

## PSALLO

### Psalm 32:1–7

This year’s result of our labor is a metrical translation and tune for a most instructive and comforting Psalm, the thirty-second. The translation you have before you is very straightforward, with only a few departures from that which is familiar. In the first verse, in keeping with a literal use of the Hebrew, we have rendered the verb  $\text{קָח}$  as “to take away.” In the Authorized Version (AV) there are two words in that verse that are functional synonyms,  $\text{עָוֹן}$  and  $\text{חַטָּאת}$  both meaning “sin.” The reason for the two different terms has more to do with poetic style than with nuance of meaning. In verse four we have rendered the Hebrew  $\text{נַפְלֵי}$  as “youthful vigor” instead of the AV’s “moisture.” The word itself is only used twice, once here in Psalm 32 and again in Numbers 11:8, speaking of the “freshness” or lack of age or spoilage of the manna, that it tasted like “fresh” oil. In the rest we have followed both the AV and the Scottish Metrical version in the main.

The tune is a “common meter” tune, which by count is rendered 8.6.8.6., or 8 beats followed by 6 beats, 8 again, and 6 again. For those unfamiliar with this meter, it is very common, used in songs such as “Amazing Grace,” and “O! For a Thousand Tongues,” and many others. The Scottish Metrical Psalter has been translated from the Hebrew into common meter for every selection. The Psalter we use at our home church has 312 such selections, so that by singing through six selections per week, the worshipper will compass the entire “Divine Hymnal” in one year. So in theory, the tune you have before you could be used (or any other common meter tune) to sing the entire Psalter. I have named the tune  $\text{כִּשְׁמֵרָה}$  לֹ (Lo-Yachshov) or “He will not Impute,” in keeping with the teaching of this Psalm concerning the Lord’s not imputing sin to those who call upon His name, confessing their sins.

As for the Psalm, it is most instructive and comforting, as it speaks about the Lord’s forgiveness of sin. We have used the contextual boundaries noted in the Psalm itself, the Hebrew word  $\text{הַלְלָה}$  (Selah) and chosen to translate only the first seven verses. While scholars are divided as to how exactly this word is to be used, there is a contextual separation or boundary normally associated with it.<sup>1</sup> In this section, David speaks of the man whose sins are taken away or lifted from him, covered, and not reckoned or imputed. In all of these descriptions we have the guilt of the sinner being removed

from him by the gratuitous action of God Himself, forming the final thought in our selection, “Thou art my hiding-place.” There is no other place to whom one may go for forgiveness than to the Offended Party, God. The Apostle Paul makes use of this Psalm in his master-thesis on the Gospel, Romans 1–5, especially in 4:6–8, which reads,

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. Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.<sup>2</sup>

We note not only the teaching of the Old Testament here revealing gratuitous justification by faith alone apart from works, but also that this is taught by way of logical necessity, a good and necessary consequence of Scripture itself, as Paul makes use of our Psalm under consideration. Teaching in Romans chapter four the imputation of righteousness, apart from works to the believer, Paul then quotes David who taught its opposite, that the Lord “will not impute sin.” David wrote that sin will not be reckoned to those who believe [in Christ], and Paul cites this as the necessary corollary to his own explicit teaching in the New Testament of imputed righteousness, revealing the necessary connection between these two doctrines, and the lack of any middle ground between them. If sin is not imputed, righteousness is, and if righteousness is imputed, sin is not. The doctrine of gratuitous imputation of the righteousness of Christ, received by faith alone, is an Old Testament doctrine also taught in the New Testament, where it is even more clear, and so the Old Testament saint was not delivered from the wrath to come by his works at all, but because the Lord did not impute his sin to him.

After affirming this Gospel-doctrine, David reveals the marks of true faith and its pleasant and satisfying fruit. The first is confession of sin, and the Spirit bearing witness with David’s spirit that he was indeed forgiven. This is first given in its corollary—that to neglect this evangelical duty of self-examination and confession of sin is to remain under the chastising hand of the Lord, as it pressed heavily upon David, and will also upon us, if we neglect this Gospel ordinance. Indeed as a Pastor

THE AUTHOR: The Rev. Todd L. Ruddell is pastor of Christ Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPCGA) in Wylie, Texas.

1. See William S. Plumer, *Studies in the Book of Psalms: Being a Critical and Expository Commentary, with Doctrinal and Practical Remarks on the Entire Psalter* (Philadelphia, 1872), pp. 20–21, John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Psalms* (Logos Bible Software, 2008), pp. 30–31, and Joseph Addison Alexander, *The Psalms Translated and Explained* (Edinburgh, 1864), p. 20.

2. *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Romans 4:6–8.

I have spoken with those who have felt, palpably, this same chastisement, and wondered aloud if they were truly forgiven their sins. But we, with David have some “good news” for such sufferers—that there is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and while the evangelical duty of confession of sin is not a quid-pro quo with the Offended Party, it is a means of cleansing, and of knowing, by faith, what it is to be forgiven.<sup>3</sup> Truly, the neglect of self-examination and confession of sin contributes, on the one hand, to a dangerous presumption, and on the other, to a want of the assurance of forgiveness. The remedy for both is a sincere and searching self-examination, where great pains and courage are taken to seek out those open and hidden sins, as part of our making use of gospel grace.<sup>4</sup> David reveals his commitment to confession of sin in verse 5, where we not only have the record of his asking, but his decided conviction to do so. This is good practical divinity, as it exhibits to us that there are times when such verbal commitments need to be made to give greater strength in the performance of duty.

