

# Shaping Today's Generation's Concept on Justification by Faith: An Exegetical Study on Psalms 32

Jaylord Hernando

*Adventist University of the Philippines*

jrhernando@aup.edu.ph

## ABSTRACT

This study addresses the prevalent struggle among students in understanding and living out the concept of justification by faith. While much of the discourse on justification by faith stems from Pauline epistles, this paper explores its presence in the book of Psalms, specifically Psalm 32. Through a biblical-exegetical analysis, the study investigates how Psalm 32 implicitly conveys the theme of justification by faith. The research begins by considering the context, genre, analysis, and theological implications of the pericope. The methodology involves examining the first five verses of the Psalm where the Psalmist's testimony of forgiveness and righteousness unfolds. The analysis of Hebrew terms such as "blessed" (אַשְׁרֵי/*asheriy*), "transgression" (פְּשָׁע/*peshah*), "sin" (חַטָּאת/*hattah*), and "iniquity" (אָוֶן/*avon*) that signifies wholeness and totality of sin can attain "forgiveness" (נָסַח/*nesuy*), his sin can be "covered" (כִּסְּוָה/*kesuy*), and imputes [righteousness] (יָחֹסֵב/*yahsob*) to the believing sinners which offer a detailed threefold forgiveness from sin as a result of true repentance and divine grace. It highlights the comprehensive nature of God's forgiveness and the total transformation it brings to the believer's life. With that, by linking scriptural insights with contemporary issues of justification, this study provides valuable implications for theological education, aiming to enhance the understanding of justification and encourage righteous living among students. It underscores the need for doctrinal clarity and experiential faith, proposing that a proper grasp of justification by faith is essential for personal spiritual growth and moral integrity in today's context. Thus, the study aims to uncover how the Psalmist's experience with God's grace can inform and shape the understanding of justification by faith among students today. Ultimately, this paper seeks to bridge the gap in biblical exegesis on Psalms and its relevance to its contemporary struggles with righteousness and faith.

**Keywords:** Maskil, justification by faith, transgression, testimony, righteousness.

## INTRODUCTION

Justification by faith is a cornerstone of Christian theology, emphasizing that individuals cannot achieve righteousness through their own efforts but require divine grace (Wright, 2009; McGrath, 1998). The Apostle Paul quotes Psalm 32 in Romans 4:6-7, linking David's experience of forgiveness with the New Testament teaching on justification (Atkinson, 1975). Additionally, early church figures like St. Augustine recognized its emphasis on grace, seeing it as foundational to the doctrine that righteousness is imparted by God's mercy rather than earned by human merit (The Works of St. Augustine, 2015).

Historically, much of the discourse around justification by faith has been drawn from the Pauline epistles (Gulley, 2009), which have deeply influenced theological thought, including the conversion of Martin Luther (Bainton, 1977). However, studies reveal that a significant number of students struggle with the concept of justification by faith and its implications for living a righteous life. Smith and Denton found that while many teenagers have a fragmented understanding of this concept, about 30% recognize their inability to live righteously without divine help (Smith and Denton, 2005:130-135). Estep and Kim (2010:205-212) reported similar findings, with 35% acknowledging that everyone is inherently sinful. Benson and Eklin's research (1990: 72-78) further highlights that even among students who received Christian education, around 40% understand the need for justification by faith. Despite these insights, there remains a gap in understanding how non-Pauline texts, such as the Psalms, articulate this concept.

This study seeks to address the gap in existing literature by exploring the theme of justification by faith in Psalm 32. While much focus has been placed on the Pauline epistles, the Psalms offer a rich and underexplored resource for understanding this doctrine. By examining Psalm 32, this study aims to provide fresh insights that can help students who struggle with the idea of living a righteous life. Understanding the message of justification by faith in the Psalms not only broadens theological perspectives but also offers practical implications for contemporary Christian education and spiritual formation.

