

Psalm 32

The Joy of Forgiveness

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Course BI 5201: Introduction to Biblical Interpretation

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Main Idea and Outline

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Psalms 32:1-11¹, traditionally attributed to King David, laments his sin and deeply grieved soul, confronts his hidden sin and its physical and emotional repercussions, confesses his iniquity before God, seeks and repentantly asks for God's forgiveness, and extolls God's unending grace and forgiveness by understanding God's ever-present mercy and protection from the ravages of sin's unyielding quest to rule and conquer his (King David's) soul.

Outline

1. Blessing of the pardoned (Psalm 32:1-2)
 - a. The sin of man is covered/taken away (v. 1)
 - b. The Lord does not count against a person their transgression, for Jesus took our iniquity upon Himself (v. 2)
2. Psalmist's personal Example (Psalm 32:3-5)
 - a. Silence over sin makes one weary, stressed, depressed, and groaning (v. 3)
 - b. Energy is turned to dryness of spirit as rebellion eats away at the soul, under God's heavy hand (v. 4)
 - c. King David's confession brings healing and the Lord's forgiveness (v. 5)
3. God's protection will guard from trouble and harm (Psalm 32:6-7)
 - a. God delivers and restores even after great guilt and sin, such as King David did (v. 6)
 - b. God is King David's hiding place, and He will surround David with songs of restoration (v. 7)
4. God's Wisdom (Psalm 32: 8)
 - a. God says to pay attention, and He will guide (v. 8)
 - b. God will instruct and teach you
5. God's Instruction and Warning
 - a. God uses animal analogy in teaching not to be stubborn like the horse or mule (v.9)
 - b. Woes and the Lord's unfailing love for those who trust in Him
6. Rejoice and be glad in the Lord (Psalm 32:11)
 - a. Rejoice in God and be glad (v. 11)
 - i. Turn your worries to Him
 - ii. Repent and confess sins
 - iii. Turn from guilt and the burden of sin
 - iv. Know God's protection, sustaining grace, love, and restoration

¹ All Scripture quotes and references derive from the ESV of the Holy Bible unless otherwise stated.

Introduction

Psalm 32 is a maskil (the name of a tune or song, or a psalm giving instruction)², and “one of the seven penitential Psalms (6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143)³ It is also a Psalm of thanksgiving, teaching, wisdom, and rejoicing. Additionally, it seems like a psalm of overjoyed thankfulness due to complete exoneration. Christians can look to this Psalm for an understanding of God’s forgiveness and patience, as well as a warning about how not to live one’s life. What makes Psalm 32 so beautiful is that it “begins with beatitudes: “Blessed is he who...”⁴ As well as it speaks to real-life healing through confession and forgiveness, it ends with being glad in the Lord and rejoicing. Psalm 32 illustrates how sin and destruction can plague the soul to the point of feeling the utter “wasting away” within one’s bones, but once the sin is confessed, songs of deliverance are rendered by our gracious and loving Father.

This paper will showcase four sections pertinent to understanding Psalm 32 from a biblical interpretation perspective. Starting with the Historical-Cultural background, questions such as the author, audience, and historical setting will be discussed. Then, the language and literature, including genre and literary form, will be analyzed. Here, the meaning the author intended, as conveyed through correct linguistic translation, along with word meaning and grammatical-structural relationships, will be shown. Next, a section on Theological Synthesis will showcase the key themes of Psalm 32 through the broader storyline of the Book of Psalms and the Bible. The final section will reflect on the contemporary application that Psalm 32 speaks

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, (Since 1710), Vol. 3 of Job to Song of Solomon (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1710), 347, 348.

³ Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, rev. ed., The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2017). [Psalms - EBSCO](#).

⁴ Robert W. Jenson, “Psalm 32,” *Interpretation* 33, no. 4 (1979): 33 (2):172. [Psalm 32 - EBSCO](#).

to Believers today but specifically, how this Psalm speaks to counselees within Biblical counseling.

Historical-Cultural Background

When looking at the Historical-Cultural background of Psalm 32, this paper will focus on the following questions: Who is the author of this Psalm and what is his situation, i.e., life and circumstances? Who did this Psalm speak to, and what was their situation? Was there a broader historical setting (social, economic, political) that forms the meaning of the passage? What customs, practices, or institutions are referenced in these verses? How does the geographical setting factor into the passage's meaning?

The author of Psalm 32 is most likely King David, as his name is associated with this Psalm in the Bible in the Psalm's title. Peter C. Craigie says, "Although these titles are of dubious value with respect to the initial composition of the psalm they introduce, they are of considerable relevance with respect to the work of those who compiled the Book of Psalms... and according to Craigie," the Collections of *Davidic Psalms*... Several such collections can be identified: Ps 3-41."⁵The Apostle Paul also referenced Psalm 32:1-2 in Romans 4:6-8 when he said, "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them," thus reinforcing that the author most likely was King David. There is a canonical link in this Psalm to events that happened in 2 Samuel:11-12, when King David had an affair with Bathsheba and murdered her husband, Uriah, by sending him to the front lines. As Halley's Bible handbook notes, "this Psalm was occasioned, no doubt, by David's sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12). He can find no words to

⁵ Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 2nd ed., vol. 19 of Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2004), 28., [Psalms 1-50, Volume 19 : Second Edition - EBSCO](#).

express his shame and humiliation.”⁶ Another Psalm that ties in with Psalm 32 is Psalm 51, “a prayer for mercy and a penitential psalm (see also Psalm 32), written in the aftermath of David’s sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12). “Create in me a pure heart” (v. 10)”⁷ Even though God’s hand is heavy upon King David in Psalm 32, the repentance that comes through David’s admittance of his sin, brings God’s true mercy, forgiveness, and joy that only the Lord’s unfailing love can provide. One could look at Psalm 32:1-2 and see the absolute joy King David felt at being forgiven for his rebellion against God. Both verses one and two start with “blessed,” which signifies *oh, the blessednesses!* The double joys, the bundles of happiness, the mountains of delight!⁸

Psalm 32 addresses God, in addition to “all the faithful” (v. 6), and I would say this Psalm addresses everyone (the congregation), both then and unto the end of days. “The exhortation in verses 6-7 is styled as a direct address to God, while the purpose is to encourage people to grasp the hope engendered by King David’s experience of divine grace in response to honest confession.”⁹ Psalm 32 furthermore, speaks to the rebellious sinner; the one who revolts against God’s laws; the one who trusts in God and receives forgiveness for their confessed iniquity. The penitential aspect of this Psalm dates back very far. “Since at least Cassiodorus in the 6th c., Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143 according to the Masoretic numbering adopted by Protestants (6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, and 142 in the Septuagint) have been regarded as a group

⁶ Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 25th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 329. [Halley's Bible Handbook, Classic Edition - EBSCO](#).

