

## THE JOYS OF GOD'S FORGIVING LOVE.

– PSALM 32. – OCTOBER 25. –

**"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."**

THIS Psalm will be quickly recognized as King David's exultant acknowledgment of God's forgiveness of his sins against Uriah. The first verse is the keynote of the entire Psalm. Verses 3-5 record the King's mental distress during the period in which his sins had come as a cloud between him and the sunshine of divine favor which he previously had enjoyed. His distress of mind naturally affected his physical health to such an extent that all of life's duties became burdensome and practically all of its pleasures died. In this fact we perceive that the King was far from the condition of a hardened criminal. His heart had been set for right and for the Lord, and was still set in that direction, even though under temptation he had grossly violated the simplest laws of justice and friendship. The fact that he had gnawings of conscience, that his soul was not at ease under the burden of divine disapproval, were the hopeful signs in the case.

Since David was not a wilful sinner – since he did not at heart approve and rejoice in sin, but despised it, mourned for it – the Lord very graciously guided his affairs so that the lesson became more and more severe to him, until finally he could not bear it longer. Then, when the boil of contrition was fully ripe, the Lord sent his message through Nathan the Prophet to lance it, and his sharp reproof and severe sentence marked the culmination of the King's terrible mental distress and brought him to the point of confession to God and before the nation – to the point of prayer for divine forgiveness and restoration of divine favor, without which he realized that his agony of mind would continue.

The King's prayers were heard – God was gracious to him, his transgression was forgiven, his sin was covered, his iniquity was no longer imputed to him, because his heart was repentant – in it there was no guile. His repentance was sincere, full, thorough. The Psalmist exultingly sings of his own restoration to divine favor, and, doubtless under divine guidance, represented his as being a sample or illustration of what God is willing to do for all who similarly have sincere sorrow for sin, true repentance, who confess their faults and make fresh acknowledgment of their faith. It is safe to say that in thousands of God's people, not only in David's own nation but in every nation, kindred, people and tongue familiar with God's Word, the King's experiences and the lessons of this Psalm, showing his reconciliation with **[R3260 : page 395]** God and the exercise of divine favor toward him, have inspired faith and brought peace and rest to those cast down through weaknesses of the flesh – some of them as grievous or more so, if possible, than David's, and some of them for sins less great in the sight of men but realized as being great in the sight of God – sufficient to separate the sinner and his Lord.

As a picture or illustration this does not specially relate to the sinner coming from the alien world and seeking entrance into God's family: it rather represents one who had already enjoyed divine favor and lost it – one who had gotten from the light into darkness. The Scriptures clearly point out to us that even after we have become children of God it is possible to "fall away." They show us two classes of those who fall. One class is described in Heb. 6:4-7; 10:26-31: these we may have no hope for, because at heart they have become sympathetic with sin; they are wilful sinners, as the Apostle here describes. It would not be appropriate that God should exercise his mercy toward those who, after having come to a clear knowledge of the Truth, wilfully, preferably, approvingly delight in sin. The only thing remaining for these, as the Apostle declares, is judgment which will devour them as adversaries of God and adversaries of righteousness. Of this class the Apostle declares, "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." – 1 John 5:16.

It is of the second class that the Apostle says there is a sin not unto death – one which may be repented of, which may be forgiven, and out of which the transgressor may come with valuable lessons which may ultimately result in blessings of knowledge and experience which will be helpful to him in future conflicts and triumphs. David's sin was of this latter class – not wilful, not approved by him, but of the class of sins referred to by the Apostle when he says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1.) Of the same class of sins the Apostle says, "He is just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," and again, "Though he fall yet shall he not be utterly cast down." The fact is that transgression that is wilful and approved by the heart means an utter fall from divine favor in every sense of the word, while stumbling into sin contrary to the will, through weakness of the flesh and temptation, is to be considered a stumbling from which there is every hope of recovery.

