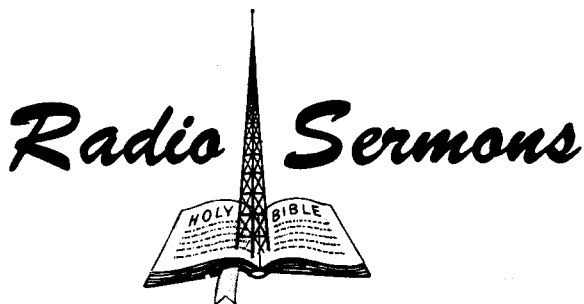


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God's Glorious Grace



by
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Righteousness Without Works

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Romans 4:5-8.

It has been correctly stated many times that there are only two “religions” in the world: (1) The revelation of God, and (2) The concept of man. The Old Testament times of God’s dealings with His chosen people, Israel, were no exception. Those who were saved in those days were saved by God’s Glorious Grace, apart from all works of the flesh.

The early chapters of the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans are dedicated to establishing the great doctrine of justification by faith alone. In Chapter 4, the apostle cites two Old Testament Scriptures as proof that in all ages, all dispensations, salvation was by grace through faith, totally apart from human merit. Even in those days before our Lord’s work of the cross, God saved men by His grace. Justification and righteousness came not by works of the law.

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the

prophets.” Romans 3:21. These terms “the law and the prophets” refer, not to individual persons, but to the two major divisions of the Old Testament. The five books of Moses were called by the Jews “the Law.” All the remainder of the books of the Old Testament, beginning with Joshua and running right on to the end, they called “the Prophets.” Sometimes the Jews divided this second group into three parts. They called the resulting divisions “the Former Prophets” (that is, the early historical books, which were all written by prophets), “the Writings” (books like Job, Psalms, Song of Solomon), and “the Latter Prophets” (all books from Isaiah to Malachi). When the Apostle Paul writes of “the Law and the Prophets,” he includes all divisions of the Hebrew Old Testament.

In the earlier chapters of Romans, the inspired writer emphasized the proven unrighteousness of all men. Because of this God is making known His righteousness which He Himself has provided for guilty sinners. The imputed righteousness of God is not based on obedience to the law of Moses. Yet this imputed righteousness is borne witness to by the Law (those first five books of the Bible), and by the Prophets (all the remaining books of the Old Testament). The apostle makes the startling proclamation that the entire Old Testament bears witness to the fact that God was going to bring His righteousness near to men who had none of their own.

We know that the Apostle Paul was a scholarly Jew, doubtless a master of Israel (Rabbi) during the days before his conversion, when he persecuted the church. He was thoroughly knowledgeable in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is easy to trace the reasoning and argument the apostle, writing under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, used in Romans, chapter 4.

Questions for a Rabbi

Suppose that we were to approach an orthodox Jewish Rabbi with two questions. We would select a Rabbi who was thoroughly familiar with his Bible and with the history of his people.

First we would ask him, "Who is the most important person in all the books of the Law?"

He would probably answer without a moment's hesitation, "Abraham, because he was the father of the Jewish people, and the one with whom God made the covenant of grace."

Godly Jewish teachers thus honor Abraham, the father of the faithful, and consider him the most important person in the books of the Law. Paul says, "Let's take the most important person out of the books of the Law and see how he is justified." Here's how he makes the point in Scripture:

"What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Romans 4:1-3.

The Apostle Paul cites Abraham, and says that the Scripture declares, "Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." The Apostle Paul is quoting the words of the Scripture from Genesis 15:6. "And he (Abraham) *believed in the LORD: and he (the LORD) counted it to him (Abraham) for righteousness.*"

That was justification by faith. That was righteousness apart from works. The most important man of the books

of the Law was saved, not by works, but by faith in the LORD.

A Second Important Question

Now, suppose we were to ask our orthodox Jewish Rabbi another question. "Who is the most important person mentioned in all the other books of the Old Testament. Who was the most important person in 'the Prophets?'"

The Rabbi would again answer immediately. His answer would be something like this. "Our great King David is the most important person in the Prophets, because he was the man with whom God confirmed His covenant. God said to David, 'I will give unto you the sure mercies of David.' We know that the Messiah is to come through David's line."

