebrated and have everything the world can offer will do the Richard Corey thing and put a bullet in their head or overdose on drugs or whatever because what they cannot shake and cannot escape and the reason they kill themselves, I keep thinking, why don't you hop a freight and just go somewhere and be anonymous, wash dishes somewhere and live under a bridge and just keep on going. Why would you think that you have to end your life? The reason is you cannot escape iniquity. Your heart knows it.

Even if you sear your conscience with a hot iron and it stops telling you that what you are doing is wrong, you know in your heart of hearts that you are wrong and the guilt and the deservedness of punishment is unrelieved and there is only one source of relief. There is only one source of that blessedness and it is God because it is God who defined what sin and transgression are. It's his authority that declares things to be right and things to be wrong.

It's his essence and his character that is the standard of measure for light and darkness, righteousness and evil. And the only way to be absolved, to be relieved, to be delivered and set free from that power is from God. Blessedness for covered transgression, forgiven transgression for covered sin.

Blessedness to the man to whom is not reckoned iniquity by the Lord. It's and it is the only place where that can happen. So if we sometimes find ourselves pressed for things to be thankful for, we look around and say well you know I'm not feeling too good, not doing too well financially, not doing too well socially, I'm not doing too well in my job, you know the world

news is bleak, national news is bleak, local news is worse and I don't really see any rays of sunshine anywhere.

If you want something to focus on, think about the galactically huge deliverance we have from ourselves, from our failures, from our willful sins. We knew better and did it anyway. We saw it coming and didn't turn the steering wheel.

We crashed right into it with our pedal to the metal. We're as guilty as sin and God still forgives. God still covers.

God still delivers. God still no longer reckons to us iniquity. It's the basis of our salvation.

We can't be saved without that truth. It is second only to the resurrection itself in terms of power and importance in our lives. What does Paul say about the resurrection? We covered this in Corinthians 15.

What is the importance of the resurrection? It's the central post on which all of salvation rests and if Christ is not raised, what's the consequence? If Christ is not raised, you are yet in your sins. They are twin truths. They are two sides of the same coin.

The resurrection of Christ is the proof that there is true forgiveness of sin. So you don't have one without the other and it's a powerful, wonderful thing to be thankful for. And the more we think about the extent to which we don't deserve forgiveness and covering and lack of imputation, the more thankful and grace-oriented and humble we are.

So it's a great thing to reflect on and to thank God for and to thank Him for the Lord Jesus Christ who because He came and died and because He was raised from the dead is the means for all forgiveness of sin, past, present and future. Well, let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll look at the rest of this Psalm in a little bit greater coverage speed.