

STUDIES IN PSALMS

5. "I spoke too hastily when I said, 'The Lord has deserted me.'" Discuss the essential element of faith. What is faith? How do we obtain it? What will increase it?

PSALMS 32, 33

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Felicitations to the Forgiven, and Examples of the Songs that they Sing.

ANALYSIS

Part I., Psalm 32. Stanza I., vers. 1-4, Happy the Forgiven; yet Divine Discipline has sometimes to Drive to Confession. Stanza II., vers. 5, 6, Confession brings Pardon, and promotes Exhortation. Stanza III., ver. 7, Petitions prompted by Exhortation. Stanza IV., vers. 8, 9, Divine Response to Petitions. Stanza V., vers. 10, 11, A Moral and an Invitation.

Part II., Psalm 33. Stanza I., vers. 1-5, Praise to Jehovah urged by his Word, Work, and Character. Stanza II., vers. 6-9, Jehovah's Creatorship a Ground for Earth's Reverence. Stanza III., vers. 10-12, Jehovah Overruleth All Nations for the Good of his Own Nation. Stanza IV., vers. 13-17, Jehovah's Regard for All Nations should Wean them from Trust in Brute Force. Stanza V., vers. 18-22, Experience Gratefully Closes the Song.

(Lm.) By David—An Instructive Psalm.

- 1 How happy is he—
whose transgressions is forgiven,¹
whose sin is pardoned,²
- 2 How happy the man—
to whom Jehovah reckoneth not iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- 3 When I refused to confess³ my bones became old with my
loud lamentation;⁴
for day and night heavy on me was thy hand,—
- 4 I was changed into misery as when thorns smite me.⁵

1. Ml.: "lifted off," "taken away."

2. Ml.: "covered."

3. Ml.: "when I kept silence."

4. M.T. adds: "all the day."

5. So Br., after Sep.

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- 5 My sin I then made known to thee,
and mine iniquity did I not cover:
I said—"I will confess concerning my transgressions to
Jehovah,"
and thou didst forgive mine iniquity
my sin didst pardon.¹
- 6 For this cause let the² man of kindness pray unto thee in a
time of distress.³
At the outburst of waters unto him shall they not reach.
- 7 O thou my hiding-place! from distress wilt thou preserve me,
with jubilations of deliverance wilt thou encompass me!
- 8 "I will give thee understanding—I will instruct thee in the
way thou shouldst go,
I will counsel thee—will fix⁴ on thee mine eye.
- 9 Do not become as the horse as the mule—without under-
standing,—
having bridle and halter as his harness for holding him in."⁵
- 10 Many pains hath the lawless one,
but he that trusteth in Jehovah kindness will encompass him.
- 11 Be glad in Jehovah and exult, O ye righteous ones;
and ring out your joy, all ye upright in heart.

(Nm.)

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(Nm.)

- 1 Ring out your joy ye righteous in Jehovah,
to the upright seemly is praise:
- 2 Give thanks to Jehovah with the lyre,
with a lute of ten strings make melody to him:
- 3 Sing to him a song that is new,
with skill sweep the strings with sacred shout.
- 4 For straightforward is the word of Jehovah,
and all his work is in faithfulness.
- 5 He loveth righteousness and justice,
of the kindness of Jehovah the earth is full.

1. Prob. *s-l-h* (= "pardon") was omitted because of its close resemblance to *s-l-h* (= *selah*).—see Br.

2. M.T.: "every."

3. So Br., reading *m-z-k* for *m-z'r-k*. Cp. O.G. 848a.

4. So Br. with Syriac.

5. M.T. adds: "he will not come near thee."

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- 6 By the word of Jehovah the heavens were made,
and by the breath of his mouth all their host:
- 7 Gathering as into a skin the waters of the sea,
delivering into treasuries the roaring¹ deep.
- 8 Let all the earth be in fear of Jehovah,
of him stand in awe all the inhabitants of the world;
- 9 For he said Be!² and it was,
he commanded and it stood forth.
- 10 Jehovah hath frustrated the counsel of nations,
he hath brought to nothing the plans of the peoples.
- 11 The counsel of Jehovah to the ages shall stand,
the plans of his heart to generation after generation.
- 12 How happy the nation whose God is Jehovah,
the people he hath chosen as an inheritance for himself.
- 13 Out of the heavens hath Jehovah intently looked,
he hath seen all the sons of mankind:
- 14 Out of his fixed place of abode hath he directed his gaze
unto all the inhabitants of earth:—
- 15 Who fashioneth together their heart,
who giveth heed unto all their doings.
- 16 Not the king can win victory by greatness of force,
a mighty man will not deliver himself by greatness of
strength:
- 17 A delusion is the horse for victory,³
and by his greatness of force shall he not deliver.
- 18 Lo! the eye⁴ of Jehovah is toward them who revere him,—
to such as have waited for his kindness:
- 19 To rescue from death their soul,
and to keep them alive in famine.
- 20 Our own soul hath longed for Jehovah,—
our help and our shield is he.
- 21 For in him shall our heart rejoice
for in his holy name have we trusted.
- 23 Be thy kindness O Jehovah upon us,
according as we have waited for thee.