⁷ Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 335. [Halley's Bible Handbook, Classic Edition - EBSCO](#).

⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, “Psalm 32, accessed 6/25/2026,” [Psalm 32 by C. H. Spurgeon](#).

⁹ Nancy L. Erickson and Christopher A. Beetham, eds., *The NIV Application Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2024), 438.

and recommended to penitents seeking forgiveness.”¹⁰ Verses 1-2 in this Psalm also shows us who the congregational audience is: ...”the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered,” and “the one who’s sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.” For the public, “The psalm is a thanksgiving or testimony, whose nature is thus to bring home in public worship the implications for other people of what Yhwh has done for the worshipper... Thus, the psalm starts with a generalization concerning the implications for other people of the worshipper’s experience (vv. 1–2) and only subsequently goes on to recount that experience (vv. 3–5), then reaffirms its significance (vv. 6–7). Less expectedly, a word from Yhwh to the worshipper follows (v. 8). The psalm closes as it began, with further didactic generalizations and with explicit exhortation to wisdom and invitation to other people to rejoice in Yhwh, on the basis of what this testimony implies (9–11)”¹¹ While Psalm 32 doesn’t directly identify a direct audience, there are some hints it’s written for community worship to be sung or recited in ancient Israel – a *maskil* (in title) is often referenced as a teaching or instructing Psalm, and verse 6 says, “therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found,” indicating again, it is for a congregation. The congregational audience was probably in “some temple ritual, perhaps the thanksgiving ceremony in which the worshiper offered a sin offering and gave thanks for deliverance (possibly from...sickness...attributed to vv 3-4).”¹²

¹⁰ Hannibal Hamlin, "Penitential Psalms," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th ed., ed. Roland Greene, Stephen Cushman, and Clare Cavanagh (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 1015, accessed July 2, 2026. <https://access.infobase.com/article/2525747-penitential-psalms?rak=1&aid=273914>.

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John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1–41*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 452, 453, [GoldingayJohn_2006_Psalm32WhenSufferingI_PsalmsVolume1\(BakerCo.pdf\)](#).

¹² Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1–50*, 2nd ed., vol. 19 of Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2004), 265, [Psalms 1-50, Volume 19: Second Edition - EBSCO](#).

King David reigned over Israel from approximately 1010-970 B.C.¹³ 2 Samuel 1-6 captures King David's war with the House of Saul and then in 2 Samuel 5:1 says, "All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood," and verse 3, "When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel." After Saul, David was made king over Judah, and after that, David became King over Israel. Then, God gave David many victories (2 Samuel 8:6), and he built Israel into a powerful nation. This now sets the broader historical setting for Psalm 32 and why it was written. David had enjoyed successful military campaigns, built an incredible city-fortress, won victories over enemies, and made Jerusalem his capital. But then, sin. In 2 Samuel 11-12, David sins against God. This time is described as "the blackest spot in David's life."¹⁴ His adultery and provocation to the murder of Uriah broke this mighty king. This one decision to sin against God was the catalyst that brought on much pain and heartache in David's life. In 2 Samuel 12:10, God says, "Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house..." and in verse 11, "Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you." David's once resplendent reign was obscured by darkness and troubles. The Lord sent Nathan to David to confront him in 2 Samuel 12:13, and David said, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die." ' Thus, it is believed that Psalm 51 (happened before Psalm 32) is truly a mourning to God from David of his utter depravity, rebellion, and revolt against God. In the *Lenten Psalms* by John Adams, he says, "Sin is the one element in human experience that refuses

¹³ Halley's Bible Handbook, rev. and expanded by Henry H. Halley (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 227. [Halley's Bible Handbook, Classic Edition - EBSCO](#)

¹⁴ Halley's Bible Handbook, rev. and expanded by Henry H. Halley (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 231.

to be ignored...Sin, according to Seneca, is the “universal insanity.” It is a dark and dismal nightshade casting a gloom over every department of human life.”¹⁵ King David knew this “wasting away, groaning, and heavy hand of the Lord (Psalm 32:3-4) upon him- this gloom over his life. Then, in Psalm 32, David acknowledges his sin and confesses that, within his heart and soul, he knows his sins are forgiven; it is a Psalm of penitence and thankfulness, of teaching and singing. David realized that if he kept quiet and did not repent of his sin towards God, then his body would utterly waste away; his mind would collapse, and the depths of depression would take over. King David reconnected with God as “a place where the waters will not reach him,” and “his hiding place.” (Psalm 32:6-7)

The customs, practices, or institutions referenced in Psalm 32 could very well include observance of the Mosaic Law regarding repentance and animal sacrifice (Leviticus 5:5-6). In Leviticus, it was customary, if one sinned, to put forth a purification offering: “When anyone becomes aware that they are guilty in any of these matters, they must confess in what way they have sinned. As a penalty for the sin they have committed, they must bring to the Lord a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering, and the priest shall make atonement for them for their sin, and verse 5 adds the requirement of the need to confess the sin that has been committed.”¹⁶ This involved confession and sacrifice to God and is reflected in Psalm 32:5. Another interesting practice referenced in Psalm 32 is in verse 9, where it discusses an animal analogy – the horse and the mule. Historical biblical interpretation guides us to interpret this Psalm from the time in which it was written, thus, an agrarian society and the people reading it

¹⁵ Reverend John Adams, B.D., *The Lenten Psalms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912; repr., University of California Libraries, n.d.), 19.

