

Psalm 32

Structure

Psalm 32 is a psalm of David, in which David instructs the worshippers in the sanctuary.

The term “Maskil”, which can be found in the header of this psalm probably has the meaning that this is an instructional psalm. There are 13 more psalms that are denoted as “Maskils”.

This psalm is a liturgical dialogue between David and God in the presence of worshippers at the sanctuary or temple

- v1-2: David speaks to the assembled worshippers
- v3-7: David speaks to God in the presence of the assembled worshippers
- v8-9: God speaks (via a priest) to David and the assembled people
- v10-11: David speaks to the assembled people

The psalm feels a bit like a play, where David and God speak to each other, but they in turn address the audience, which in this case is the assembly of worshippers.

In a act of worship the role of God would most likely be performed by a priest.

Verse by verse

v1-2 David to Worshippers

v1-2: Form the introduction to the Psalm. David addresses the worshippers with a proclamation of the happy state of those who have experienced God's forgiveness.

PS 32:1 Blessed is he
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.

PS 32:2 Blessed is the man
whose sin the LORD does not count against him
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

Although said at the start of this psalm, David shows the other people here what the ideal relationship with God is: that God has forgiven a person of his/her sins, and the person meet God with a clean slate. The other point that David makes here right at the beginning is that God is playing the main part. God is the one who has forgiven sins, and does not count these against the person. There is no action from the person required.

In Romans 4: 1-8, Paul quotes these verses to indicate that forgiveness is not associated with our doings -> but that forgiveness comes from God unconditionally

Paul refers to Abraham, how he believed God unconditionally and that therefore he was called righteous (his sins were forgiven).

Paul says: ^{RO 4:4} Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

After saying this he quotes these two first verses of this psalm.

The whole psalm indicates that we receive God's forgiveness independent of what we are doing for it.

This is the key of our Christian faith. Jesus died for us on the cross for forgiveness of our sins. Period. So unlike what people believe in non-Christian religions where a person has to earn this forgiveness by good works or deeds, or by certain actions, like going to Mecca, it is Jesus' death on the cross that has taken our sins. He himself has become the offering and the action that pays for the effects of our wrongdoing

In the Old Testament people offered food or animals up to God to obtain forgiveness. Jesus' offering has taken this need away, and now we are free to come to God and request forgiveness of our sins directly and without making an offering. This psalm, even though in the Old Testament, highlights God's grace towards his people, and that in the end God forgives us by grace and not by the actions that we do in order to obtain forgiveness.

Jesus' offering is for once and all; everyone is free to come to God via Jesus to ask for forgiveness. You do not have to be a Jew and you do not have to offer something else up to God. Jesus has freed the way to God up for us.

However, this does not mean that we are forgiven automatically. We still have to come to God to ask for forgiveness.

vs. 3-4 David speaks to God

From vs 3 onward David speaks directly to God, but he also says the things he says for the benefit of the listeners.

Vs. 3-4 show very dramatically what happened to David when he did not ask for forgiveness:

The NIV translates these verses as follows:

PS 32:3 When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

PS 32:4 For day and night
your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.

These are very dramatic words. Here David relates very directly the state of his physical and spiritual being with the fact that he has sinned and not asked for forgiveness: his bones wasted away, and his strength was sapped.

God wants David to ask for forgiveness of his sins and therefore God indicates to David that he needs to do that: God's hand was heavy upon David, and David's strength was sapped away as in the heat of summer.

Also note the relationship between David's physical / spiritual wellbeing and his relationship with God.

But in these verses David also shows his reluctance to confess his sins, he maybe too proud to do so, or maybe he did not realise that the way he felt was related to the sins he had done.

vs 5: David speaks to God

In **vs. 5** David speaks of his decision to own up to God:

PS 32:5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity
I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD"--
and you forgave
the guilt of my sin.