This is the apostle's continuing theme in Romans 4. He says, "Let us call in the most important man in the books of the Prophets and see how he was justified. Let's see what he has to say about the way a guilty sinner finds life and peace."

Paul then quotes from the 32nd Psalm. "*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*" The Apostle Paul refers us to Psalm 32 as the outstanding Scripture that sets forth the way in which God justifies ungodly sinners. It is a psalm that was penned by King David. The experiences spoken of in this psalm are David's own. But the instruction set forth is of God. Through this psalm penned by King David almost 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus the Christ, God testifies of His Glorious Grace. The words of this psalm merit careful consideration as we wait upon God for His instruction.

A Song of Instruction

“A Psalm of David, Maschil” — Superscription, Psalm 32.

Psalm 32 is one of many psalms headed by an inspired superscription. We can know beyond doubt that the human author of this psalm was King David because the words of this inspired heading tell us plainly that it is “a Psalm of David.” David’s authorship of this psalm is further confirmed by Paul’s words of Romans 4:6,7. *“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.”*

Because of the Davidic authorship, this Psalm has been called a “Penitential Psalm.” This is hardly correct. The 51st Psalm is the great prayer of confession and for forgiveness, which King David prayed after the incident in which the prophet, Nathan, had pointed his finger at him and said, “Thou art the man!” Psalm 51 is truly a “Penitential Psalm.”

By contrast Psalm 32 is the record of the confession that David made to God, and the forgiveness that he received after his restoration to fellowship. David speaks of the conscious blessedness of that complete restoration. He had found shelter in Him against whom he had sinned. This is his song of deliverance.

In Psalm 51:13, David had said, *“Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”* In this 32nd Psalm he carries out that resolution as he provides *“instruction.”*

This brings to our attention the last word of the inspired superscription. It is the untranslated Hebrew word, *“Maschil.”* This word literally means *“giving instruction.”* The inclusion of the word *“maschil”* in the superscription makes this psalm the first of the so-called *“Maschil Psalms.”* There are 12 more of these *“maschil”* psalms included in the Book of Psalms. These are all the *“instructional songs”* of the Old Testament.

Other Appearances in Scripture

It is interesting to note the occurrence of this word *“maschil”* as it appears in other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. The word is used by the Prophet Daniel several times in his writings. When the word appears in Daniel’s prophecy it is always used in connection with the future history of Israel. It is used in association with that nation’s coming tribulation, in association with the witness of the godly among the unbelievers of the nations, and in association with the deliverance of the remnant.

In Daniel 11:33 we read, *“And they that understand (maschilim) among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.”* And continuing in verse 35, *“And some of them of understanding (maschilim) shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.”*

In the last chapter of Daniel, that chapter in which the coming Great Tribulation is clearly predicted, we find the same word again. In Daniel 12:3 we read these words. *“And they that be wise (maschilim) shall shine as*

the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” Further on, in verse 10, Daniel writes, *“Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise (maschilim) shall understand.”*

The root word “maschil” means “giving instruction.” The plural noun, “maschilim,” derived from this root means, “those who understand,” and also “those who make others to understand.” The “understanding ones,” who impart “understanding,” that is, truth to others (referred to by Daniel in Chapter 11 and in Verse 10 of Chapter 12), are the godly Jews during the final seven years of the times of the Gentiles. That is the time when the man of sin is on the throne of the world, and the long predicted tribulation is in progress. When the church of this age has been raptured, and her testimony is no longer heard on earth, the Lord will call this remnant “according to the election of grace,” and by His Spirit He will make them “maschilim” — men of understanding. He will make the men of this called Jewish ministry fit instruments to teach and lead others into the truth as well as into the knowledge of the coming King - the “Anointed One,” the “Christ,” of God.

“Maschilim” in Our Day

The third verse of Daniel 12 applies the word “maschilim” to the Christian teachers and witnesses of this present age. Daniel 12:3 is a prophecy of this parenthetical age of the church. Daniel, who was chosen of God to give the great prophecy of the “seventy weeks” of Israel’s history, here speaks of the time that is to intervene between the closing of the sixty-ninth week and the opening of the seventieth week. He speaks of God’s purpose to call out from the world an holy priesthood to Himself. He speaks of the church, and of

God's called servants in the church. These are the "maschilim," the "wise," those that "give instructions."