¹⁶ Richard S. Hess, *Leviticus*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2017), [Leviticus - EBSCO](#).

would have very much understood the symbolism of not being stubborn like the horse or mule or having to be controlled or bridled by the bit, thus, knowing the repercussions that stubbornness leads to a life of wayward sorrow and despair. And the flood symbolism in verse 6 would have been understood by this ancient culture, because Noah's flood (Genesis 6:17) and, very well, there could have been flooding during that time and in that culture, where this analogy would be understood.

The geographical setting in Psalm 32:1-11 is not explicitly noted. However, there are some clues as to where the setting might be if we draw on a couple of verses in this passage and note its more positive wording if subsequently written after Psalm 51, where King David laments his sin to God. One of the verses (v. 4) talks about David's "strength was sapped as in the heat of summer," while another (v. 7) says, "You are my hiding place..." In 1 Samuel 18-20 and 1 Samuel 21-27, David was on the run from King Saul due to Saul's jealousy. David had to flee and hide from Saul: "Saul tried to kill him, but David fled and for years was a fugitive in the mountains and in the wilderness."¹⁷ Wherever David wrote Psalm 32, he might have been drawing from his years of fleeing to wilderness places, thus using some of these analogies in this psalm. There is also an interesting parallel between 2 Samuel 22 (David thanking God for protection from his enemies) and Psalm 18, where King David likewise extols God's protection from his enemies. This parallel can also be extended to Psalm 32, where King David is thanking God for deliverance from sin and rebellion. I think King David was in his palace in Jerusalem when he wrote this psalm, and after becoming king, he thanked God for "his unfailing trust in God and his unbounded gratitude to God for his constant care."¹⁸

¹⁷ Henry H. Halley. 2008. *Halley's Bible Handbook, Classic Edition*. Zondervan. EBSCOhost., 224, 225. [Halley's Bible Handbook, Classic Edition - EBSCO](#).

¹⁸ Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 231. [Halley's Bible Handbook, Classic Edition - EBSCO](#).

Language and Literature Analysis

“The English word "psalm" comes from the Greek and Latin translations of Hebrew *mizmor*, "accompanied song.” The psalter contains 150 psalms arranged in five "books"- Psalms 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, and 107-50... Many of the psalms within each book have been carefully placed with nearby psalms according to themes and repetition of key words.”¹⁹ (Thus, Psalm 32 with its neighboring psalms 31 and 33 work together, from lament in 31, to thanksgiving in 32, to joy in 33). Psalm 32 also has as its title, “Of David. A Maskil,” which may mean David (if he wrote it) composed it for instructional purposes, or this might mean the Psalm was written after David, but it was for him. My contention is that King David wrote this psalm because it dovetails fittingly with Psalm 51, where he went through the process of repentance for sinning against God.

Genre and literary context in biblical interpretation are very important. In this section, items such as linguistic information, word meanings, grammatical-structural relationships, along with the genre of the passage, will be discussed. The psalms “consist of 150 different compositions by a number of different writers... Psalms is a book of poetry, the most common types being hymns, laments, and thanksgiving psalms.”²⁰ Psalm 32, where, “a deeply contrite individual (King David) seeks God’s mercy for her or his sin, relief from the physical and emotional distress it has caused, and restoration to the joyful intimacy with God formerly enjoyed,” according to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr., is in the genre of a penitential psalm,²¹

¹⁹ Richard J. Clifford, 2005. “The Psalms,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, July 1, 2005, <https://doi.org/10.2307/45227400>, 39.

²⁰ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), Chapter 4, “Start with Types of Psalms,” para. [Psalms : An Introduction and Commentary - EBSCO](#).

²¹ William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 453.

as well as a “thankful or thanksgiving psalm concerning forgiveness, or a thanksgiving psalm with wisdom elements for the instruction of God’s people.”²² Also, the influence from other genres is seen in that wisdom has penetrated this psalm in the use of the beatitude (Ps 32:1), the similitude (Ps 32:9), and the instruction (Ps 32:6-8).²³ Psalm 32 can also be classified as an instructional Psalm, as verses 8-9 showcase how one will be instructed in the way they should go, as well as the command not to be like the mule or horse, which have no understanding. Another genre seen in Psalm 32 is one of utter and complete exoneration. And oh, the joy of this exoneration by God! There are, in total, seven penitential Psalms (6, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). Psalm 32 is situated between Psalm 31, which calls out to God from adversaries and trusts in His goodness, and Psalm 33, which is a very joyous Psalm for all He has made, spoken, and His strong counsel. Touching briefly on the literary form of this psalm, Psalm 32 blends mostly the penitent and wisdom aspects with thanksgiving. There are confession, repentance, forgiveness, and extolling of God’s mercy, while recognizing the consequences of wrong behavior, learning that God will teach and lead the way, and that if one follows this psalmist’s instruction to stay on His right and true path, He will be the hiding place and protection.

Linguistically, Psalm 32 reveals beatitudes, literary form, parallelism, repetition, analogies, and a chiastic relationship between verses.²⁴ Beatitudes, much like in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, begin Psalm 32 and denote joy and thankfulness for forgiveness. “The repeated

²² Tremper Longman III, and Peter Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), Chapter T, U, V, “Start with section 1.4.1,” accessed June 11, 2026, [Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings : A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship - EBSCO](#).

²³ Longman III, and Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Chapter T, U, V, “Start with section 1.3.1,” [Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship - EBSCO](#).

²⁴ Peter C. Craigie and Marvin Tate. *Psalms 1-50, Volume 19: Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 265, [Psalms 1-50, Volume 19: Second Edition - EBSCO](#).

opening word of the first two verses of this psalm carries the reader back to the first word of the Psalter and forward to the Matthean Beatitudes. One who believes that one's sins are not held against one is truly blessed by God's grace."²⁵ The literary form resembles a composition within which resides a thanksgiving and wisdom message as well as a chiasmus (literary device where words or phrases are presented and then shown in reverse order) in an AB BA format: part one is wisdom (vs. 1-2) and thanksgiving (vs. 3-5) and part two is thanksgiving (vs. 6-8) and wisdom (vs. 9-11).