So David ask God for forgiveness of his sins and he is forgiven by God. The result of this is what David said in vs 1-2: He is blessed by the

Lord, because his sins are forgiven, and the result now is the total opposite of how David felt in vs 3-4

vs 6-7 David speaks to God, but also to us

Based on this experience he draws to the following conclusion in **vs 6-7**, as a lesson for the worshippers and for us, but still addressing God. It is like he is praying on all godly people's behalf that they may do the same as he has done: ask God for forgiveness:

PS 32:6 Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you
while you may be found;
surely when the mighty waters rise,
they will not reach him.

There is an element here that tells us that God will not forever hold on for people to ask for forgiveness:

David here tells us that if we are stubborn, and do not listen to God, when he tells us to ask for forgiveness, he may give up waiting for us (He may not be found).

However, if we do come to God, He will protect us from the rise of mighty waters, because God will lift you high above these.

The image of the rising of mighty waters was one commonly used in the near-east to depict threats or distress, as the sea was seen as a force always wanting to destroy the land.

vs 7 David speaks to God

In **vs 7** David adds his testimony of God's protection and faithfulness:

PS 32:7 You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Because his sins are forgiven and his relationship with God is restored, David can trust on God for protection and he also receives God's reassurance for his future salvation as well (the songs of deliverance).

vs 8-9 God speaks to David and worshippers

In **vs 8** and 9 God speaks to David and to the other listeners. In Jewish liturgy these verses would probably have been spoken by a priest.

PS 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.

God will instruct and teach them in the way they should go. He will counsel them and watch over them. I get a feeling of an increasingly closer relationship that God is offering: from Instruction -> teaching -> counselling -> watching over.

In every stage the relationship with God gets closer.
"Instruction" you can get from anyone, having a certain authority, but you may not know them. For instance YouTube videos

"Teaching" you normally receive from a person assigned to you specifically: at a school or a training course.

“Counselling” you normally would not receive or accept from anyone but close friends, or professional people that know your situation very well.

And “watching over” is the closest relationship you can get, this is like a father or a mother watching their child play in the playground or swimming pool. In this stage God is as close or closer as family to us.

But then God warns again in **vs 9**:

PS 32:9 Do not be like the horse or the mule,
which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle
or they will not come to you.

Don't be stupid, like the horse or the mule, which have to be directed by force. Instead, if you make God the centre of your life, and live according to his will, God will offer you is protection and close companionship.

vs.10-11 David speaks to worshippers

From **vs 10** onwards David speaks to the listeners:

He adds another word of reassurance and another word of warning:

PS 32:10 Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the LORD's unfailing love
surrounds the man who trusts in him.

If you trust in God, you'll be surrounded by God's unfailing love, but if you don't and turn away from God, eventually you will get into trouble.

David then concludes in **vs11** with a call to worship to all who have received God's forgiveness and are therefore declared righteous!

PS 32:11 Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Learnings

What can we learn take from this psalm.

Forgiveness

Well firstly, how good it is to ask forgiveness from God, for this re-establishes our relationship to God and we will become blessed by it.

Also, forgiveness makes the way free for God to heal us, to instruct us, to teach us, to council us and to watch over us. Basically God's forgiveness makes the way free for the Holy Spirit to enter into our lives. Later, Jesus called the Holy Spirit also the Counsellor, which echoes with the words that David is using here.

Signs of unforgiven sin

The other thing we can learn from this Psalm is that God has a way of showing us that we have sinned and should ask for forgiveness, maybe for something very specific.

David suffered physically, mentally and spiritually of the effects of him not asking for forgiveness.

Now I am not saying that all illnesses are related to sins that we have not asked forgiveness for. Not at all. But, when we are not feeling well, down or depressed, we may just need to have a look at ourselves and check with Jesus, if there is anything that he wants us to ask forgiveness for. Jesus may want to teach us something that he finds sinful, while we thought that this was all right.