"And the *maschilim* shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." Daniel 12:3.

The interpretation of the word "maschilim" as a reference to the godly remnant of Israel during the tribulation is fully sustained by two New Testament passages. In our Lord's Olivet Discourse, recorded in Matthew 24 and 25, He speaks first of the coming end of the age and the events connected with it. The Lord describes the coming days of "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, the prophet." Matt. 24:15. Then, he inserts the exhortation, "whoso readeth let him *understand*." The Lord's "understand" is a reference to Daniel's "Maschilim." No doubt the godly Jews of that day will be familiar with the New Testament. They will read the prophecies of our Lord, and then turn to Daniel and understand.

A Prophecy of the Tribulation

The other significant New Testament reference is found in the Book of Revelation. Chapters 6 through 18 provide a prophecy of the events of the Great Tribulation. It covers the same period of time as the first part of the Olivet Discourse, and of the last chapter of Daniel. In Revelation Chapter 13, the Apostle John is given a vision of the beastly empire with its head, the "little horn" of Daniel 7. In this vision, John sees the first beast rising out of the sea. Then, later on the second beast is seen arising out of the land. This second beast has two horns like a lamb, but his speech is like the dragon. The second beast is identified as the false prophet, the counterfeit of the Spirit of God sent by Satan into the world.

At the close of Revelation 13, we read, "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath *understanding* count the number of the beast." Again, this word "understanding" is related to Daniel's word "maschilim." It is those who are the wise, those who are the ones "giving instruction," who are exhorted to "count the number of the beast," and therefore to "understand" the significance of this number.

Psalms noted as "maschil" Psalms are those which have special significance to God's redemptive program for mankind. In the words of Psalm 32, King David "gives instruction" concerning God's Glorious Grace, and its application to the life of the helpless sinner. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached through the words of this great psalm from Israel's Hymn Book.

3.

The Righteousness of the Saved Sinner

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.” Psalm 32:1-5.

This “Psalm of Instruction” opens in a most dramatic way. The first two verses of Psalm 32 contain the consummation. This is a peculiarity that we find in the structure of most of these “maschil” psalms. Often we find the climax in the very beginning. Then, in the verses that follow, the inspired Psalmist shows how this climax was reached.

Here in the first two verses, we are given the four-fold blessedness of the believer. And in the remainder of the psalm, we are taught how King David was brought into the enjoyment of this blessedness. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven.” That is the first thing! “Whose sin is covered.” That is the second! “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity.”

That is the third! "And in whose spirit there is no guile." That is the fourth!

The Jewish people called this an "Asher Psalm." That is because the first word in the Hebrew text is "Ashrei". You will recall that one of the tribes of Israel was called "Asher". That name is from the Hebrew word that opens this psalm. The word means "happy," or "blessed."

There are a number of the psalms that begin with this word in Hebrew. In fact, the Psalm 1 begins with the word "Ashrei." "*Blessed* is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly."

The Psalm 1 uses the same opening word, but it is dealing with an entirely different "Blessed Man." The blessing is that of the One Man who never went astray, the Perfect Man, the Holy One, the One who is separated from the ungodly. This blessedness cannot be claimed by a sinner. It is the blessedness of Him who knew no sin, and in whose mouth there is no guile. The "Blessed Man" of Psalm 1 is our Lord Jesus Christ, no one else. He was the One and only "Blessed" and Perfect Man "that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." The first Psalm speaks of His blessing.

The Second "Asher Psalm"

Psalm 32 is the second "Asher Psalm." But in this psalm, the opening word pronounces a blessing on the man who *did* go astray, but who has been brought back to God. You and I *can* know this blessedness. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." Who is *that* man? He is the man who has come to God admitting his guilt, and putting his trust in the message that God has given.

The law, written in commandments and ordinances,

cannot give man blessedness. The law demands a perfect obedience which man cannot obtain. The law pronounces a curse. "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." Deut. 27:26.