The central problem this study addresses is the need for a deeper understanding of justification by faith outside the traditional Pauline framework. Specifically, it investigates how Psalm 32 conveys the concept of justification by faith and how its message can be applied to address the struggles of students in living a righteous life.

The primary objective of this study is to uncover the implicit teachings of justification by faith in Psalm 32 and to demonstrate how these teachings can shape the contemporary understanding of this fundamental Christian doctrine. The study seeks to show that justification by faith is not only a New Testament concept but is also embedded in the Old Testament, offering timeless guidance.

This study employs a biblical-exegetical method to analyze Psalm 32, focusing on the first five verses. The methodology includes situating Psalm 32 within its broader and immediate contexts, examining the text's morphology, syntax, semantics, and literary structure, as well as exploring its intertextual connections. The study will reveal how the psalmist communicates the need for divine grace and forgiveness. The anticipated findings suggest that Psalm 32 not only complements Paul's teachings on justification but also provides profound insights into the experience of God's grace, thereby offering a valuable resource for those seeking to understand and live out the principle of justification by faith.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study in the Book of Psalms, particularly in chapter 32, will investigate the teaching of justification being hidden in the said chapter. The method to apply in this study is through biblical-exegetical analysis. We will begin our pericope in the very first five verses of Psalms 32 because from there we can see the theme of justification by faith being conveyed indirectly from the whole chapter.

We will be applying the basic elements of the methodology in the context of the Biblical theology paper by investigating the contextual background and the genre of the section. We will also look at the literary style and structures of the pericope, analyze the keywords in the pericope, find its intertextuality, and then, we will be implementing [all] the

theology acquired from the study by uprooting on what the text meant, to apply what the text means in our time.

With this method, we seek to answer the question, “How was God revealed and presented in this section? what does the text say about God?” “What actions of God are evident in the section? What principles could be established based on the text?” “How does the motif in the section should be understood considering the entire bible and how does it should be understood today?” After that, a synthesis based on the previous analysis will then be included in the conclusion. This is the method we are going to use.

## RESULTS OF THE LITERARY ANALYSES AND DISCUSSIONS

### Contextual Background of Psalm 32

According to Nichol, the psalm is the heart history of one who sinned, for a time refused to confess, endured the torture of guilt, finally acknowledged and confessed, and gained forgiveness. It might be called the psalm of justification by faith (Nichol, 1977:708). The Psalms, characterized by their poetic depth and spiritual insight, often lack specific historical details, making their exact context difficult to ascertain. Jamie Grant, in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, notes that the Psalms are intentionally vague about their historical setting, allowing readers to focus on the spiritual and emotional experiences conveyed (Grant, 2006). Despite exhaustive efforts to trace detailed historical context, few resources provide extensive background information on individual Psalms, including Psalm 32.

Scholars such as Nichol (1977:706) Ellen G. White (1890:724), and Fausset (nd:207) suggest that Psalm 32 was written by King David after Psalm 51, following his sin with Bathsheba and the subsequent confrontation by the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 11-12). This Psalm, then, serves not only as a personal record of David’s confession and divine forgiveness but also as an instructional tool, fulfilling his vow in Psalm 51 to teach other transgressors the path to righteousness and peace.

### Genre

The genre of this particular psalm of David is a maskil, which may mean that it is didactic poetry (Futato, 2009: 127). A type of wisdom Psalm, further reflects its didactic purpose, aiming to impart spiritual insight and guidance (Archer Jr., and Waltke, 1999:877). It aims to instruct, enlighten, or give wisdom to the reader in a particular subject matter as the Hebrew meaning of the word renders.

Psalm 32 is recognized as one of the Penitential Psalms, a group that also includes Psalms 6, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. These Psalms are marked by their expressions of penitence and acknowledgment of sin, though not all include explicit confessions. In these Psalms, adversity is often portrayed as divine judgment for wrongdoing, with expressions of distress functioning as indirect confessions of guilt. Among the Penitential Psalms, Psalm 32 stands out for its intensity of feeling and its profound acknowledgment of human sinfulness before God (Elwell and Beitzel, 1988).