But as is very clear from this psalm, is that by asking for forgiveness and receiving this from God, we reconcile our relationship with God, and make the way free for the Holy Spirit. This also means that once the Holy Spirit has entered our lives, he can also help to heal us. So when we pray for healing for other people or for ourselves, we may want to look at ourselves first, and pray for forgiveness.

For instance when Jesus healed people he often forgave the person's sin first, before the person was healed physically.

This happened for instance with the lame man that was lowered through the roof in front of Jesus, this can be found in Luke 5:19-22:

¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

Only after the man's sins were forgiven did Jesus heal the man and the man walked out of the synagogue praising God.

Final point about forgiveness

I want to finish with a final point about asking for forgiveness. In Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus says:

^{MT 6:14} For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Jesus said this just after he taught the Lord's Prayer to his disciples. And in the Lord's Prayer we also pray: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors"

During one of the Dunamis course that I attended, I received inner healing for an area that was bothering me. This was related to some quarrel my late mother and I had when I was still a teenager. Only after being able to forgive my mother completely, something lifted from me, and the thing that bothered me was released.

So this is very important: in order to receive forgiveness from God, we have to be able to forgive other people for what they have done wrong to us.

Maybe this is something we all need to look into.

Amen.

Psalm 28

Forgiveness

Psalm 32

- This psalm looks at the effect that unforgiven sin has on our lives
- David speaks here about his own experience
- There is a relationship between how we feel and being forgiven



Blessed is the
one whose
transgressions
are forgiven,
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Psalms 32:1

Structure Psalm 32

- Maskil: Instructional Psalm
- Liturgical dialogue:

v1-2: David speaks to the assembled worshippers

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Blessed is he
whose transgressions are
forgiven,
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Blessed is the man
whose sin the LORD does not
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— Psalm 32:1-2 (NIV)



When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

For day and night
your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.

— Psalm 32: 3-4(NIV)



Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity
I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD"--
and you forgave
the guilt of my sin.
— Psalm 32:5 (NIV)



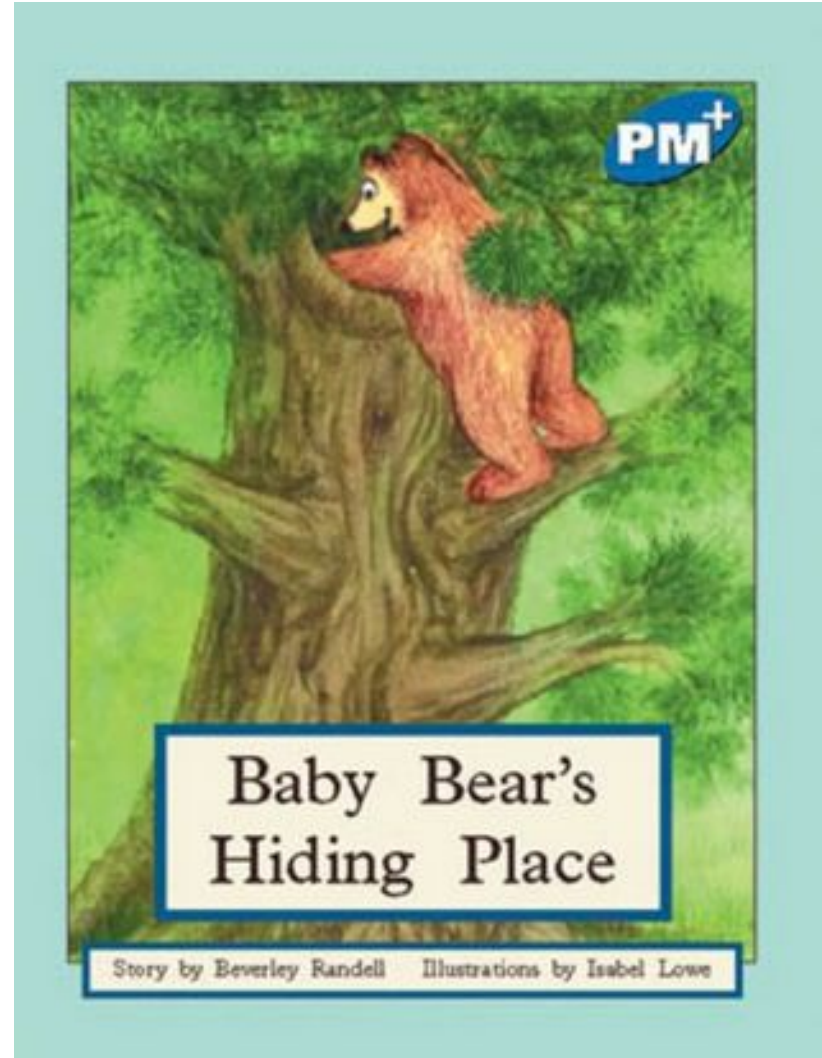
Therefore let everyone who is godly
pray to you