Some one will perhaps argue that practically every transgression is a wilful one, because the Lord's people, however weak in body, have still the power to will aright if they would. Such are inclined at times to accuse themselves of wilful sin, and to fear that they are under the ban of the second death. We point, however, to David's case as an illustration of what is not esteemed of the Lord to be a wilful sin. King David deliberately planned for days and weeks and months in connection with his transgression. It cannot be denied that there was a measure of wilfulness in it, but there was a measure of something else also: namely, of weakness of the flesh, inherited as a member of the race from father Adam. Only divine judgment could clearly, distinctly discern how much of David's sin should properly be accredited to wilfulness and how much to weakness. That it was not wholly weakness or ignorance is evident, and that it was not wholly wilfulness is equally evident. It was therefore what we might term a mixed sin. The proof that it was not wholly wilful is found in the fact that David's conscience afterward, before being reproved by the Lord through the Prophet, recognized his sin and realized the

barrier which it had raised between the Lord and his soul. Had the sin been wilful, instead of feeling sorrow and contrition the King would have felt disposed to go on in the course of sin still farther, and would have had no longings for divine forgiveness and reconciliation. His desires for these prove to us that, although he had deviated so grievously from the proper paths, his heart, his will, was still on the side of the lord and of righteousness. Let this serve as a lesson and illustration for all who have fallen into sin and who long for divine forgiveness and reconciliation. Let such accept the mercy of the Lord by faith and rejoice therein as did King David. Let them remember that those who have sinned the sin unto death it is impossible to renew again unto repentance – impossible to bring them back to a condition where they would be truly contrite and repentant for their evil course.

True repentance implies a rectification of the wrong to the extent of one's ability. David's sin being a public one, known to the nation, it was appropriate that the repentance should be as public as was the sin, and we have reason to believe that David would not have received restoration to divine favor had he not been thoroughgoing in his confession and his endeavors to make good the wrong he had done. His course had led some to blaspheme God's name (2 Sam. 12:14), and it was appropriate that his repentance should, so far as possible, offset this. And so the story of David's repentance has come down the ages with the story of his crime; and while the one has given occasion to blasphemers, the other has given hope and encouragement to many overtaken in faults, who, like David, at heart were loyal to the Lord.

We are to distinguish sharply between forgiveness of sin and remission of penalties. In this case we see that David's sin was forgiven, yet the punishment which the Prophet had foretold came upon him in due time. Thus we see that forgiveness here stands not for judicial **[R3260 : page 396]** forgiveness, which would have exonerated the forgiven one from all punishment, but it stands

merely for the removal of divine disfavor which had come upon the King as one of the results of his transgression. We are to notice also that the King had not in his mind the thought of escaping the punishment which God had foretold and described; his joy was in respect to the restoration of communion between himself and the Lord – the removal of the sin-born cloud which had hidden from him for a time the light of the divine countenance, the smile of heaven, the fellowship of God. And so it will be today with all who, falling into sin wilfully, repent thereof and seek a renewal of the fellowship of the Father and of the Son from the right standpoint. Their moving desire will not be simply escape from punishment, but specially a renewal of communion of soul [R3261 : page 396] broken by transgression. It is in full accord with this that the New Creation at the present time rejoices in forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with the Father through the Son, yet live under practically the same conditions as the world, subject to the aches, pains, trials, difficulties and disappointments which belong in general to the fallen race because of original sin. The blessings of our new relationship to God consist not in our release from the burdens and difficulties of the groaning creation, but in the realization that we are no longer under divine condemnation, no longer children of wrath even as others, but brought nigh unto God in fellowship and communion through the blood of Christ. Our hope of deliverance from the burdens which afflict the whole groaning creation are centered in the promised Kingdom blessings at the second advent of our Lord. Inspired by these hopes and promises we sorrow not as do others, but are enabled to rejoice in tribulation and to wait patiently for the Lord's time and for the Lord's way – the First Resurrection.

This thought, namely, that in the present time our sins are merely covered from divine notice through the merit of our Lord, – that they are merely forgiven or given over or set aside, are hidden and not actually *blotted out* – is very clearly stated by the Apostle Peter (Acts 3:19-21) when, preaching under the influence of the holy Spirit, he declared that his hearers should repent and be converted to

the Lord, so that their sins might be blotted out when the times of refreshing should come – the times of restitution – the Millennial age and Kingdom.

In that glorious Millennial day the Church, now reconciled, will first pass inspection, and those counted worthy will share in the first resurrection, and the bodies they will then receive will be perfect, without blemish and without flaw – very different from the mortal bodies of the present time, all of which are more or less marred by sin, mentally and physically. The receiving of the new bodies perfected will mean that all the blemishes, all the marks of sin for this class, were blotted out in the tomb, in the flesh, their spiritual bodies being perfect, even as it is written of this first resurrection class: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in in incorruption; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown an animal body, it is raised a spiritual body."