We note as well that there is a revealed end to the opportunity to make confession and seek forgiveness. This is the hedge against the presumption we spoke of earlier, warning us not to think we might “repent at leisure.” Hear the wisdom of the Rev. Thomas Manton:

Oh, could we look upon death as at our back or heels! If men did but consider that within a few days they must go to heaven or hell, that there is but the slender thread of a frail life upon which they depend, that is soon fretted asunder, they would not venture any longer to be out of a state of grace, nor dally with God. But we think we may live long, and time enough to repent by leisure; we put far off the day of our change, and so are undone by our own security.<sup>5</sup>

But the godly are not so (Hebrew, חַסִּידִים Chasid, faithful ones). They do call upon the Lord in that early and acceptable time, and He is found of them, and they receive the knowledge of their forgiveness, working the means of self-examination, confession, and repentance from sin. They are the ones who will be delivered in the floods of great judgment, and in the day of the great and final assize.

Our section finishes with David, who was pursued by his enemies, and convicted by his own sins, speaking of the Lord Jehovah as his “hiding place” from these threats to his eternal felicity. The Hebrew is סֵתֶר סֵתֶר secret place, or covert—a place of protection. In this is the acknowledgement that it is God

alone who saves—He is our refuge most secure and covering from the falling fiery indignation that will devour all His adversaries. Our works will not deliver, strength or prowess will not, our cleverness and mental acuity cannot, but God alone is our place of refuge and safety. David speaks not only of God’s deliverance and faithfulness, but in that deliverance, joy and gladness in song. Truly the Psalter itself is a witness to this deliverance of the people of God, and they take courage from the faithfulness of Jehovah there proclaimed and sung back to Him with the confidence that He is their secret place in the days of trouble. Truly, they are compassed about not only by songs of deliverance, but deliverance itself, in the Person of their Savior and Redeemer (Zech. 2:5).■

*In Brief: David Dickson on Psalm 32:6-7. A Brief Explication of the Psalms, Volume 1 (1834), p. 168–169.*

V. 6. The first use of this doctrine and of David’s experience, is to teach others how to behave themselves in their trouble. Whence learn, 1. The doctrine of justification by gracious forgiving iniquity, is the ground of all the godly’s approaches to God, and right worshipping of him; for, to show the use of this doctrine, thus tried by experience, he saith, *every godly one shall pray unto thee*. 2. There is a time when God may be found, to wit, so long as God is offering grace and sparing extremity of wrath, which time men ought to lay hold on, not knowing how short while it may last: they shall pray *in a time when thou mayest be found*. 3. It is possible, that a godly man may be in the midst of the waters of sore troubles, and yet these troubles not come near unto him, because God can furnish the man an ark in Christ, whereby he shall swim above the deluge; and when God keepeth off trouble, that it proveth not hurtful (much more when he maketh trouble a means of spiritual good to a man, and giveth the man true peace and contentment in himself, it is verified what is promised here: *surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come near him*).

V. 7. From the second use wherein David confirmeth his own faith for time to come, learn: 1. Experience of God’s mercies bygone should fasten resolution to make use of faith hereafter in all troubles, as here. 2. The godly after one trouble, should prepare for another, after one delivery expect another, as here. 3. What God hath proved himself to be to us before, we may promise he shall be the same to us in effect hereafter, because he is that by covenant and promise to us, what in practice we have found him to be; for David reasoneth thus, *thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble*; that is, I shall have no damage by trouble, as is said. A justified soul resolving to make use of God in every condition that can come unto him, according to the covenant, may promise to himself a comfortable outgate of all his troubles, and matter of praise and joy from God on all hands; yea, he may confidently say with David, *thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance*.■

3. See 1 John 1:8–10.

4. See Psalm 38:1–8; 51:3–5; Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 57:17; Jeremiah 31:18.

5. Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 7 (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1872), p. 144. See also Isaiah 49:8; 55:6; Luke 19:42–44; 2 Corinthians 6:1–2; Hebrews 4:1–9.

# Psalm 32:1-7

A Psalm of David, Maschil.

Lo-Yachshov

Todd L. Ruddell

<sup>1</sup>O bless-ed is the man for whom is tak-en all a - way  
<sup>2</sup>Bless'd is the man to whom the LORD doth not im - pute his sin  
<sup>3</sup>When si-lence I then did re - tain t'was that my ver - y bones  
<sup>4</sup>For day and night Thy heav-y hand did sore up - on me lie,  
<sup>5</sup>My sin made known my 'niq - ui - ty to Thee re - veal'd I said,  
<sup>6</sup>For this to Thee shall all th'up-right pray when thou may'st be found  
<sup>7</sup>Thou art my sure ref - uge se - cure me from dis - tress doth keep

His trans-gres-sion; and all his sin is cov - er - ed al - way.  
 And thus a - bid - ing in his soul de - ceit's not found there - in.  
 Weak-end, they were as a - ged, through my roar-ing all day long.  
 So that my youth - ful vig - or is turn'd like the sum - mer, dry.  
 Un - to the LORD I will con - fess and my guilt Thou for - gav'st.  
 And cer - tain the great wa - ters' floods shall not him com - pass round.  
 And with songs of de - liv - er - ance a - bout shall com - pass me.