while you may be found;
surely when the mighty waters rise,
they will not reach him.

— Psalm 32:6 (NIV)



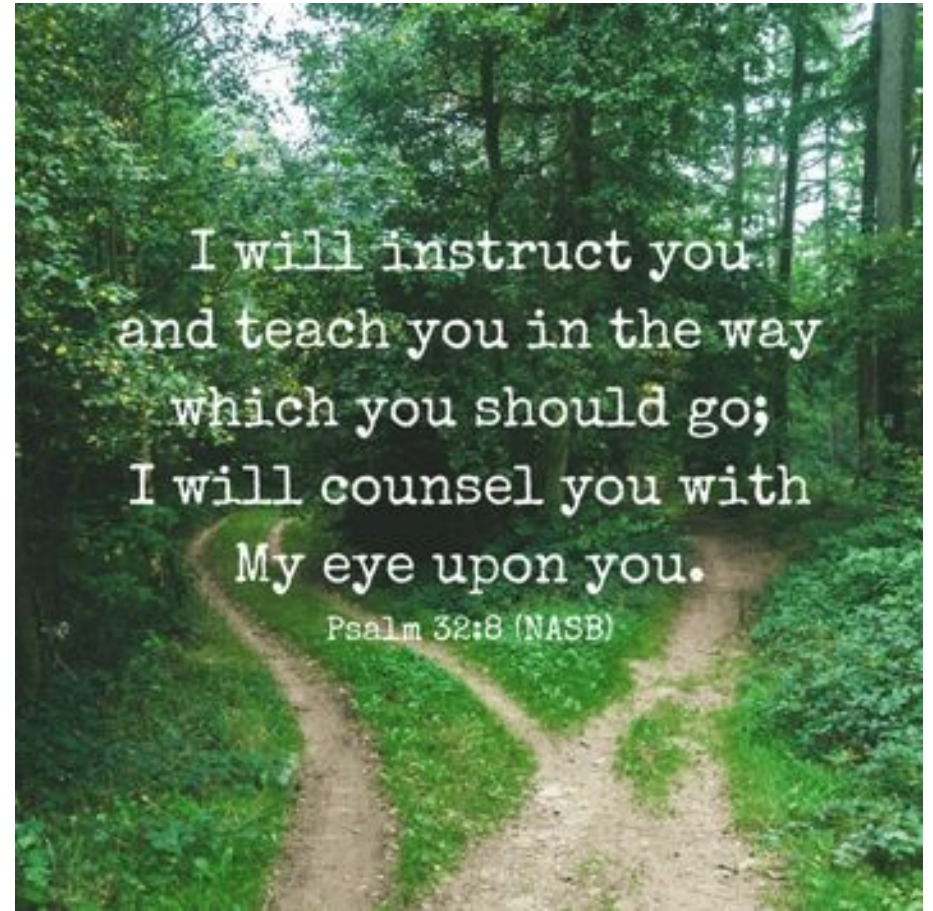
You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from
trouble
and surround me with songs
of deliverance.
— Psalm 32:7 (NIV)



I will instruct you and teach
you in the way you should
go;

I will counsel you and
watch over you.