(Nm.)

1. Or: "primeval"—Br.

2. So Carter.

3. Or: "safety" (as Dr.)

4. Some cod. (w. Sep., Syr., Vul.): "eyes" (pl.)—Gn.

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PARAPHRASE

PSALM 32

What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.

3 There was a time when I wouldn't admit what a sinner I was.¹ But my dishonesty made me miserable and filled my days with frustration.

4 All day and all night Your hand was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water on a sunny day

5 Until I finally admitted all my sins to You and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, "I will confess them to the Lord." And You forgave me! All my guilt is gone!

6 After this experience, I say that every believer should confess his sins to God as soon as he becomes aware of them, while there is yet time to be forgiven. If he does this, judgment will not touch him.²

7 You are my hiding place from every storm of life; You even keep me from getting into trouble! You surround me with songs of victory.

8 I will instruct you (says the Lord) and guide you along the best pathway for your life; I will advise you and watch your progress.

9 Don't be like a senseless horse or mule that has to have a bit in its mouth to keep it in line!

10 May sorrows come to the wicked, but adding love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.

11 So rejoice in Him, all those who are His,³ and shout for joy, all those who try to obey Him.⁴

PSALM 33

Let the joys of the godly well up in praise to the Lord, for it is right to praise Him.

2 Play joyous melodies of praise upon the lyre and on the harp!

1. Literally, "When I kept silence."

2. Literally, "When the great waters overflow they shall not reach him."

3. Literally, "You righteous."

4. Literally, "All who are upright in heart."

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3 Compose new songs of praise to Him, accompanied skillfully on the harp; sing joyfully.

4 For all God's words are right, and everything He does is worthy of our trust.

5 He loves whatever is just and good; the earth is filled with His tender love.

6 He merely spoke, and the heavens were formed, and all the galaxies of stars.

7 He made the oceans, pouring them into His vast reservoirs.

8 Let everyone in all the world—men, women and children—fear the Lord and stand in awe of Him.

9 For when He but spoke, the world began! It appeared at His command!

10 And all with a breath He can scatter the plans of all the nations who oppose Him,

11 But His own plan stands forever. His intentions are the same for every generation.

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, whose people He has chosen as His own.

13, 14, 15 The Lord gazes down upon mankind from heaven where He lives. He has made their hearts and closely watches everything they do.

16, 17 The best-equipped army cannot save a king—for great strength is not enough to save anyone. A war horse is a poor risk for winning victories—it is strong but it cannot save.

18, 19 But the eyes of the Lord are watching over those who fear Him, who rely upon His steady love. He will keep them from death even in times of famine!

20 We depend upon the Lord alone to save us. Only He can help us, He protects us like a shield.

21 No wonder we are happy in the Lord! For we are trusting Him! We trust His holy name.

22 Yes, Lord, let Your constant love surround us, for our hopes are in You alone.

EXPOSITION

"The headlines serve to individualize psalms . . . this fact will yield important results . . . There is no headline to Psalm 33, so on the surface it belongs to Psalm 32. A study of the material places the relation beyond question" (Thirtle, O.T.P.,

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102). This witness is true; and, in the present case, adds quite an unusual interest to the sequence thus assumed. Kirkpatrick had already called attention to the close relationship between the two psalms. At the commencement of his comments on Ps. 33, he says: "The psalm begins by repeating the call to praise with which the preceding psalm closed, and recites the grounds on which Jehovah is worthy to be praised. It stands here as an answer to the invitation of 32:11, an example of the 'songs of deliverance' spoken of in 32:7. Yet it differs widely in character from Ps. 32. That psalm is an instruction based upon a particular personal experience; this is a congregational hymn of praise, arising (if indeed any special event inspired it) out of some national deliverance." If to these observations we add the suggestion, that it is when a man receives and enjoys the forgiveness of his personal sins, that he is prepared to unite "with all saints" in the celebration of public mercies, we shall perhaps have received the inwardness of the connection between these two psalms. Not that a single reference to the fact of such connection can by any means exhaust its fruitfulness. It is nothing less than thrilling, to hear David, when forgiven, calling out in spirit, to his son Hezekiah in 32:6; to think of the latter (32:7) coming into just such a *time of distress*; in imminent danger of being swept away by *the outburst of the mighty (Assyrian) waters* (cp. Isa. 8:7, 8); and that nevertheless they did not *reach* him. Thus in ver. 7 we may detect the response to ver. 6. The earlier verse said "Let him pray": in the later verse he does pray, and we seem to hear Hezekiah crying unto Jehovah, and promising at the close of his petitions the very thing that he promised more explicitly in Isa. 38:20. To complete the entwining of these bonds of connection between the two psalms, and Isaiah, it may be observed how admirably Ps. 33:10, 11 compares with Isa. 8:10, 14:24-27, 46:10.