There is the blessedness which man can obtain by faith in Jesus Christ, the blessedness which is shown in the opening line of this psalm. We have seen how the Holy Spirit applies the beginning of this psalm in the New Testament passage found in Romans 4:5-7. Christ died for our sins. In His blessed death as the Substitute for lost sinners He met and satisfied the righteousness of God, so that the Holy God can now be a just God and a Saviour, just and the Justifier of all who believe in Jesus. The faith exercise is counted (imputed) for righteousness, just as Abraham's faith "was counted (imputed) unto him for righteousness." Gen. 15:6.

In Old Testament times, this message was not given as full and as complete as in our day. In our age, He gives us the full, clear Gospel of His own blessed Son who died for our sins. When we put our trust in Him, we know that through what Jesus did on Calvary, all our iniquities are forgiven.

The Apostle Peter makes this point plainly when he says, "*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*" Acts 10:43. Remission, of course, is forgiveness. We receive forgiveness of sins through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Every poor sinner who believes that which God has told us concerning His Son is forgiven.

Notice the second part of this four-fold blessedness. "Blessed is he . . . whose sin is covered." The word translated "covered" is the word that is used throughout the

Old Testament for “atonement.” What King David is really saying here is this. “Blessed is he whose sin is ‘atoned for’.” The real meaning of “atonement” is “covering.” God found a “covering” for sin when He gave His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to die in our place. And in the Psalm the Holy Spirit says, “Blessed is he whose sin is covered.” The precious blood of Jesus Christ blots out all of the sin record in the life of that one who has placed his faith in Him. His sin is covered.

No “Marking Down” of Iniquity

Now, look at the third part of this four-fold blessing. “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity.” What is it to “impute iniquity”? To “impute iniquity” is to “mark iniquity down.” To “impute iniquity” is to make a permanent and continuing record of the sins of the one for whom the record is kept.

If the Lord Jesus Christ blotted out all my sins the moment He saved me, and then immediately began putting down more sins against me, I would not be much better off in the future than I was in the past. But the Psalmist says, “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity.”

God is not marking down sin against His people as something that they must face in the day of judgment. Those who have come to God by faith in His Word are “justified” from all things. That is, they are “declared innocent in the courts of heaven.” This “imputed innocence” takes into account the sins of the past, the present and the future.

The moment I trusted in Jesus Christ, His precious blood covered the whole record from the cradle to the grave. I am “justified from all things.” I am enjoying the

blessedness of the man “to whom God imputeth not iniquity.”

Now we come to the question that skeptics always ask. Does that mean that I can sin, and it does not make any difference? The Apostle Paul brings up this question, and then provides a superb reply to it, in Romans 6:1,2. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Let it not be! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

The answer to the question, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” is emphatically “No!” The moment my responsibility as a sinner having to do with the God of judgment ended for all eternity, my responsibility as a child having to do with my Father, began. I will never have to face a God of judgment. But I do have to deal with my heavenly Father!

Obedience is Expected of Children of God

As a “child,” I am supposed to be an obedient child. God has strict discipline in His household. If I am a naughty child, my Father will have to spank me for my naughtiness. I do not have to worry about eternal judgment, but I do have to face family discipline. *“For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”* Heb. 12:6.

God never imputes iniquity to His people. It is the very opposite. Instead of imputing iniquity, He imputes righteousness. Every believer is made the righteousness of God in Christ.

The “non-reckoning” of iniquity, and the “reckoning” of righteousness are interchangeable terms. The righteousness that is so reckoned is of faith. It is a “righteousness without works.” By God’s Glorious Grace,

thousands of Old Testament believers, beginning with Abraham and even before, were saved and declared righteous in anticipation of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That finished work was with God an eternal reality.

Now consider the fourth “blessedness” that King David has presented. “Blessed is the man . . . in whose spirit there is no guile.” Note very carefully, a man “in whose spirit there is no guile” is *not* a sinless person. There are no sinless people on earth. At one time there was One. That One was our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. But since the fall of Adam, there has never been another. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* Rom. 3:23.

“For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.” Eccles. 7:20.

“In many things we offend all.” James 3:2. This is true of believers as well as of unbelievers. Even believers offend in many things.

The Definition of a “Guileless Man”

But the man “in whose spirit there is no guile” is the man who is not trying to cover up and hide. He has admitted that he is just what God says he is. He is an offender. He is a sinner. As long as a man is covering his sin, then there is guile there.