Traditionally, Psalm 32 has held significant liturgical importance. In certain Jewish traditions, it is recited on Yom Kippur- the Day of Atonement (Danziger,1988), and its verse 8 is included in the “Foundation of Repentance,” recited on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year (Scherman, 1985). These associations underscore its role in religious observance and personal reflection on repentance and forgiveness.

## Literary Style

Let me begin to point out the beauty of the chiasmic structure of our passage. Below is the chiasm and the synonymous parallelism of this chapter.

A. (1a) Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, (1b). Whose sin is covered?

A. (2a) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity (2b). And whose spirit, deceit does not exist.

B. (3a) When I kept silent, my bones, [they] worn out (3b) from groaning the whole day.

B. (4a) For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; (4b) My strength was change, (4c) As by the dry heat of the summer. Selah"

C. (5a) "I acknowledge my sin to You, and I did not hide my iniquity 5b) and I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord (5c) and You, you took away the guilt of my sin." Selah.

'C. (6a) Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; (6b) Surely in a flood of great waters (6c) they will not reach him. (7a) You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble (7b) with songs of deliverance (7c) You surround me. Selah

'B. (8a) I will instruct you and teach you (8b) in the way which you should go; (8c) I will counsel you with My eye upon you.

'B. (9a) Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, (9b) Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check,

(9c) Otherwise they will not come near to you.

'A (10a) Many are the sorrows of the wicked, (10b) But he who trusts in the LORD, (10c) lovingkindness shall surround him.

'A (11a) Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; (11b) And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

As noticed above, the upper wing from verses 1c to 5c that formed stanza ABC which we call stanza 1, and the lower wing from verses 6a-11b that formed the stanza 'A'B'C which we call stanza two posit an artistic structure. Stanza 1 based on my analysis is the Psalmist's testimony and stanza 2 is his teaching instruction to the wicked. That might be the reason why our passage understudy is called a maskil of David. Meaning, it is the wisdom of David or a contemplative poem of David. If we put it in the context based on our analysis, Psalms 32 was used by David, both for teaching instruction and to give wisdom or insightful ideas about justification by faith to his audience.

With that in mind we asked, what is the testimony of the Psalmist from our passage understudy in the first stanza of verses 1 to 5? He begins with the blessings from verses 1-2, the curse of suffering from verses 3-4, and then confession and forgiveness from the Lord in verse 5. From here, we synthesize the principles of justification by faith, and why it is so significant during the time of the Psalmist, during Paul's time, and even in our time.

## Structure

For us to understand it, Potgieter explained that "The structure of stanza I is thus determined by synonymous parallelism in the first line or hemistich found in verses 1 and 2 to form strophe A. Then, synonymous parallelism again in verses 3 and 4 to form strophe B; and the single, tristich verse hemistich in verse 5 that constitutes strophe C and connects back to strophe A via keywords is also synonymous parallelism (Potgieter, n.d.: 6)." It should also be

noted that the line 1ab and 2ab are climactic or repetitive parallelism (Gugliotto, 2000:32) in structure also as displayed by the poetic lines because both are talking the same idea. Contrast parallelism between hemistich/line 1a with 3a, 2a with 4a and 10ab with 10c. There is also a synonymous parallelism in 5a with 5b and 8ab with 8c, also in line 11a with 11b.

The argument summarizes that Strophe A constitutes the blessedness of being forgiven (verses 1ab and 2ab). If you notice Strophe B is the suffering of a guilty sinner because of unconfessed sin (verses 3ab and 4abc). Strophe C is a confession of guilt, the forgiveness of sin, and declaring the sinner righteous in verse 5abc.