Synonymous Parallelism is also seen in Psalm 32 and "the two opening lines of generalization are parallel, and each is also internally parallel,"²⁶ and where three terms: transgression, sin, and iniquity (vs. 1-2) and forgiven, "are covered," and "does not count" are presented. Both verses one and two also say the same thing – transgression and sin exist, while sin is covered and there exists no deceit. There are many examples of repetition throughout this psalm: God truly shows grace and forgiveness... transgressions are forgiven, sins are covered, does not count against them, and no deceit." Repetition is also seen in vs. 3-4: "my bones wasted away," and "your hand was heavy on me...as in the heat of summer." Verse five shows multiple repetitions: "I acknowledged my sin," "did not cover up my iniquity," and "I will confess my transgressions." Psalm 32 also shows much metaphor and imagery: "surely the rising of the mighty water will not reach me." (verse 6), and "You are my hiding place." (verse 7) And in verse 9 – "do not be like the horse or mule." Psalm 32 is replete with strong analogies/word pictures. One could compare the flood imagery in verse 6 to Genesis 6-9 (Noah and the flood),

²⁵ Ellen T. Charry, *Psalms 1-50 (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible)*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2015), 166, accessed June 15, 2026, [Psalms 1-50 \(Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible\) - EBSCO](#).

²⁶ John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1-41*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 453, [Psalms: Volume 1 \(Baker Commentary on the Old Testament\) : Psalms 1-41 - EBSCO](#).

where King David (or the psalmist) draws heavily upon the Old Testament to teach about great distress and to affirm that God is the protection, the hiding place, and the One in whom to trust.

For a word-meaning reflection on Psalm 32, this paper will focus on the overall message of this psalm, namely, blessedness, sin, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration. Additionally, the lexical and syntactical aspects of Psalm 32 will be discussed. Overall, this psalmist extols the blessings, happiness, and joy of having their sin forgiven, as the psalm begins with the word “blessed” in both verses 1 and 2. “Who is truly happy (or blessed)?” The one whose sins are forgiven.” “The term “blessed” (vv. 1–2) is the same as in Psalm 1:1. The truly happy person is the one “whose transgression is forgiven” (i.e., the penalty has been dismissed), “whose sin is covered.” The word “cover” here is in parallel to “forgive,” and has the nuance of “hide from view.”²⁷ Warning permeates some verses, but the message is one of absolute elation because sin is covered. In verses 1-2, rebellion and revolt against God are called Transgression (עֲוֹן) (breaking a connection), sin (חַטָּאת), and iniquity (רִשְׁעָה)(guilt).²⁸ The lexical analysis reveals three words for sin and three words for forgiveness in verses 1-2. In verses 3-5, we see another lexical example of what happened to the person physically and mentally when they kept quiet and the acknowledgement of sin – “The result was lost vitality, that is, physical weakness (“bones wasted away”) and mental anguish (“groaning”)...and, “lost vitality as really a mercy; it is, after all, God’s “hand” that is “heavy upon” his faithful, and its purpose is not to destroy them but to help them come to the point of confessing.”²⁹ But what a gift the heavy hand of God is! He keeps

²⁷ C. John Collins, *ESV Expository Commentary (Volume 5): Psalms-Song of Solomon* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022) “Section Psalm 32, Comment I., 32:1-5, [ESV Expository Commentary \(Volume 5\): Psalms-Song of Solomon - EBSCO](#)

²⁸ Peter C. Craigie, and Marvin Tate. *Psalms 1-50, Volume 19: Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 265, [Psalms 1-50, Volume 19 : Second Edition - EBSCO](#).

²⁹ Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, eds., *ESV Expository Commentary: Psalms-Song of Solomon*, vol. 5 of *ESV Expository Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022) “Section Psalm 32, Comment I.,

His hand there because He loves us so much; He wants us to turn from our sin. God forgives the rebellious guilt of sin, and His mercy covers the sinner. Verses 6-11 illustrate the application through words such as “therefore,” “do not be like,” and “rejoice.” Verse 6 implores the listeners to pray at the moment they sin, as God will not let the waters overcome; He will protect the godly from trouble, and instead of putting off confession, confess so that God may instruct and teach in the way they should go. God cannot lead or teach one whose heart is filled with sin and unrepentance. If it’s God speaking in verse 8 (which I think it is), it shows that once someone has confessed and acknowledged their sin, they have a clean slate. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come!”** It’s interesting that Verse six in Psalm 32 and 2 Corinthians 5:17 both start with “therefore.” This signifies a new beginning and a clean slate. Verse 7 word meaning signifies God’s deliverance, “God’s deliverance is likened to a “hiding place” (32:7) to which the predatory troubles cannot track the faithful.”³⁰ God speaking in verse 8 could be a statement to the congregation, but this verse placement is right after we learn “He is our hiding place and surround us with songs of deliverance, (v. 7)” (Zephaniah 3:17). God’s voice to me is loud and clear when He says, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go (Isaiah 48:17, “...who **teaches you** for your benefit, who **directs you** in the way you should go) ...I will counsel you with my eye upon you” There is a sort of gentleness to this verse and ownership almost, where the one talking says “I know you, I see you, and I will from this point on, teach you, while affectionately, counseling you while watching you.” Verse 9 nearly swoops in (as a

32:1-5, [ESV Expository Commentary \(Volume 5\): Psalms-Song of Solomon - EBSCO](#).

³⁰ Crossway, *Psalms–Song of Solomon* “Section Psalm 32, Comment II., 32:6-11.” [ESV Expository Commentary \(Volume 5\): Psalms-Song of Solomon - EBSCO](#).

reminder) to not be stubborn and refuse counsel and continuous confessing of sins (Proverbs 17:10), for, “The image contains an implied warning: God may use whatever means he needs to help his faithful to repentance!”³¹ – do not stray from the right and true path for if one does, the woes will be great (v.10) but if one obeys, the Lord’s unfailing love will surround them. (v.10) The final verse (v. 11) repeats the overall meaning of Psalm 32 – the happiness and peace that come from confession and forgiveness make the heart glad and one’s countenance righteous; it makes one want to shout jubilantly!

