

Lent 1 / February 22, 2026

Psalm 32:1

*“Blessed in the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”*

Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered

Psalm 32 is the second of seven penitential psalms, used by King David in particular, the faithful in Israel in general and now believers in Christ, as preparation for the forgiveness of sin in absolution. The penitential psalms are important reminders of our sinfulness that remains even after baptism; and of our sins, which we continue to commit daily, despite our best intentions; in thought, word and deed, but what we have done and by what we have left undone. Most importantly, the penitential psalms lead us to the remembrance of our baptism and God’s perpetual promise to wash away our sins and drown our sinfulness through our sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ. St. Peter writes, *“Baptism...now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”* The blessing of confession is absolution. The blessing of absolution is a clear conscience. Blessed are those whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered for the sake of Christ Jesus, His blood and righteousness.

Lent is a season of penitence, in which we consider our sins and our sinfulness, in light of the forgiveness we receive through faith in Christ and by baptism into His death and resurrection. The purpose of penitence is to lead us to a deeper appreciation of forgiveness and a fuller understanding of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins. Even as Lent leads to the cross on Good Friday where Christ made atonement for the sins of the world, penitence leads us to the foot of the cross where we hear words of forgiveness, healing and peace with God. From the cross Jesus prayed, *“Father, forgive them.”* For the sake of the cross and Jesus’ sacrifice, God forgives us and all who come to Him in the humility of faith, confessing their sins and sinfulness, seeking His grace and favour. In John 6:37 Jesus says, *“Whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”* We come to Jesus in penitence with our sins and sinfulness for the sake of His sacrifice, in response to His love, believing His promise to receive us in forgiveness and bless us with His peace. Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Often our sins seem small and our sinfulness manageable, so that we fail to appreciate either our great need for forgiveness and the greater sacrifice Christ

made for our sins. We didn't kill anyone. We didn't rob a bank. We didn't commit a crime against humanity. We just spoke in anger. We just thought things that aren't godly. We just did the bare minimum in helping others. After all, we're only human. That's the problem, we are only human and so we tend to see the best in ourselves and minimize our sins and sinfulness, while being less than charitable in the way we view others. That's why we need penitential psalms and seasons of penitence, so that we consider the true nature of our sins and sinfulness; so that we better appreciate the fullness of God's love and the sacrifice He made in Christ Jesus. Adam and Eve could have minimized their sin. What did they do that was so bad? They didn't kill anyone. They didn't steal anything. All they did was eat a piece of fruit. But, the effect of their 'little sin' was to bring death to the world and sinfulness to every human being who came from them. When we see sin and sinfulness from that perspective, God's perspective, we appreciate the blessedness of those whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered.

King David was blessed with a greater awareness of his sin and sinfulness than most people. His sins and sinfulness stood out for all to see. David wanted to build the Lord a temple. The Lord said he would not build His temple, because He had shed much blood, both as a warrior and as a sinner. David killed many warriors in battle. He shed blood. Some of things David did as a warrior would today be considered crimes against humanity. David committed adultery with the wife of one of his most faithful soldiers. Instead of confessing, David tried to cover his sin by having the husband killed in battle by having him placed in a position where death was certain. Because of David's adultery and murder, which became public knowledge, people spoke contemptuously of the Lord, because David was the Lord's servant. When He confessed his transgressions, the Lord forgave David the iniquity of His sin. The Lord forgave David when he confessed smaller sins, the kind we think of at the end of a normal day. The Lord forgave David's greater sins, which we may not be guilty of. David's sins were great and grievous, but at least they kept him from underestimating the great guilt of his sin and the greater gift of God's forgiveness. Psalm 32 reminds us to consider the guilt of our sins, so that we return to the promise of forgiveness for the sake of Christ Jesus in the word of absolution and the washing of our baptism. When we confess our sins and sinfulness, God forgives the iniquity of our sin for the sake of Jesus, His blood and righteousness. Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered.

What would you do if you committed a great sin. How would you feel if you did something in anger that caused physical or emotional injury to someone you loved?

How would you feel if you made a mistake, caused an accident which led to someone's death? I think then we would truly feel the agonizing guilt that is associated with sin. Two people, Judas and Peter, denied the Lord Jesus. Both were stricken with guilt after the fact. Judas, because he betrayed Jesus. Peter, because he denied knowing Jesus, despite his previous protestations of undying faithfulness. Both felt the guilt of their sin. One turned away from the Lord in despair. One turned to the Lord in penitence.

Peter went out and wept bitterly. Judas took his own life. Peter wept bitterly, but he didn't give into despair. He returned to the Lord. The prophet Hosea said, *"Come let us return to the Lord...that He may heal us."* The prophet Joel said, *"Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."* Turn to the Lord in your guilt and grief. He has a heart to heal you and arms to receive you. Acknowledge your sin, do not cover up your iniquity. Confess your transgressions to the Lord. He will forgive the iniquity of your sin for the sake of Jesus, His blood and righteousness. Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered.

There is a saying, 'Confession is good for the soul.' Confession is truly good for the soul when we take our sins and sinfulness to the Lord, in prayer, in confidential conversation with another believer or our minister. Confession is good for the soul when the person with whom we make our confession leads us to cross where Jesus atoned for our sin. Confession is good for the soul when the person with whom we make confession speaks to us words of forgiveness in the promise of our baptism. Joseph, the son of Jacob and his wife Rachel, was sold into slavery by his brothers. They pretended to their father that Joseph had been attacked and devoured by a ferocious animal. Years went by. A famine struck their land. Their father sent them to Egypt where he heard they could buy food. The Egyptian in charge of the food supply treated them harshly. They didn't know why. They thought God must be punishing them for the sin they committed against their brother years earlier. The guilt of their sin, buried in deceit continued to trouble their souls.

Perhaps they interpreted every trouble as punishment from the Lord. They said to each other, *"In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen."* A guilty conscience has no rest. Centuries later King David confessed, *"When I kept silent my bones wasted away...day and night your hand was heavy on me."* The unconfessed sin ate away at their consciences. Finally, the Egyptian who treated them so harshly revealed himself as their lost brother. Amazingly, instead of anger he forgave them.

Years went by and their guilt remained. They feared he was only feigning forgiveness until their father died. They confessed their sin saying “*please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.*” Again, Joseph assured them of his forgiveness. He comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed are those whose sin is covered in Jesus’ righteousness and whose sins are forgiven for the sake of His blood shed on the cross.

David urges us to confess our sins and acknowledge our sinfulness of God. He says, “*Let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found.*” God is found now in Christ Jesus. God comforts us and speaks kind words of forgiveness, healing peace and life for the sake of Christ Jesus. We embark upon this season of penitence so that we may better appreciate God’s kindness offered to all people, given to all who believe for the sake of Jesus and the sacrifice He made on the cross. God made Him who had no sin to be a sin offering that in Him, we would receive the righteousness of God for the forgiveness of our sins and as a covering for our sinfulness. When we acknowledge our sins and confess our sinfulness to our heavenly Father, imploring His mercy for the sake of Christ Jesus, He covers our sinfulness and forgives our sins. Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered for the sake of Jesus, His blood and righteousness. In Jesus’ Name. Amen