## Figurative Language

Given the figure of speech used in Psalms 32, we can see few from the text. In verses 1 and 2 is a synecdoche i.e. stating a part but referring to the whole, where the second person “he” and “man” refer to all sinners who are forgiven. I noticed also that in verse 3 is a “metonymy that refers to something by naming an associated item (Craig, 2001:71) where the psalmist said, “When I kept silent, my bones grow old” which refers to the unconfessed sin that made him weak. Also, there is a hyperbole, or an overstatement being perceived in verse 11, where the psalmist is “shouting for joy” because of being justified from sin. The picture given us here is a psalmist bursting his song of praise as he composed right on the spot while dancing, rejoicing, and enjoying the moment of freedom from the loads of sin, a relief given by YHWH Himself. Lastly, there is a *paranomasia* or wordplay according to Rothlin (2006:201) which is very lucid in verses 1, 2, and 5 with the interchangeable use of sin, iniquity, and transgression. Another is in verse 11 with the use of rejoice, glad and shout for joy which implies praising God as an outburst within the forgiven sinner.

## Word Analysis

The first word of verse 1 and 2 is ‘אֲשֶׁרֵי/asheriy’ in Hebrew. It is a construct noun, masculine, plural. Based on analysis, its construct state suggests that the word participates in genitive relation, and it appears like an interjection in the hemistich. So, Koehler’s rendition of the word is right “Blessed is he who (1994-2000:100). The plurality of the word based in the context does not suggest a person but in the five-fold portion of the reward for being blessed.

Let me discuss the two blessings I saw from verses 1 and 2. Then, I will proceed to discuss the curses of sin from verses 3 and 4, for us to draw another blessing from it. then the other last two blessings from stanza 2 will come after, as a complement or as a result from stanza 1.

Blessings from verses 1 and 2. First, God forgave him by covering his sin (v1). The psalmist here uses a figure of speech called ‘*paranomasia*’ or word play (Rothlin, 2006:201) that describes sin under three names: transgression (פֶּשָׁע/ *pasha*), sin (חַטָּאת/ *hattah*) and iniquity (אָוֶן/ *avon*) that signifies wholeness or totality because transgression means in the Hebrew word ‘crime, offense, rebellion’ (Koehler, 1994-2000:981) and the sense of the word is an ‘act or feeling that transgresses God’s law’ (Logos Bible Sense on Sin) and iniquity connotes ‘the guilt caused by sin’ (Koehler, 800). So, the Psalmist is not only talking about the crime he made but also the action and the guilty feeling in his heart. In short, the complete whole being. That’s the totality of sin in its sense. Now, the entirety of the blessing that reflects also from the verbs he used is also in *paranomasia* that describes forgiveness in three names: forgiven (נָשַׁו/ *nesuy*), covered (כִּסָּו/ *kesuy*), and impute (יָחֹסֵב/ *yahsob*). The word forgiven conceived as being lifted or perhaps being removed from the sinner. In the case of the Psalmist, his crime

of adultery. When he used this word, he knew that his sin was lifted from him or being removed from him. That’s the sense of the word forgiven. The word covered implies ‘to cover or put oneself with garment’ (Koehler, 488) in this case, the bible tells us that it is the ‘clothe of righteousness’ (Isa. 61:10; Job 29: 14; Rev. 19:8 etc.).

The Psalmist knew, when God removed from him his sins through the blood of the lamb in the context of sanctuary service. That tells him that God is covering him with the robe of his righteousness because of His blood. That is why when he was rejoicing in Psalms 32:11, he called the forgiven man, righteous. He knew what he is saying. The last verb is imputed (יָשָׁב/yahsob). In Hebrew, the word means “to reckon or count” and “respect or hold in high regard.” God does not reckon the sin to the sinner’s account (Nichol, 1977:786) He will treat the repentant “sinner as if he had never sinned (White, 1892:67).” Then in verse 2b, the Psalmist said, “and whose spirit (בְּרוּחוֹ/beruho) there is no (אֵין/ween) deceit. Other manuscripts render the ‘spirit’ as heart (LXX) and mouth (Syriac Version). The Hebrew word אֵין should be translated ‘does not exist.’ In other words, the translation should be ‘whose spirit (that refers to heart and soul) deceit does not exist’. To put the whole words in context, the man who was forgiven should understand that his crime was lifted away from him and that is, God removed the sin from him, then he will be clothed with the robe of righteousness and eventually, God will declare him righteous because sin does not exist anymore from his heart. That is the second blessing from our passage.