The final analysis will focus on the grammatical-structural relationship in Psalm 32. This psalm shows the blessing of receiving forgiveness, the experience and repercussions of sin, the confession and teaching (learning from God’s wisdom), and the triumphant praise and rejoicing. This psalm moves from experience to instruction, with confession and wisdom threading their way, as shown in the confessional and instructional verses. (vs. 5, 6, 9). Psalm 32 shows a definitive structure. A blessing (vv. 1-2) presupposed the experience of sorrow, confession, and forgiveness (vv. 3-5). The experience of forgiveness delves into encouragement of the righteous to seek refuge in the Lord (vv. 6-7) and to be led and taught by Him (vv. 8-10). The last verse is a congregational call to rejoice in the Lord and to sing (v. 11).³²

The language and literary analysis of Psalm 32 could fill books. I will try to do it justice in the final paragraph. Although this psalm could be classified as different genres – thankfulness, wisdom, or penitent, my conclusion is that this is a psalm full of thanksgiving because King David is joy-filled that his sins are no more; they are covered. There’s an element of penitence

³¹ C. John Collins, *ESV Expository Commentary (Volume 5): Psalms-Song of Solomon* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022) “Section Psalm 32, Comment I., 32:6-11, [ESV Expository Commentary \(Volume 5\) : Psalms-Song of Solomon - EBSCO](#).

³² Willem A. VanGemenen, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2017), “Section FF: Psalm 32: The Blessing of Forgiveness and Wise Living, [Psalms - EBSCO](#).

when David describes his physical and mental woes and his confession of sin. But I really see this psalm as Joel 2:12-13 says, “Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to Me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion.” David’s sins (and all of ours) are, as Isaiah 1:18 says, “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: **though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;** though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” (emphasis mine) Psalm 32 displays God (as He always wants for each of us) drawing us back to Him. Another parallel is in Proverbs 28:13 (King David’s son), Solomon, said, “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” He is waiting for us to repent and acknowledge our sin, knowing that forgiveness, lovingness, compassion, graciousness, abounding love, and seeing the sin no more is what awaits us, as God’s unfailing love surrounds us, his protection sustains us, and songs of deliverance are sung around, as the guilt is removed. Romans 4:7-8 says, “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” 1 John 1:19 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” I would argue that Psalm 32 (as declared by David) is a foreshadowing of the future New Testament, and when Jesus, our glorious God, arrives, so the sinner can repent, be forgiven, have their sins nailed to the cross, and then be counted righteous in Christ through justification

Theological Synthesis

This section will discuss the theological synthesis of Psalm 32 and show how this psalm fits within the Psalms and across the entire Scriptural canon. Two sections will be highlighted –

the first, biblical theology – showing where Psalm 32 fits into the unfolding narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration, as well as how its themes recur throughout the Bible.

Additionally, how do these themes relate to the person and work of Christ? The second section will engage with systematic theology by identifying the doctrinal contribution of Psalm 32 and what it teaches about God, humanity, sin, salvation, or the church. Also, does it confirm, clarify, or enrich what the rest of Scripture teaches about that doctrine?

Psalm 32 encapsulates the grand redemptive historical narrative of all of Scripture.

Working through Creation→Fall→Redemption→Restoration. God's complete unified redemptive story is shown in this psalm. Always mindful of where Psalm 32 fits in the grand story of God, one should see Christ as the fulfillment of all of God's promises to man. This section will show how Psalm 32 points to the grand story of God and what He's doing to bring about the salvation of sinners. Verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 32 both begin with the word "blessed." And weren't the first people, Adam and Eve, blessed as they thrived in a beautiful garden, where everything was perfect? Creation was blessed by God through all He created over six days. From the beginning, there was no sin, and man and woman were created and placed in a perfect garden, where no sin existed. Verses 1-2 repeatedly discuss how blessed one is whose sins are forgiven and against whom the Lord counts no iniquity – exactly as it was during Creation and with the first humans. And then came the Fall, where the serpent struck, and sin entered the world. Looking at verses 3-4 in Psalm 32, this exact theme is shown: "when I kept silent," "bones wasted away," "your hand was heavy upon me," and "my strength was dried up" are expressions of rebellion. It is sin. Just as when the serpent led the first humans to fall, this utter iniquity, transgression, and revolt against God is what King David feels in verses 3-4. But alas, verses 5-6 bring redemption. King David acknowledged his sin to the Lord, and he was forgiven,

and he goes on to say, “Therefore, let everyone...offer prayer to you...surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.” God redeems His people if we confess our sins. (Isaiah 43:2). And finally, restoration in verses 7-8,10 – God is a hiding place (Nahum 1:7); He has kept the believers from trouble; He will instruct, teach, and counsel the way one should go; “...the steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.”

Psalm 32 is in the first book of the Psalms, one of five books. Within all 150 various compositions in the book of psalms (the larger book of psalms), most of the psalms between 1 and 150 denote praise, thanksgiving, lament, sin, repentance, fear, guilt, and praise honoring to God- normal human emotions, struggles, and issues people deal with today and faced in ancient times. Psalm 1 starts with being blessed by and delighting in God’s Word, and Psalm 150 ends with praising God. Tremper Longman III. Observes that the psalms are like a literary sacred place- “That the Psalms are a literary sanctuary is not a new insight, since Jerome described it as a ‘large house’ (magna domus), with Psalms 1 and 2 serving as an entrance to this house...”³³ and finishing with a resounding praise to God! Thus, within the broader book of psalms and its varied messages of singing and speaking to human emotions and struggles, Psalm 32 also speaks to how one can find peace and true salvation – by acknowledging and repenting of one's sin to God. Looking more closely at the psalms before and after Psalm 32, Psalm 31 ends by encouraging the listener to take courage and be strong, while Psalm 32 ends by calling the listener to be glad in the Lord and rejoice. And then Psalm 33 starts with, “Shout **for joy** in the Lord...” There is this thematic connection. Psalm 32 is also considered a wisdom and teaching psalm by some, and in three places in v. 8-9, God shows His guidance by these words, “I will

³³ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), “Start with Introduction, Composition, Collection, and Organization and under “Organization,” [Psalms : An Introduction and Commentary - EBSCO](#).

instruct you. I will *teach* you. I will *counsel* you.”³⁴ God is emphasizing how important His instruction is by using the analogy of a mule or a horse. Now that the sinner has confessed and acknowledged their sin, God will instruct them in the way they should go.

