

December 21 Su Reading A355 — Psalm 32 — Confession

Audio: [Psalm 32 \(ESV\)](#)

Uncover to Cover — This psalm is often connected with tomorrow's Psalm 51 because today's psalm sounds like David's confession and instruction, although the title does not mention him. The theme of the first five verses is about how any person can live a "*blessed*" life: one's "*transgression ... [or] sin ... [must be] forgiven ... [or] covered*" (v. 1). Sin plays havoc with a person's body and soul, which is described by "*bones wasted away [and] groaning all day long*" (v. 3). It is somewhat like a toothache that might be partially ignored by chewing on the other side of the mouth. The problem isn't solved; it is ignored. The conviction of God's Spirit is described as, "*day and night your hand was heavy upon me*" (v. 4). Its purpose is to make you feel the pain enough to want to do something about it. The solution is confession, which is uncovering it before God in prayer. Our own sin cannot be "*covered*" effectively by our own "*deceit*" (v. 2). We might be fooling some people, but we are not fooling God. If we will "*uncover*" our sin in confession, God will "*cover*" it in forgiveness.

December 22 M Reading A356 — Psalm 51 — Cleanse Me!

Audio: [Psalm 51 \(ESV\)](#)

Deep Repentance — As the title shows, this is a psalm directly tied to David's sin with Bathsheba. The prophet, Nathan, had exposed David's sin to him, so he could see it as a horrible sin against God. Thankfully, he was willing to stop attempting to hide what he had done and to face the wrong and its consequences. Admitting his full guilt, he cried out to God, "*Have mercy on me, O God ... according to your abundant mercy*" (v. 1). That is the first step of finding cleansing and restoration after departing from God's known path. David said, "*I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me*" (v. 3). Christians probably don't often sin accidentally; they know they have sinned as soon as it happens or even before. Only if they persist in sin do they become hardened against God's convicting Spirit. Part of recognizing our guilty position is to fully agree with God that He is right in His judgment. David said that the Lord was "*blameless*" in His judgment (v. 4); He is always right. What David had done was not just an external act; it was evidence of an internal problem, something that affected "*the inward being, and ... the secret heart*" (v. 6). It is not like paying for a parking ticket, which is likely done with an angry, reluctant attitude. That is something that affects the wallet more than the heart. The guilt of David's sin reached his heart; he was sad about it, and we should feel that way also. When David asked for God to "*blot out my iniquities*" (v. 9), he also asked for Him to "*renew a right spirit within me*" (v. 10). Something good needs to replace the evil that is put away. We need to learn and grow from our experiences of straying away from God into sinful practices. Sinning Christians need the return of "*the joy of your salvation*" (v. 12). We know when our repentance is genuine and effective when we have "*a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart*" (v. 17).

December 23 Tu Reading A357 — Ps. 86, 122 — Praying and Praising

Audio: [Ps. 86](#), [Ps. 122](#)

Reasons for Answers — Here are two more psalms written by David, the first one focusing on prayer and the second one on praise. In Psalm 86, David prayed, "*Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me*" (v. 1). He presents three reasons in his prayer for why God should answer him. The first reason was because of David's sincere *faith*. He said, "*I am godly*" and that he was one "*who trusts in you*" (v. 2). He was not being haughty, but he was just saying that his heart was right before God. He was not hiding sin or being artificial. That is how we ought to approach God initially also. Don't come to ask God for something when you know that your heart is not right with Him! Approach Him first with confession! The second reason David felt that God should answer his prayer was his *urgency*. He said, "*Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day*" (v. 3). His need was vital, and he demonstrated it by praying long and hard. When I bring that kind of need to the Lord, I

will sometimes fall to my knees to pray, physically expressing my deep concern. David's third reason for expecting God's answer was the Lord's *goodness*. Twice he expressed this idea in his prayer. In verse 5, he presented this reason: "*For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.*" Ten verses later, David repeated the exact words God said about Himself when He gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai: "*But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*" (v. 15; cf. Ex. 34:6). When we pray today, before asking God for something, let's remember to pray with a clean heart, with urgency, and in recognition and praise of God who is thoroughly good.