Curses from sin in verses 3-4. The Psalmist said, “When I kept silent my bones grew old. The phrase ‘when I kept silent’ (הֶחֱרַשְׁתִּי/heherashtiy) is in hiphil perfect form, first person singular. Since it is in Hiphil perfect state, we know that it is causative according to our analysis and its perfect form connotes a completed action from the past. With this, for us to understand the intent of the word, we may roughly translate it as “when [sin] (within the context) caused (hiphil perfect form) me (first person singular) to keep silent (root meaning).” The picture that comes to mind now is that David after committing the sin of adultery and knowing that Bathsheba is pregnant, formulates a scheme for him to hide his sin, or in other words, he doesn’t want to confess his sin and keep it for himself. Then the verse said, ‘my bones grew old.’ An idiomatic expression that suggests ‘his bone was becoming weak, deteriorating or in other words, killing him.

So, the more David keeps the heavy load of sin, the more his inner being is becoming weak and it is killing him not only physically but spiritually. Then, he complains in verse 4 that ‘day and night the LORD’s hand was heavy on him’ which implies the weight of sin he is carrying day and night is so heavy and it is pressing him to the ground, and it is so exhausting and sapping which is the reason why he applied the principles of righteousness by faith in verse 5.

There are things we should know about these steps to become righteous in God’s sight. First, approached the LORD with faith. David went into the sanctuary with his sin offering and said, ‘to You (Lord)’ in verse 5a. Then second, acknowledge all your sins and that you are a sinner (v. 5a). David cries and groans all day long because of the heaviness of sin he is carrying, which only means that he is remorseful for sin (v. 3b) and third, confesses everything to the LORD. Do not hide anything from Him, confess your transgression, your sin, and your guilt (v. 5d). That brings us to the third blessing of YHWH’s forgiveness and that is, God gave him relief from the heavy loads of sin (vv. 3-4). Fourth, God allows him to experience joy to the fullest (v. 11).

Again, this passage is a synonymous parallelism and the figure of speech he used is *paranomasia* or word play. He describes the elevated feeling of joy in three names: be joyful (שִׂמְחָה), rejoice (גִּילָה), and shout for joy (וְהִרְגִּיזוּ). The first verb of verse 11 is an imperative (command) which the psalmist shows consistency throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza which is an

instruction. This implies spontaneous, natural feeling when the psalmist received forgiveness (בִּיהוָה) in the Lord. Only God can bring healing to the tortured heart from the Lord and that is what he found in the Lord (בִּיהוָה). The second verb is (וַיִּלֵּן), which is not a feeling anymore but an expression according to the sense of the word. Koehler gives the meaning of the word as, “shout in exultation (Koehler, 1994-2000:869).” Gesenius provided another meaning which is ‘to leap for joy (Gesenius, 2003: 168).’ After the Psalmist knew he was forgiven, he became glad (feeling) but when God declared him righteous, as if he never sinned, now his expression shows not only on the face but “out of the abundance of joy from the heart, his mouth shout in exultation while jumping. Then, the third verb completes the picture and that is, the Psalmist ‘shout for joy (וַיִּהַרְגֵזוּ),’ Koehler renders the meaning of the word as “call loudly shrilly, whimper, cry out” (Koehler, 1994-2000:1247) The shout of joy and jumping shifted to tears of joy and praise. What a perfect picture of rejoicing because of justification/ righteousness by faith experience. That is a joy to the fullest!

Lastly, God wants him to use this testimony to instruct and teach others so they will live also the righteous life (v8). Very powerful! These are the plurality of the blessings (vs. 1,2) a sinner can acquire upon approaching God through faith (vv. 6-7).