When King David kept on covering his sin, there was guile. But when the king came out frankly and acknowledged that sin, when he said, “I have sinned against the LORD,” there was no more guile. There was no cover-up, and there was a blessedness that came to David when guile was no longer in his heart. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our*

sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” I John 1:9.

Israel, as a nation, rejected the righteousness of God, and therefore knows nothing of confession and acknowledgement of his sin. *“What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which follow not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone.”* Rom. 9:30-32.

It will be different with the godly remnant. They will acknowledge their sins and believe on Him whom the Father has sent, and possess the same blessedness every believer has now in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul himself is a type of this godly remnant of Israel. He speaks of himself as one born out of due season in I Corinthians 15:8. Paul further writes, *“For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them (a remnant of his own nation) which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.”* I Tim. 1:16.

The experience that Paul had will also be the experience of this believing remnant of the last days. When that nation’s eyes are finally opened, they will share with Paul his one driving ambition. *“Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteous-*

ness which is of God by faith: That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” Phil. 3:8-10.

As we read on in this psalm, King David tells us how he came to know the four-fold blessedness that he has just described. He first tells of the time he did not know such blessedness. *“When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.”*

King David Chastened of the LORD

The illustration of this truth is from King David’s own experience. The king relates how he tried to hide his sin, refusing to acknowledge his sin to himself and to God. The result was physical weariness, physical pain .

God’s chastening made itself felt, not only by the remorse of conscience, but also by actual sickness. There was pain in his physical joints. His very bones had begun to suffer. They grew old, they wasted. David suffered and complained. But such complaint was not a prayer of repentance. His complaints brought no relief while he would not confess his sin.

“For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” Just look at the picture David is drawing for us here! The vital sap and juices of his body were dried up by the burning fever within him. The picture that David is presenting is just like the wooded hills of South Texas. They are so green and beautiful after the winter rains, but they are so dried up when the drouth of summer comes. All of the king’s joy was gone. He was desolate, and he could not stand it any longer.

And so he said, *“I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.”* He had been hiding

his iniquity, but that course brought him nothing but sorrow.

"I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD." The very next thing is a free pardon! *"Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."*

The Loving Kindness of the LORD

How many times other sinners have had the same experience! The hand of the LORD was against them, and rested heavily upon them. The sinner found that he must come into God's presence, into the presence of the all-seeing One. He came, as every sinner has to come, in deepest humility acknowledging his sin. No longer did he cover his iniquity. The sinner made, or wanted to make, a clean breast of it.

Here we have a blessed evidence of the loving kindness of the LORD. Here we have evidence of God's Glorious Grace. David's words say, *"I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah."*

David intended to confess. But it seems that before he could carry out his resolution to the full, the LORD got ahead of him and forgave. *"Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."* So it was with the Prodigal Son as he turned homeward to the Father's house.

Have all of us been there? *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* 1 John 1:9.

Verse 5 ends with the musical interlude, "Selah". This word means, "Pause and meditate." It is an instruction for the voices of the singers to cease, and the music to be lifted up. Here the word seems to have expressed the Psalmist's distress of mind. It is used to prepare the way for the change in the next verse.

The Hiding Place

“For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.” Psalm 32:6,7.

In this “Psalm of instruction,” King David explains how he came to know the four-fold blessings of a life made right with God. He said, *“I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD.”* With confession came complete and total forgiveness. *“And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”*

Now, everything is different. Now the forgiven sinner is on praying ground. King David said, *“I could not pray in those old days, but I can now!”*

“For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.” This exhortation of King David is based upon his own personal experience. His words say, *“Therefore let everyone that is godly pray unto thee in a time of finding.”*

In A Time of Acceptance

The exact meaning of the latter part of this Hebrew expression is obscure because of its brevity. *“In a time when thou mayest be found”* is probably the best rendering of this expression. It could also be rendered

“in a time of acceptance.” King David is prophesying of a time when God’s Glorious Grace will be offered freely to all who will accept His gift of life. David is looking forward to this inter-advent age, to this “great parenthesis” between the 69th and the 70th weeks of the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27.