The world not having received reconciliation, not having received forgiveness of sins, will not receive the blotting out of sins in the Millennial morning. The great blessing that will come to the world of mankind as distinguished from the Church, the body of Christ, the little flock, the elect of the present time, will be the blessing of forgiveness – full, free. The great atonement day (the Gospel age) will then have closed, its better sacrifices will all then be in the past, its blood of atonement will then have been presented before the Father and will have been accepted on behalf of the whole world. As a result of this acceptance, the divine forgiveness will reach the whole world through Christ – a remission of the sentence pronounced upon the world in the person of Adam. This is specifically stated by the Apostle, saying, "As by the offence of one judgment [sentence] came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift [will come] upon all men unto justification of life." (Rom. 5:18.) But as forgiveness to David did not mean a repudiation of such penalties as were due him because of

the measure of wilfulness contained in his sins, and as forgiveness in this Gospel age to the Church does not mean an immediate release from the penalties that are upon the race, so likewise the forgiveness of the world's sins at the dawn of the Millennium and the beginning of Messiah's reign will not mean the removal of all the marks of sin, the disabilities, death conditions, which come upon all men partly through their own wrongdoing. As with the Church now, forgiveness of sins means a covering of those sins, that we may be treated as though we were not sinners: so with the world in the next age – the forgiveness of the world's sins will mean that thenceforth Christ stands for the whole world before God as the covering of their sins, and that on account of the sacrifice paid by Christ on behalf of the world the sentence of everlasting death upon them is annulled. The work of Christ and of the Millennial Kingdom will be to lift up all who will of the world of mankind to the full perfection of their human nature, so that at the close of that age they may be perfect and entire as human beings. The work of the Millennial age will therefore be a work of blotting out sins – blotting out the evidences and traces of sin in body and mind. The weaknesses and impairments which sin has brought upon humanity will be thus overcome, and it is for this **[R3261 : page 397]** reason that that age is called the times of restitution, the times in which gradually the original likeness of God will be brought back to all those who will accept the divine favor through the great redemption.

In verse six King David suggests that his own experience should be helpful to others who at heart were godly – desiring God's way of righteousness, but who had stumbled in the way. He advises that they pray to the Lord promptly – that they should seek him while he may be found. David's own experiences seemed to teach him that every day removed him farther and farther from fellowship with the Lord. His exhortation is that in order that the floods of great waters of trouble should not reach such an one, he would be spared much by going promptly to the throne of heavenly grace to make confession and to obtain mercy and grace to help in future times of need.

In verse seven the King reverts to his own experiences and how he had found peace in the Lord – a hiding-place in which he could have rest; and although he knew to look forward to the prescribed punishments, his heart now being in fellowship with the Lord he could realize that the Lord's presence would be with him in those punishments and preserve him in that trouble, and that he would be, so to speak, enabled to hear the heavenly messengers singing songs of his deliverance even whilst in his affliction.

The concluding verses of the Psalm represent the Lord as the speaker, instructing David and all of his people who, like David, desire the Lord's guidance and feel wretched and troubled when any earth-born cloud intervenes between the Lord and their souls. The Lord engages to be the teacher, the instructor of all such; he will overrule their affairs, he will make all things to work together for good. Even their stumblings shall not prove disastrous; but because they maintain the spirit of devotion to the Lord and to the principles of righteousness, he will make even their missteps to become valuable lessons, that they may be henceforth less liable to stumble, and learn to look unto the Lord and to be guided in their goings by his eye.

Those whom the Lord instructs, and who will receive his instruction, will not be like the horse or mule that must be turned and guided by force. Their hearts will be so in sympathy with the Lord that he can deal with them otherwise, to their blessing and joy. The wicked shall have their sorrows, but the Lord's people will not be counted in among these; for his mercy shall be with them, restoring their souls. Therefore this class, through the Lord's mercy, will be counted righteous – not that they were righteous of themselves, but counted righteous through the divine provision in Christ. These may be glad in the Lord, though they could not be glad in themselves. These, because upright in heart even though prone to sin and full of weaknesses according to the flesh, may be brought off conquerors through him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood –



may shout for joy as they realize the abundance of the divine provision "for the propitiation of our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." – 1 John 2:2.