### **Intertextuality**

In the writings of Paul particularly in Rom 4:6-8, he quoted our pericope in Psalms 32:1, 2 to prove his arguments about justification by faith, a righteousness not by work (Rom 4:2) but “to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness (v5). Only God can impute righteousness to the believing sinner (v6), and this is God’s declaration that he is righteous before His eyes. Paul, then, alluded to Abraham’s narrative in verses 9-12 (c.f. Gen 12-15) to upsurge his argument on justification by faith where we can see our allusion also. Hither, both Abraham’s background and Paul’s argument will be used to accentuate how they used such expressions and motifs from our texts under study.

Let us take into consideration the blessedness of being forgiven, covered, and righteousness imputed to the guilty sinner of Psalms 32 where it was alluded at the outset of Abraham’s calling to leave his people and his heathen home behind. Genesis 12:1-9 is a landmark passage where our pericope finds its allusion. Scripture gives us no information on whether Abram experienced some prior relationship with God, or if he had previously communicated with the Lord. Abram’s people, including his father Terah, worshipped false gods (Joshua 24:2,14, 15). Ur and Haran, Abram’s former and current homes, were apparently centers of idol worship. Before his calling by God, Abram was a pagan and idolater in every sense of the word.

Upon writing this, we can see Paul is asking this question, how then was it credited [referring to righteousness]? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? [then he answered] No, but while uncircumcised” (Rom 4: 9-11, NASB). It is very clear then from Paul’s argument that Abraham was accounted righteous because of his faith though he was uncircumcised. Then, how about with the Psalmist? Our text says in verse 2, “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity...” In other words, if the Lord does not credit iniquity to the man (in this case a forgiven man of verse 1) then what will the Lord credit to him? Well obviously, our allusion from Romans 4:9 and Genesis 15: 6 tell us that it is accounted to him righteousness. When? the time when he is fully convinced that what He had promised, [he should believe] that God can perform (Rom 4: 21, 24).

Herewith, we understood that even the Psalmists himself got the idea that justification is by faith alone. He acknowledges that he is a sinner in need of a redeemer, so, as a voluntary

gesture of a believer, he came to Yahweh and that is faith. and confess his sins, iniquity, and his transgression to the Lord verse 5e says, “and You (LORD) forgave the guilt of my sin” an expression from the Psalmist revealing his faith in Yahweh. This is the reason why verse 2c of our text says, “The Lord does not impute to him his iniquity.” In other words, the Lord accounted him just and righteous. When Abraham, with faith, obeyed God and left behind his sins of idolatry and with the promised blessing in his heart, Abraham began to worship God by building altars for the Lord that made him accounted righteous because he believed the LORD (Genesis 15:6).

Paul said, “Also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believed in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification.” Romans 4:24,25. A silent allusion in the part of David because before he was forgiven from his sin, covered his transgression and the Lord will not impute to him, his iniquity (Psalms 32:1,2 5), by faith, he should go in the sanctuary, offer a lamb for his sin- offering, after he confessed his sin over the head of the animal, the priest will kill it and get the blood and sprinkle the blood at the altar then to the veil in the Holy place to cover his sin, cleanse him from iniquity and purify him from his transgression. This is the blessedness the Psalmist was saying.

One important allusion also that I want to point out from Paul was his purpose in teaching about justification by faith in Romans 4-5 and that is to address the tension among Jews and the Gentiles in the Roman Church that they are equal with God (2:11) and both need grace and the righteousness of God through faith (1:16-3 31). We can see that allusion to the purpose of the Psalmist in our pericope in verse 8. Because he experienced the tremendous effect of sin in the heart and soul (Psalms 32: 3,4; 51), he wanted his testimony would instruct sinners how to have freedom from sin, gain peace, live a righteous life, and experience joy throughout their life.

### Theology of the Section

We need to understand that in the background of our passage, this chapter is recited during Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and Rosh Hashanah. What does that mean? Well, it is in the context of sanctuary where YHWH’s dwelling place was. Let me call the theology of Psalms 32 the “Three G of Justification by Faith.”