Across the Scriptural Canon, Psalm 32 is most closely parallel with Proverbs 28:13: “The aim of the psalmist seems to have been to argue...that stubbornness in accepting the guilt of sin causes suffering, but that Yahweh is eager to restore an intimate relationship with those worshippers who confess their guilt and are willing to accept his guidance on the way of life.”³⁵ This message permeates both Psalm 32 and Proverbs 28:13. Psalm 32:5 stresses that, rather than covering one’s sin, it must be acknowledged to God, while Proverbs 28:13 says the same, emphasizing that confession brings mercy while concealment brings transgression. Hiding (Genesis 3:8-10, Hebrews 4:13) brings emotional and physical pain and suffering (Psalm 32:3-4), guilt, and a lost connection with God, but God sees and knows all. “And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” Hebrews 4:13. Psalm 32 aligns with the whole of God’s redemptive story, especially the passages on sin, confession, and forgiveness (1 John 1:9, Psalm 103:10-12, Isaiah 43:25, Ephesians 1:7, and Colossians 1:13-14, to name a few).

Psalm 32 shows the grace that Jesus offers to His children if we but confess and turn to Him. It takes the reader from complete rejoicing and thankfulness to recognizing one’s sin to realizing that only through personal confession of sin will the iniquity be covered. “Augustine and Luther and Calvin and Barth all take their cue from Paul (Rom. 4:7-8) and in their interpretation of the psalm do not tire of insisting that confession of sin is in no respect a work of

³⁴ Andrew D. Rogers, “Psalm 32 and the Surprising Joy of Repentance,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 28, no. 1 (2014), 35., [Psalm 32 and the Surprising Joy of Repentance. - EBSCO](#).

³⁵ Phil J. Botha, “Psalm 32 as a Wisdom Intertext,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 70, no. 1 (2014): Art. 2710, 1. [Psalm 32 as a wisdom intertext - EBSCO](#).

our righteousness. The righteousness received in forgiveness comes because “The Lord imputes no iniquity...” The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit (51:17). For the Christian, the cure for deceit comes by keeping the crucified Christ in view as God’s judgment on and pardon of our sin.³⁶ This all shows the person and work of Christ and points to Christ in Psalm 32. In Mark 1:15, Jesus says “...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” “James encourages his readers to ‘come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded...Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.’”³⁷

This next section will engage with systematic theology by identifying the doctrinal contribution of Psalm 32 and its teachings about God, humanity, sin, and salvation. Also, this paper will determine if it confirms, clarifies, or enriches what the rest of Scripture teaches about that doctrine.

God is over everything. He spoke everything into Creation. The things God speaks are unifying, coherent, and consistent.³⁸ Psalm 32 shows God’s mercy, His forgiveness, His protection, His teaching, and His deep love that surrounds those who trust in Him. His expectation that sin be covered and that one confess shows His unfailing love. When Psalm 32 says that “you forgave the guilt of my sin” (v. 5), this is the unifying, coherent, consistent Word if one confesses and acknowledges their sin to God. Once we confess, God instructs and teaches us in the way we should go. Psalm 32 also teaches about humanity. All through Scripture,

³⁶ James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 148, [Psalms: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching - EBSCO](#).

³⁷ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), “Start with 32:8-11 I will teach you and under “Meaning.” [Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary - EBSCO](#).

³⁸ Ligonier Ministries, “What is Theology? Foundations – An Overview of Systematic Theology with R.C. Sproul, YouTube, June 24, 2026, 19:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIRbcmVC1Q0>.

humanity is precious to God. In fact, so precious is God that He requires us to repent of our sins because this means separation from Him. In Psalm 32, the complete ebullience of humanity is displayed by proclaiming the blessedness of the forgiven one's transgressions; the safety one feels when protected by God; the desolation and heaviness one feels when they sin; the object lessons one is instructed in to not be stubborn and sin; and the proclamation to rejoice in the Lord because He's forgiven our sins. Psalm 32 also teaches about sin – it's one of the main themes in this psalm, except it isn't the focus. The focus is God's forgiveness. The focus is on how one feels when one sins and on how patient, loving, and kind God is in forgiving one's sin. Finally, salvation is found in verse 5. The only salvation is through Jesus. This could almost be foreshadowing of who would come to save us from our sins. Confess, covered, forgiveness, and then protection from the rising waters and troubles that the enemy continuously attacks upon our forgiven souls.

Psalm 32 confirms what God's Word says about the doctrines of God, humanity, sin, repentance, salvation, God's relationship with people, and His divine protection. Additionally, this psalm is replete with doctrines of God's forgiveness, humanity's weakness and justification by faith. From the Matthew Henry commentary on Romans 4 – “God is said *to cast sin behind his back, to hide his face from it*, which, and the like expressions, imply that the ground of our blessedness is not our innocency, or our not having sinned (a thing is, and is filthy, though covered; justification does not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin), but God's not laying it to our charge, as it follows here: it is God's *not imputing sin* ([v. 8](#)), which makes it wholly a gracious act of God, not dealing with us in strict justice as we have deserved, not entering into judgment, not marking iniquities, all which being purely acts of grace, the

acceptance and the reward cannot be expected as debts;”³⁹ God judges sin (vs. 3-4), He’s a refuge (v. 7), and He’s true to His covenant of love (v. 10). Repentance and salvation are found in vs. 5 and 8 (teaching and leading). God’s relationship with His people (v. 6 and 9) as He unfailingly loves His people. Psalm 32 exemplifies hamartiology (sin) (Romans 3:23) and soteriology (salvation) (Romans 10:9-10). The bridge between these two is the doctrine of confession, which is, in essence, repentance to the all-knowing and powerful God. “Confession requires submission and trust. It requires me to say, “You are God. I am not. You are the standard. I am not. What you say goes, and I will agree. If you say it is a sin, then I say it is a sin.”⁴⁰ “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...” Acts 3:19.

