

## Virtual Bible Study of Psalm 32

Hello, everyone. We're going to continue with our study of the Psalms with Psalm 32. In Luther's Introductions, you will find that we no longer talk about the commandments or the petition, the Lord's Prayer, where this Psalm can be found. Luther found that after 30, some odd psalms of kind of repeating the same thing that we could then from there, divine and figure out where the rest of these psalms might fit in. They tend to fit in some of the same similar areas. So he no longer is going to point out which part of the Commandments or which part of the Creed or which part of the Lord's Prayer that the Psalms are from. He still gives an introduction, but it doesn't include that bit.

So we're in Psalm 32 now. And let us read what Luther has to say about Psalm 32.

The 32nd Psalm is an exemplary Psalm of instruction that teaches us what sin is, and how one might be freed from it and be righteous before God. Our reason does not know what sin is and tries to make satisfaction for it with works. But the psalmist says that even saints are sinners. They cannot become holy or blessed except by confessing themselves as sinners before God, knowing that they are regarded as righteous only from the grace of God, apart from any service or work. In short, our righteousness is called (in plain language) the forgiveness of our sins. Or, as it says here: "sins not counted," "sins covered," "sins not to be seen." Here stand the clear plain words: All the saints are sinners and remain sinners. But they are holy because God in His grace neither sees nor counts these sins, but forgets, forgives, and covers them. There is thus no distinction between the saints and the non-saints. They are sinners alike and all sin daily, only that the sins of the holy are not counted but covered; and the sins of the unholy are not covered but counted. One would have a healing dressing on and is bandaged; the other wound is open and undressed. Nevertheless, both of them are truly wounded, truly sinners, concerning which we in our books in other places have abundantly bore witness.

Psalm 32:

- <sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.
- <sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- <sup>3</sup> For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.
- <sup>4</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.
- <sup>5</sup> I acknowledged my sin to you,  
and I did not cover my iniquity;  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"  
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.
- <sup>6</sup> Therefore let everyone who is godly  
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;  
surely in the rush of great waters,  
they shall not reach him.
- <sup>7</sup> You are a hiding place for me;  
you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

<sup>8</sup> I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

<sup>9</sup> Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,

which must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
or it will not stay near you.

<sup>10</sup> Many are the sorrows of the wicked,

but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.

<sup>11</sup> Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,

and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

All right, this is David confessing his sin before God and begging for the forgiveness that only God can give. This is of course, related to his time with Bathsheba and Uriah and all that came along with that, the most glaring and obvious sin David committed and that was recorded anyway. But he says, he still holds confidence that God will forgive. "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." That is us. Our transgression is forgiven and our sin is covered by the blood of Christ. We are washed in the blood of the Lamb. We wear the white robes of righteousness that are found in Christ. And so therefore we are covered in the righteousness of Christ. We do not gain righteousness of our own efforts. It is simply the Word of God applied to us.

"Blessed is a man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity." What a blessing that is. I mean, think about it. If you are honest with your life and if you look at the 10 Commandments and all the depth of the word and the thought that goes along with those commandments and the branches that Jesus talks about with lust and saying, you hate your brother and the various other things like that, can any of us stand before God and say we are without iniquity, without sin? If we're honest and we should be, there is always sin within us. This is why in the theology of the Cross and the theology that Martin Luther lays out that we find in Scripture and right here in this Psalm, especially we realize that we are both sinner and saint at the same time.

"Simul justus et peccator" in the Latin, which Luther said, "At the same time justified and sinner." And somewhere along the line, the English translated that to "sinner and saint". We are justified by Christ and therefore we are a saint. We are holy and righteous before God. But in this world, we still have sin and we still act upon that sin. And we are still influenced and afflicted with that sin. So, there's always this tension that goes on within humans, as Christians especially, of this tension between sinner and saint. Paul says, "The good that I would do, that I do not. And the evil that I ought not to do, that I do." And he talks about that tension right there. That even though he knows what is right, he cannot do it. And even though he knows the evil he ought not to do, that he just does by human nature.

And so we rejoice, we rejoice that God redeems us. And I think we also need to remember to rejoice when God's hand is heavy upon us. Now that doesn't quite sound right, perhaps at first, but think about this. If we do not know what our sins are, if we do not realize the weight and severity of our sins, then we tend to blow it off and not think about it. But if we know the weight of our sin, we despair for our life and turn to the only hope that we have, which is Christ Jesus. And so the weight of God's hand of judgment turns us back to His Word, where we find joy and comfort and peace and the forgiveness of sins. And so there is great joy in being turned back. "Return to the Lord, your God," the phrase that we use during this Lenten season, as we prepare for the Gospel, as we leave out the Alleluias and remember our sin. Return to the Lord. Return back to His Word where we find solace and comfort.

"Let everyone who is godly offer prayer to You at a time when You may be found." What a blessing it is that He can always be found. The only reason God doesn't listen to prayers is because we don't speak them

because we fail to turn to Him. And even then, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us when our spirit doesn't know what to say. So even then, there's always a time when He will hear.

"You are a hiding place for me. You preserve me from trouble. You surround me with shouts of deliverance." We have this hedge of protection around us, and God holds us in the palm of His hand. He protects us and guards us and keeps us in the one true faith without any merit or worthiness within us. And so He also calls us not to be stubborn like the mule or the horse, who is only led by the demands of the bit and the bridle and is yanked this way or that way, pulled by that, not by his own free will, but by the force of the bit and the bridle. In other words, what the psalmist is saying is let me not be stubborn and constantly be forced to recognize my sin, be forced to turn and confess my sin. Rather, let me be honest with myself and honest before God and confess my sin readily and quickly so that I might know the grace that He offers.

"Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, oh righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart." Even though you are sinner and saint, you are upright because Christ has made you upright in your baptism. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Let us pray. O God, our heavenly Father, with whom is grace and much forgiveness, be merciful to us who were born in sin and cannot but sin and fall short every day. Forgive us our many transgressions and account them against us no more, but make us Your heirs through Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, who was delivered into death for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Amen.