December 24 W Reading A358 — 2 Samuel 13 — Rape and Murder

Audio: [2 Samuel 13 \(ESV\)](#)

Complicating Sin — There are so many things wrong in this story. Just as it is today, there was a lack of understanding about love. Amnon's "*love*" for his half-sister, Tamar, was only "*lust*," something that never satisfies or endures. The very crafty Jonadab, the cousin of Amnon and Absalom, advised Amnon about how to rape Tamar (v. 3). He seems to have also advised Absalom about how to kill Amnon, since he told David that he knew of Absalom's plan (vv. 32-33). Where was David's influence in raising these two sons? It seems that he did not "*bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*" (Eph. 6:4). That was one negative consequence of kings having many wives, therefore too many children. When David heard of Amnon's rape of Tamar, "*he was very angry*" (v. 21), but he didn't do anything about it. After Absalom killed Amnon, "*the king ... wept very bitterly*" (v. 36), but he didn't do anything about it. Absalom probably didn't even have to flee to Talmai, his maternal grandfather, in another country. Why did David appear to be so helpless? One reason was that his sin with Bathsheba had just been exposed by Nathan. David was as guilty as his sons. Sin complicates things. It ruins families and destroys lives. Don't go there!

December 25 Th Reading A359 — 2 Samuel 14 — Absalom Returns

Audio: [2 Samuel 14 \(ESV\)](#)

Merry Christmas!

Two-step Forgiveness — David was in a dilemma—one of his sons had killed another son. Although the woman of Tekoa said that Absalom was "*banished*" (v. 13), three times in the previous chapter, it says that he had "*fled*" for his life. According to God's Law, Absalom was a murderer and deserved to die (Num. 35:31), but General Joab felt that David should forgive him, so he orchestrated a complicated plan. After three years, David agreed to have Absalom return to Jerusalem, but he wouldn't allow this son to come into his presence. That was incomplete forgiveness. Before judging David's action, however, we should think about how many times we only half-forgive someone who has wronged us. Is there someone you are keeping at arm's distance because of an offence against you? Partial forgiveness is really no forgiveness at all. After two years, Absalom forced Joab to get permission for him to see his father, which resulted in David's complete forgiveness, sealed with a kiss (v. 33). If God brought to your mind today someone you have not completely forgiven, confess that to God, genuinely forgive that person in your heart, and reach out to them to restore your relationship.

December 26 F Reading A360 — 2 Samuel 15 — Absalom's Conspiracy

Audio: [2 Sam. 15 \(ESV\)](#)

David's Humility — We begin to see Absalom's pride and desire for power in this chapter. In contrast to that selfish attitude, we see glimpses of David's humility. His first reaction to hearing that Absalom had declared himself king was, "*let us flee*" (v. 14), although he had control of Joab and the whole army. David even twice called Absalom "king," telling Ittai, "*Go back and stay with the king*" (v.

19), and asking Hushai, *“whatever you hear from the king’s house, tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests”* (v. 35). When he told Zadok the priest to take the ark of God back to the city, he said, *“If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back ... But if he says, ‘I have no pleasure in you’ ... let him do to me what seems good to him”* (vv. 25-26). Perhaps David was thinking that what was happening to him was the result of his sin with Bathsheba and his sin against Uriah. Nathan had predicted this message from God: *“Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife ... Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house...”* (2 Sam. 12:10-11). David didn’t know how this would turn out, but he was willing to humbly submit to the will of God. Think about David’s response the next time you feel that everything is going against you. Maybe it is your own fault.

December 27 Sa Reading A361 — Psalm 3-4 — David's Spiritual Response **Audio:** [Psa. 3-4 \(ESV\)](#)

Handling Opposition — The first of these two psalms is tied directly to the time when David fled from Absalom. Both psalms deal with a godly response to human opposition. Our first lesson is that when we have someone against us, we should remember how God delivered us in the past. David prayed, *“You have given me relief when I was in distress”* (4:1). This might not come easily because our selfish mindset usually files them away in the back part of our mind. What God has done for us in the past will help us in our second godly response; it will build our trust in what God will do for us in the present. David concludes Psalm 4 with this: *“In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety”* (4:8). Our human, emotional tendency is to first respond in anger to opposition, which is the opposite of peace that comes with trust. David provides our third godly reaction to opposition, which is, *“do not sin”* (4:4). The *“sin”* here seems to be our desire to act in revenge. How do we counteract that? Here are four offered solutions: *“ponder in your own hearts ... and be silent ... Offer right sacrifices ... put your trust in the LORD”* (4:4-5). First, we should think about it without verbal response and then turn our attention toward God in worship and trust. Let Him take care of it.