The Prophet Isaiah referred to this age of God’s grace as “the acceptable year of the LORD.” In Isaiah 61:1,2 the prophet is recording the words of God the Son Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, as he writes, “*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.*”

After reading these words from the scroll of Isaiah, the Lord Jesus Christ “*closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*” Luke 4:20, 21. The words of Isaiah’s prophecy were literally fulfilled in this One who had come to do all those things listed in the passage.

What is “*the acceptable year of the LORD?*” It is that time when God is looking in grace upon all poor sinners everywhere. It is that time when the message of the Gospel is going out to all. It is King David’s “*time of finding*” of the 32nd Psalm. It is a time when God may be reached by all. It is “*a time when thou mayest be found.*”

So, let everyone pray “in a time of acceptance.” Let no one delay, for there is also a time of not finding. “*Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come*

nigh unto him." This is a reference to that which comes after "the acceptable year of the LORD." There is a time of judgment coming, which is to follow God's prophesied "time of finding." David's prophecy of God's time of grace, and of God's time of judgment, falls into the same verse. Only a colon separates the words that describe the two distinct time periods.

A Time of Judgment to Come

Only a comma separates these same two time periods in Isaiah's prophecy. In Isaiah 61:2, we find the final portion of that prophecy (the first part of which the Lord had applied to Himself and to His ministry of this present age as He spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth). However, the sentence does not end at the place where the Lord ceased to read, and where He closed the book. Verses 2 and 3 read as follows. "To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, *and the day of vengeance of our God*; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."

The Lord did not read the final part of this prophecy as He spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth. Why? Because at His first coming, He had come to fulfill only those things that were prophesied in the first part of Isaiah's prophecy. He, at that time, had not come to proclaim "the day of vengeance of our God." That awaits His second coming! In Isaiah's prophecy, this entire age in which we live, is contained in a single comma.

"Surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach unto him." In a time of calamity and judgment, there will be those who find themselves beyond the

reach of God's Glorious Grace. Over and over again, the Scriptures warn us of that impending time.

“For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.” In this age of God's unlimited grace, the sinner who has met the conditions of the early verses of this psalm can enjoy the four-fold blessedness. Because he knows that he is forgiven, because he knows what it is to be without guile, he can pray with glad, blessed assurance, and know that the Lord will protect him in every kind of trial.

Notice how beautifully his condition is expressed in verse 7. *“Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.”* David was hiding from God. But now, he is hiding in God.

How wonderful it all is! He who justifies becomes our Refuge, our Hiding Place. Now, in our age, the blessedness of sin forgiven, the blessedness of knowing Him as a hiding place, is open to all. For this is still the time in which He may be found.

But there is also coming a time when He no longer can be found. That is in the day of His manifestation when He comes to deal in judgment with the ungodly who refuse to come unto Him and be saved.

The justified believer has a Hiding Place, an Ark of Safety, even the Lord Himself. The waters of judgment cannot reach this righteous One. Those judgment waters cannot touch his “Ark of Safety,” just as the judgment waters of the deluge could not invade the ark of Noah.

There is coming another “flood” of tribulation and judgment, preceding the Lord's Second Coming. It will

be “a day of darkness and of trouble” according to Joel and to Zephaniah. While the church, the “called out assembly” of this “acceptable year of the Lord,” is in the Father’s house, gathered there according to I Thessalonians 4:17, 18; the remnant of Israel, passing through the flood of great waters, will also be preserved. To this applies the prophecy of Isaiah 26:20. “*Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.*”

What He was to David in the time of the writing of Psalm 32, He will be then for the godly in Israel. He, Himself is the “Hiding Place.”

He is much more now for us: our Hiding Place, our Keeper, and our Preserver.

In the past, David was hiding *from* God. But after his confession and prayer, he was hiding *in* God.

Which are each of us doing? It makes such a tremendous difference. Some of us remember when we were also hiding *from* God. Then we were so totally miserable and unhappy. And then, instead of hiding *from* Him, we turned about face, and went directly to Him to find our “Hiding Place” *in* Him.

Guidance for His Own

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.” Psalm 32:8-11.

Who is the speaker in verses 8 through 11? Is it the psalmist, King David? Or is it God? Many have said that it is the psalmist who speaks in these verses. They say he has now assumed the part of the teacher, and in these verses he fulfills the promised instruction mentioned in the superscription.