Contemporary Application

“What a killing thing is sin! It is a pestilent disease! A fire in the bones! While we smother our sin, it rages within, and like a gathering wound swells horribly and torments terribly.”⁴¹ It is sin, often unconfessed sin, that ravages the wandering soul whose constant lament is one of unrelenting attack from the enemy. The psychology of the world has answers, for sure, in all sorts of medications and therapies, but at the root of most counseling issues is the heart. For God’s Word says, **“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” Proverbs 4:23 (NIV).**

³⁹ Matthew Henry, “Commentary on Romans 4,” *Blue Letter Bible*, https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Rom/Rom_004.cfm, accessed June 28, 2026.

⁴⁰ Andrew D. Rogers, 2014. “Psalm 32 and the Surprising Joy of Repentance.” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 28 (1), 33. [Psalm 32 and the Surprising Joy of Repentance. - EBSCO](#).

⁴¹ C. H. Spurgeon, “Psalm 32,” *The Treasury of David*, “Start with, “Exposition and then under Verse 3,” [Blue Letter Bible](#), last modified December 5, 2016.

“God is at the center of counseling. God is sovereign, active, speaking, merciful, commanding, and powerful. The Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is the central focus of counseling and the exemplar of the Wonderful Counselor. The Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit are foundational to all significant and lasting life change.”⁴² Psalm 32 pulls no punches. One could summarize it by saying, “recognize your rebellion, confess it, repent, and God forgives because He’s waiting to provide protection and restoration in your life.” Laid out within this psalm is an answer for the hurting soul to find refuge, strength, and a balm for their weary lives. Through the guidance and work of the Holy Spirit, God’s Word gets to the heart of the counselee’s issues. (Hebrews 4:12) The counselee who comes for counseling is wasting away, struggling, hiding, scheming, deceitful, wandering, stubborn, full of iniquity, carrying pain for years, that becomes so insidiously heavy that it wastes the person’s bones, saps their energy, and emotionally weighs down their soul. As John Goldingay says, “Keeping quiet is not a mark of OT piety...there is something suspicious about a person keeping quiet...we do not yet know what is going on here. We do learn that internal anguish and outward wasting accompanied silence. The Psalm then testifies to the way the soul and body interact. When things are wrong inside, they have a way of affecting our bodies.”⁴³ The counselee is often depressed, mentally wrought, has a myriad of physical symptoms that can’t be explained, and is sullen and withdrawn. And the pain they carry is the very thing they need to confess, just as King David shows in verse 5. This paper suggests that indeed, the carrying of unconfessed sin does inflict symptoms such as anger, depression, lost weight, sadness, and even suicidal thoughts. “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of

⁴² John MacArthur, *How to Counsel Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 27.

⁴³ John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1–41*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 455, [Psalms: Volume 1 \(Baker Commentary on the Old Testament\): Psalms 1-41 - EBSCO](#).

soul and of spirit...” But sin doesn’t need to stay there. God’s Word heals, and through behavior change and replacing anxious thoughts with God’s truth, the healing can begin for the oppressed wanderer.

Four applications of Psalm 32 will be observed in this section: the original application, the level of specificity of the original application, the cross-cultural principles, and the appropriate applications that embody those broader cross-cultural principles. The first principle looks at the original application of Psalm 32. In this psalm, King David wants the congregation and his readers to know that recognizing, acknowledging, and confessing their transgressions brings God’s forgiveness. Under the old law, an animal needed to be sacrificed, but what King David says in this psalm is profound – confession means restoration with God. King David also wants the gathered to pray while God may be found; to rejoice in the Lord and be glad in the Lord, to sing, and to rejoice! Don’t be stubborn and be silent with your sin, the king says, but instead, confess because God in His mercy is waiting to welcome the sinner back home.

Next is the level of specificity of the original application of Psalm 32. Although Psalm 32 originates from King David’s personal sin, it has a broader audience-oriented aspect, as verse 6 calls on “all the faithful to pray to you while you may be found.” This psalm is timeless in its message of confessed sin, repentance, forgiveness, and God’s unfailing love for His people. This psalm presents a broad, theological principle and is manifested in other parts of the Bible (Proverbs 28:13, 1 John 1:9, Romans 4:6-8). Psalm 32 is not limited in its application, and it promotes a more universal approach throughout the entire book of Psalms. Themes such as forgiveness, deliverance, sin, and repentance are universal throughout all of the Psalms. These themes are also prominently significant in today’s culture. According to Longman III. And Dillard, “...the psalter functioned as the “hymnbook of ancient Israel,” ...” in the context of

worship,” ...and” a book composed primarily of prayers.”⁴⁴ The psalms were used for worship, lament, prayer, singing, thanksgiving, and congregational praise. Psalm 32 is today used in temples, worship services, prayer, and counseling. There is a congregational joy aspect to this psalm – that when someone confesses sin, the entire group rejoices. We should celebrate forgiveness as: take part in the sinner coming home; rejoice that they’ve been found! ⁴⁵ What a good reminder of the posture one should have when someone repents. As the song Reckless Love says, “Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine. I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it, still, You give Yourself away. Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God.” ⁴⁶ There is also an application in Psalm 32 that is rooted in God's character and in His redemptive plan for humanity. God’s heavy hand upon King David is for restoration and for calling the king to repentance, so that his sin may be forgiven and the relationship with God restored. The same is true today – all of us (as sinners) are called to repent and acknowledge our sin so that connection with God may be restored and He may then “instruct you and teach you in the way you should go” (v.8) and also so that He may counsel while lovingly watching over each person.