— Psalm 32:8 (NIV)



Do not be like the horse or the
mule,

which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit
and bridle

or they will not come to you.

— Psalm 32:9 (NIV)



Many are the woes of the
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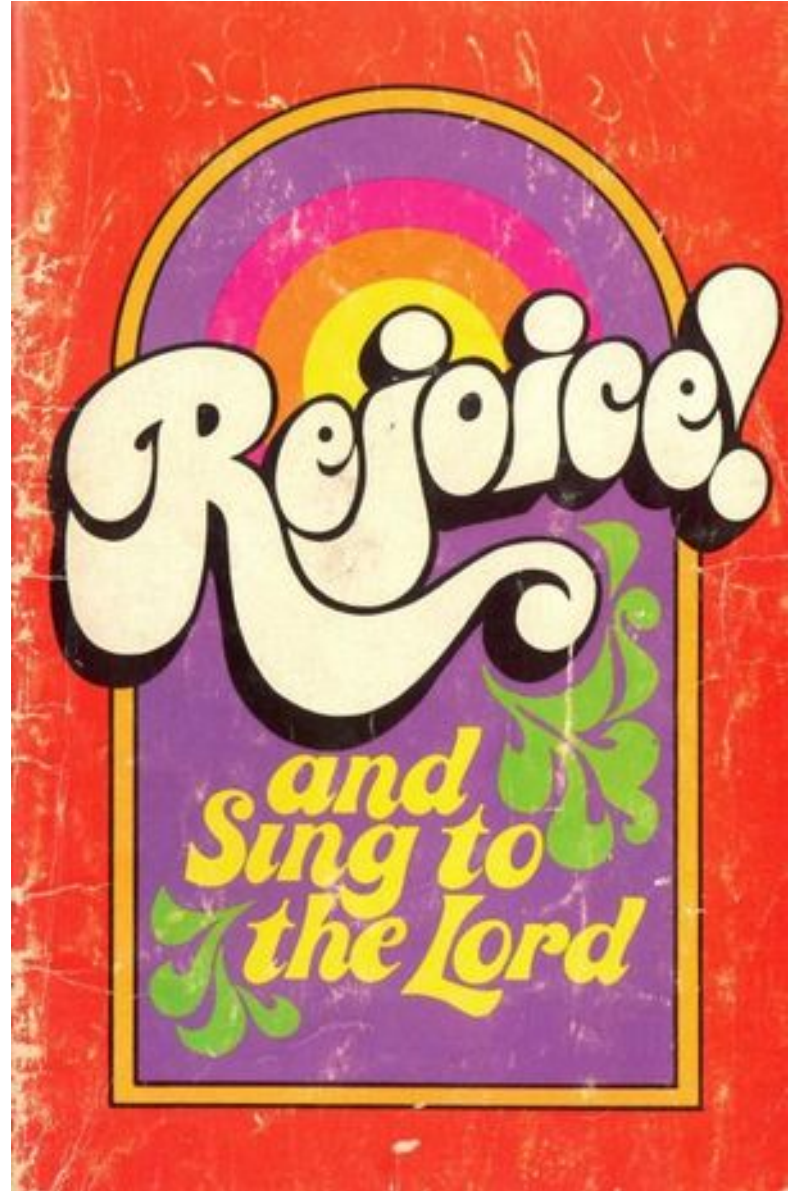
— Psalm 32:10 (NIV)



Rejoice in the LORD and be
glad, you righteous;

sing, all you who are
upright in heart!

— Psalm 32:11 (NIV)



I will instruct you and teach
you in the way you should
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— Psalm 32:8 (NIV)

