

## THE FULLNESS OF FORGIVENESS

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Psalm 32:1-2.

This Psalm was written upon the occasion of David's repentance and forgiveness at the preaching of Nathan the prophet after David had sinned in taking Uriah's wife, and in order to cover that sin had occasioned the death of Uriah.

This Psalm opens with a perfect outburst of blessedness that comes straight from the heart of David. It pictures a bright light, but immediately tells of the time when it was not there and of how dark it was then. The dark picture is that of a man without forgiveness, whereas the bright one is that of one who has received it. The Psalm announces the happiness of the person who has come to know the reality of divine forgiveness in its fullness.

Often people speak of a sermon as being dull, and perhaps some are. But we do not see how any message could be counted lifeless, uninteresting or flat when within its bounds are the good tidings of forgiveness. This is what every sinner needs to hear and what God yearns to make known to all the world. There are few, if any, sweeter words in human language than forgiveness.

David gave expression to his joy which was overflowing on account of his being forgiven. True happiness consists in having one's sins forgiven. The knowledge of sins forgiven is undoubtedly one of the greatest blessings that can come to any person.

This word "blessed" in the Hebrew text is in the plural. It may be translated, "Oh, the happinesses!" or "Oh, the blessednesses!" It does not denote an ordinary experience. It indicates a deep inward satisfaction based on rightness with God, with others and with self.

All men have their own ideas of blessedness. They count those blessed who are strong in health, who are abundant in riches, who are honored with fame and who exercise authority. But God's Word does not call any of these "blessed." Instead, God tells us what it is to be blessed. Forgiven sin is far better than accumulated wealth. The remission of sins is infinitely to be preferred to all the glitter and the glare of this world's prosperity.

David knew by personal experience the awfulness of sin and the blessedness of being forgiven. He was not propounding a theory but declaring a glorious truth. He knew something of the readiness and ability of God to pardon and to deliver. He had sinned, but he had repented, and God had forgiven him. He knew the reality and the extensiveness of the experience because it was his own.

### I. The Need of Forgiveness.

There are three words in the text which describe the condition of all who are out of Christ. They represent man's threefold failure and consequently his need of the grace of God in forgiveness.

#### 1. Transgression.

Transgression is a rebellion against rightful authority. It is a revolt against God. It is a deliberate turning away from God where there is the knowledge of right. It means walking across, or going counter to the known will of God, in thought, in word or in deed. When the Psalmist speaks of "transgression" he had reference to doing that which has been prohibited. It is stepping across the boundary line which has been laid down. It carries with it the thought of rebellion. This is what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. God laid down a certain prohibition and they overstepped His bounds and were led to partake of the fruit of the forbidden tree. A transgression is the most obvious form of wrongdoing. It

refers to the things that we have done which ought not to have been done.

2. Sin.

This word is a very common one upon our lips. It occurs many times in the Bible, wherein people are constantly warned of the outcome of those who indulge in it. Sin means missing the mark, or wandering from the way. Sin is coming short of the goal set for us by a wise Creator. Therefore, the sinner is one who misses the chief end of life, which is to glorify God. God created man to find in him the qualities of faith and love and obedience, but in his disobedience man missed the mark and failed to glorify his Creator.

Sin means to miss the mark, or to come short of the point at which we should have aimed. It is missing the thing which was best for us. It hurts us. It prevents God doing for us what He was disposed to do and would have done if we had not hindered Him. Every evil misses its own shabby mark. No man ever gets, in doing wrong, the thing that he did the wrong for; or, if he gets it, he also gets something else along with it that takes all the sweet taste out of it. All sin is a missing of the true goal.

3. Iniquity.

This word refers to the fact that man has turned aside from the proper course prescribed for him. It indicates depravity or moral crookedness. It is crookedness as opposed to straightness, uprightness or righteousness. It is the perverse turning aside from the proper course of life.

These three words summarize the true character of human nature in the sight of God. Alienation, failure and crookedness comprise the evil trinity which has a terrible grip upon all who are born into this world. These three words, transgression, sin and iniquity, reveal to us our deep and great need of forgiveness.

II. The Nature of Forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a provision for sinning humanity. This glorious fact is the exclusive revelation of the Bible. The message of forgiveness cannot be discovered anywhere in the vastness of God's universe aside from written revelation. This truth of forgiveness was known to many who bore abundant witness to its reality and possessed the sweet assurance in their souls of sins forgiven. Of Israel's great king we read, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." Romans 4:6-7. When Peter preached in the home of Cornelius we hear him say, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission (forgiveness) of sins." Acts 10:43.

Forgiveness is described in three ways:

1. As the removal of a burden.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." To forgive is to lift up and to take away. It is to lift a transgression as a burden, a heavy load, resting upon the sinner, and bearing it away from him to a place where it will trouble him no more. The principal idea in the word is complete removal. It is expressed beautifully in John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

This statement, "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven," implies that there is hope for the rebel, the one who has defied God, who has stepped over the bounds laid down by the Creator.

Forgiveness is the relieving of the burdened heart of its sense of guilt and its fear of punishment. There is no other sense of relief equal to it, this blessed consciousness that the deeds we had been accumulating like a mountain barrier between God and us have been lifted up and borne away. There is no other joy like it. It is the blessedness of liberty to the captive, of health to the diseased, of sight to the blind, of immortality to the dying, and of heaven to the lost. Health, wealth, power and fame fade into insignificance in comparison with the blessedness that comes into the soul when one's transgressions are forgiven.

2. As the covering of sin.

"Blessed is he whose sin is covered." God is conceived as covering the sin over so as to hide and obliterate it. It is covered in such a manner that the foulness of it no longer meets the eye of the Judge and calls for punishment. There is plenty to be seen, but it is covered completely. God does not see it any more. It is like the snow which falls on the ground and the dust and dirt are entirely covered, so God says, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." Adam tried to cover his sin with leaves, and Cain tried to cover his with lies, but God covers sin with blood. No other covering has ever equalled the one which God uses.

"What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

Sin is covered over by the blood of Christ, as one might cover some foul thing, that it may no longer be in evidence before the eye of God. He Himself casts a merciful veil over it and hides it from Himself. As it were, God digs a grave for it, and buries it out of sight.

3. As the cancelling of a debt.

"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." "Imputeth" means not hold an account against. So, as used here, it means that an account is not kept against the person. The records have been cleared. God deals with him as though he no longer has any connection with it. As far as God is concerned the sinner is cleared of his iniquities. They are not held against him. Forgiven sins are never to be counted. They will not enter into the reckoning. God does not cherish a grudge against any. It does not mean that you are worthy, but that God counts you worthy for the sake of somebody else. You are saved through the merits of Christ. As it were, Christ steps forward and says, "Put this man's sin to my account and accept him as you accept Me." Oh, the joy of full forgiveness! The burden of sin is lifted off from us and borne away by the Son of God. It is no more reckoned against the penitent.

III. The Nobility of Forgiveness

God's forgiveness is different from that with which we are familiar among men. It reveals to us the fact that His heart is in it and that He means exactly what He declares. Our Lord is so approachable and so ready to save the sinner who trusts in Him.