This section started with identifying the issue for each person coming to biblical counseling – the heart. Psalm 32 identifies, even in those ancient times, the central issue at stake. It’s not external reasons that a person sins (lies, cheats, steals, kills, gossip, pride, drugs, habits, and so many other counseling issues), but it’s the heart. (Matthew 12:34-35, Matthew 15:18,

⁴⁴ Tremper Longman III. And Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 244, 256.

⁴⁵ Rolf Jacobson, “Commentary on Psalm 32,” *Working Preacher*, March 9, 2014, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/first-sunday-in-lent/commentary-on-psalm-32-9>.

⁴⁶ Cory Asbury, “Reckless Love,” [Genius Lyrics](#), accessed July 5, 2026.

Mark 7:21-23, Luke 6:45, Jeremiah 17:9). God knows us personally. He created us. It's the transgressions, iniquities, and sin that plague a soul. King David knew exactly what was needed to remedy his wandering soul – acknowledging his sin to God; confessing all his sin and pain; not returning to a stubborn heart but being forgiven one's sin – of being covered and restored; of being surrounded and protected by the One who knows each of our sufferings and pain. And not just knowing this protection but then, shouting for joy, being glad in the Lord, and extolling all His forgiveness! We don't just stay in our confession – we congregationally rejoice, sing, and shout that we are clean, renewed, covered! "...oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine..."⁴⁷ "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." (v. 5) ..." I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it, still, You give Yourself away. Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God."⁴⁸ "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Conclusion

Psalms 32 points the reader, counselor, and counselee to a blueprint for conquering heavy sin, which includes: do not conceal sin but confess and acknowledge it and seek God to learn from Him the way one should go. He is the refuge, teacher, hiding place, fixed rock, and He pardons our sin. It's a theme all throughout the Old Testament - God's people sin, and they repent, and he has mercy on them. The fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, Galatians 5:22-23), also are in parallel with Psalm 32, present striking character qualities (or virtues) that will guide the counselee forward

⁴⁷ Cory Asbury, "Reckless Love," [Genius Lyrics](#), accessed July 5, 2026.

⁴⁸ Cory Asbury, [Genius Lyrics](#), accessed July 5, 2026.

and encourage them in how to live their lives. The counselee will find peace because their sins are forgiven, and they will no longer need to remain silent but will be able to confess. The pure love and joy the wandering soul will encounter knowing they are protected from trouble, feeling God's loving eye on them, and knowing His unfailing and steadfast love will encourage the counselee to live their lives confessing, acknowledging, and honoring God. Self-control will dictate the counselee's steps, producing a harvest of consistent living, as they will trust in the Lord's strength each day to get them through, rather than living in bad habits. Gentleness will overcome their hearts and minds as the Holy Spirit changes their proclivities toward anger and impatience, and they yield and transgress less against God and others. Some days will be very difficult, but now, the Lord is their Teacher; Counselor; Friend, and Father. One needs only to repent of their sin, be in the Word daily, pray continually, and trust in God, surrendering all battles, worries, habits, and struggles to He Who knows all their pain.

To further research Psalm 32 and its relevance in today's counseling arena, it would be interesting to consider the following suggestions: One might examine how the Apostle Paul cited Psalm 32 in Romans 4:6-8 and the meaning of justification as received through faith. Another area to examine is Augustine's understanding of Psalm 32. Augustine often used to read with a weeping heart and eyes, and which before his death he had written on the wall over against his sick bed, that he might exercise himself therein, and find comfort therein in his sickness.⁴⁹ Reading and learning from the ancient, wise Believers sounds very interesting! Additionally, one fascinating aspect of Psalm 32 is verses 3-4 and the effects of sin on the body; thus, an interesting study would examine how unconfessed sin affects the body physically and emotionally, and how it can cause disease. It would also be interesting to research how Jewish

⁴⁹ "Bible Commentaries, Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary, Psalm 32," StudyLight.org, accessed July 18, 2026, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/phc/psalms-32.html>.

and church scholars and theologians throughout history have integrated Psalm 32 into congregational worship and study, either through song, memorization, or repetition.

The blessings of forgiveness are freedom, joy, singing, being upright in heart, the surroundings of the Lord's steadfast love, and rejoicing. Psalm 32 is a song of deliverance; a poem of grateful blessing to God; and a blueprint for any believer on how to humbly approach God and repent, followed by its reward of covering, protection, counsel, and teaching. Not only does the mortal soul gain deliverance from their heavy pain and iniquity – the guilt is forgiven. *"...the sin lies in the past, and the voice begins by calling "blessed" those the Lord has forgiven...by revealing what is hidden and shameful, a person opens the way to release and forgiveness. The voice then celebrates God as "my shelter" and calls others to be glad and exalt."*⁵⁰ *After being forgiven, You, great Lord, are our hiding place; our protection. We continue to heap guilt upon ourselves while You sing songs of deliverance around us! You, great King, continue to teach and lead and counsel, while Your unfailing love surrounds us. Oh, how the lost, wandering soul needs to know our King's forgiveness if only they would acknowledge, repent, and not hide their sin. Whether a counselee or a wayward person, the heart is above all full of trouble, evil, deceit, and wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). The Lord "searches the heart and tests its ways..." (Jer. 17:10) and even then, when the broken person, full of regret and agony comes to the Father and confesses and acknowledges their sin, it is forgiven by a faithful, consistent Father who knows our pains and is just waiting for us to run to Him, with our weaknesses. And then, the blessedness and rejoicing, and singing and gladness that King David extols in Psalm 32, is the very rejoicing that the broken, lost, and heavy-laden sinner who repents can shout with*

⁵⁰ Harry Hagan, "The Penitential Psalms: Seven Voices Crying Out," *The Priest* 80, no. 2 (2024): 20, [EBSCOhost](#).

confidence and “shout for joy, all you upright in heart!” because the one who “was dead is alive again; the one who was lost, has been found.” (Luke 15:24, paraphrase mine).

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