To the reader who has grounded himself carefully in the text of these psalms, and has also grasped the illuminating connection between the two, little more assistance need be offered than a few brief notes on the successive groups of verses as they are rapidly passed in review.

Verses 1-4 (Ps. 32). The great thing here is to ponder well the undoubted truth, that unforgiven sin must sooner or later be punished. Second only to this, is the reflection, that un-

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confessed sin cannot be forgiven. It follows that all Divine chastisements, which—falling short of capital punishment—are fitted to lead to the confessing and forsaking of sin, are administered in mercy, whatever instruments are used to inflict them. How much misery might be spared us, if we would sooner humbly confess our transgressions!

Verses 5-6. If sin can be pardoned, every other mercy may be hoped for and be made a subject of prayer. Hence the opening clause of ver. 6 is perhaps wider than "*For this*"—namely forgiveness. Rather does it suggest: That the man whose heart is touched by the Divine kindness may embolden himself to pray that a pardoning God would become a delivering God. In passing, we may note how well the various reading *distress* in ver. 6 prepares for the *distress* of ver. 7.

Verse 7. To perceive in this verse a response to the appeal of the previous, is to discover a reason for its abruptness and brevity. It is graphic: neither advice to pray, nor promise, but PRAYER. As already suggested: it seems like Hezekiah's practical response to David. What is stanzistical uniformity, compared with such tokens of life?

Verses 8, 9 are surely (with Kirkpatrick) Jehovah's words rather than (with Delitzsch and Perowne) the psalmist's. The reference to horse and mule seems to say, "Let us beware of becoming brutish, lest Divine Pity have to deal with us sternly."

Verses 10, 11. *The lawless one* reminds us of Rabshakeh 1:1 note, 9:17, and *he that trusteth in Jehovah* of Hezekiah (2 K. 18:5).

Verses 1-5 (Ps. 33). Jehovah is no "tribal God," as men sometimes mistakenly say: *With the kindness of Jehovah, the earth*, and not merely the land of Isarel, *is full*; for this alone leads on to what follows.

Verses 6-9. Creation is wide as the earth, and furnishes reason why all the *world* should *revere* Jehovah, who, as Hezekiah delights to tell us (Pss. 121:2, 134:3) is "Maker of heaven and earth."

Verses 10-12. Nevertheless vain are the *counsels* of the other *nations*, when directed against *the nation* whom Jehovah has *chosen as his own inheritance*.

Verses 13-17. Far from neglecting the nations, Jehovah severely discounts their trust in brute force.

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Verses 18-22. He has a *watchful regard* for all who in any nation *revere him*; but happy are they who know him and trust him. So sings one of a remnant who can speak from experience of what Jehovah has done for their *own soul*: knowing what they do, they *long*, they *rejoice*, they *trust*, they *pray* they *wait!*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Paul felt the teaching of this psalm was very much a part of the joys of a Christian. Read Romans 4:6-8 and discuss; both as the psalm relates to David and as the truth relates to each of us.
2. Notice the "fourfold description of evil". Discuss the meaning of these four words: (1) transgression, (2) sin, (3) iniquity, (4) guile.
3. When we will not admit, confess and forsake our sin a terrible payment is exacted in our personality—in our physical bodies—in our minds. Discuss. Read verses 3 and 4.
4. What therapeutical value is there in confessing our sins "one to another?" (James 5:16); or should this be only a confession to God?
5. After we are forgiven we have a deep sense of security—relief, but our relationship to God does not end here; we are not to be like a horse or mule—howso? Discuss.

Psalm 33

6. Are we to understand by verses one through three of this psalm that it is possible that a Hebrew without Christ had such joy in his heart that he actually expressed it in the manner here described? Discuss.
7. How can it be true that "of the kindness of Jehovah the earth is full" or "the earth is full of His tender love."?
8. "Hallowed be Thy name"! This was the first thought in the prayer of our Lord. When we consider the creation of our God is there any other response?
9. Jehovah is not only the God of creation—He is the God of history. Read and discuss verses 10 through 19 with this thought.
10. There is a way to be glad and have the highest hope. Read verses 20 through 22 for the divine formula. Make specific application of this to your life.