But surely it must be the voice of God, David's Lord, who speaks the words here recorded. Would any human teacher venture to say, “I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee” as the last line of verse 8 should be rendered? Only God could assume this authority, and offer such guidance to His redeemed creature.

The LORD - Our Instructor and Guide

In these three verses, we hear the LORD speaking to King David, and to His own who have been justified and know Him as their “Hiding Place.” The LORD Himself

offers to instruct and to teach in the way in which the believer is to go. God has a way for all His children. He is ever ready to instruct and to lead us into that way. God says, "I have forgiven you, now I will undertake for you and will guide you through this scene - 'I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.'" Or, as this could be rendered, "I will guide thee with mine eye upon thee."

In another place it is said, "*Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He have mercy upon us.*" Psalm 123:2.

In other words, if one who is a child of God lives in such close fellowship with God that he can always see His face, He will show that one just how to go. The servant will not be left to stumble and fall. The reason that God's redeemed ones have such difficulty understanding the mind and will of the Lord is that they know so little of what it is to live in fellowship with Him. "*If therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*" Matt. 6:22.

What sad mistakes we make when we go our own way! What dishonor we bring upon Him and griefs and sorrows upon ourselves! No finite mind can know the extent of God's Glorious Grace as He seeks to direct even His weakest child in all things. However, if we do not seek His face and put ourselves into His hands in faith, He cannot do as He promises here. Precious is His promise that says, "I will give counsel with mine eye upon thee."

The LORD's own voice tells us that His eye is ever upon the righteous. That eye is never withdrawn from

them. The keeper of His people neither sleeps nor slumbers. He watches every step we take.

“Bit and Bridle” Guidance

However, to be counseled and guided by His eye necessitates nearness unto Him. If we are like the horse or the mule with no understanding, then bit and bridle must be used for restraint. *“Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.”*

How do you guide a horse or a mule? With your eye? Of course not! “Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, or they will not come near thee.” A great number of God’s people must have “bit and bridle” guidance, because they will not keep their eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who have had experience with the animals know that there is a great difference between the horse and the mule. The horse will take the bit in his teeth, and he will say, “I will.” When he does this, his driver has a hard time holding him back. On the other hand, the mule plants his feet and says, “I won’t.” His driver has a hard time getting him to move.

We can find both “horses” and “mules” among God’s people. Many of the Lord’s own are just like the horse, ready to get the bit in their teeth and run away at any time and with anything they have been entrusted with. These “horses” do not want to be guided or directed. Off they go only half prepared and with no idea where they will wind up.

But there are also the “mules.” They are the hardest to handle. They get so well established that one cannot move

them at all. And, of course, it is not lawful to use a whip upon them no matter how tempted one may be. God does not want us to act like a horse or a mule. *“Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.”*

Guidance With the Eye of God

How much better it is for the child of God to gaze into the loving eyes of the Father. One should keep near to Him, like a child which never leaves the parent's side. That one will watch the eye to read there what is the Father's will. And he will thus be directed. One of imputed righteousness may rejoice greatly in fellowship with his Lord, who has justified him, and who is his Hiding Place and his Guide and Counselor.

Verse 10 contains a little word of warning as it contrasts between the lot of the ungodly and of the faithful. *“Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusted in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.”*

If men will not come to God and judge their sins, if they will not come and confess, if they will not get right with God, then they have to face grief and pain. They are children of wrath, children of judgment. By their unbelief they have placed themselves beyond the reach of God's Glorious Grace. The sorrow which they face, they have brought down upon their own heads.

“But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.” This Hebrew expression can be translated, “Mercy enwraps him on every side.” This is the message of God for all those who have placed their trust in Him.

David concludes this Psalm of instruction with a

chorus of praise. *“Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.”*

Who are the righteous? Who are the upright in heart? They are those who possess the imputed righteousness of the Saviour and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. They are those who have been made upright in heart through the power of His shed blood. They are those who “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” They are the saved.

King David, the Psalmist, was one of these. He believed in God’s promise, and his faith was imputed unto him for righteousness. This is an example of the outpouring of God’s Glorious, Unchanging Grace.

To those who know Him, to those who have been saved by His grace, the message is, “Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice.” All can experience the joy of their glorious salvation by giving heed to the “instructions” presented here by the inspired Psalmist.

Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

The End