The first one is the Gospel. Based on Psalms 32:1, 2, The Gospel is twofold: 1) Only God can bring the blessings of forgiveness or the joy of forgiveness. 2) Only God can declare righteousness. Though the gospel here is twofold, the blessings that are entailed through it are fourfold. According to the Hebrew text, the word blessed is *asre* which is in the plural form that could represent person, thing, place, or quality but in this case, it is unlikely to represent person because the subject is in the personal pronoun “he”. With that, it could be represented by a thing, or a quality of rewards being received by the subject “he” after being forgiven. Here I called it, “a fourfold portion of blessings” and that is, transgression is forgiven, sin is covered, the LORD does not impute iniquity, and deceit does not exist. Based on my analysis, the Psalmists used a figurative language called *paranomasia* which means “playing of words” because David here uses four different words in explaining a single thought which is sin (*pesha, hattah, avon, remmiyah*) and forgiveness (*nesuy, kesuy, yahsob, ayin*). Now, let’s put them together. The word “blessed” is an exuberant feeling the psalmist felt when his criminal action was forgiven. He understood, the moment he stepped into the temple court and expressed his desire to be forgiven at the head of the lamb, the high priest, after slashing the throat and getting the blood. He then lifts and carries it away from the sinner and applies it at the four corners of the altar and he then sprinkles it at the curtain between the HP and the MHP symbolizing that

his sins were taken away from him and the lamb will be offered at the altar carrying his sin. That's what the Psalmists understood and that's exactly what Jesus did on the cross. The moment we come to him, confessing our sins repentantly, He then takes it away from us and carries those sins for himself.

Well, it didn't stop there. David knew by faith that the Hattah which is the act of wrongdoing will be covered with a cloth. Does it sound familiar brethren? White said in *Lift Him Up* (p. 163), “Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul.” David was aware that the moment his sin was forgiven, meaning, it was taken away from him, then, a white cloth, the robe of righteousness of God would be imparted to him to cover the sins he committed.

And then, the iniquity/*avon*, “the guilty feeling caused by his sin, the Lord will no longer be charged to him or in other words, the Lord does not think that he is guilty of sin anymore because the Lord accounted or reckoned him righteous. That is the reason why, deceit in the life of David does not exist to him anymore because God declared him righteous in his sight. You see, the transgression, which is the crime itself, the sin, which is the action of wrongdoing, the iniquity which is the guilty feeling caused by sin, and all deceits we committed will be lifted, be taken away from us and Christ will carry it with Him on the cross. That moment, God will cover us with the righteous blood of the lamb, and He will declare us righteous, and sin does not exist anymore in our lives. Those were the fourfold blessings the Psalmists received because of God's grace.

The second one is Guilt. Look at the Psalmist's testimony when he was trying to hide his guilt caused by sin. If you read vs 3 and 4, as if David is saying here, “The more I am hiding it, the heavier the loads of my sin be, it pains me down to the ground and it's killing me. The idea is that unconfessed sins will wear the sinners out.

The Psalmist said, “When I kept silent my bones grew old. The phrase ‘when I kept silent’ (הִחַרְשִׁיתִי/*heherashtiy* in Hebrew), is in hiphil perfect form, first person singular. Since it is in Hiphil perfect state, it is causative according to analysis, and its perfect form connotes a completed action from the past. With this, for us to understand the intent of the word, we may roughly translate it as, “when [sin] (within the context) caused (hiphil perfect form) me (first person singular) to keep silent (root meaning).” The picture that comes to mind now is that David after committing the sin of adultery and knowing that Bathsheba was pregnant, formulated a scheme for him to hide his sin in other words, he didn't want to confess his sin and kept it for himself because it's embarrassing to know, not until he was exposed by the prophet Nathan. Then the verse said, ‘My bones grew old.’ An idiomatic expression that suggests ‘his bone was becoming weak, deteriorating or in other words, killing him. So, the more David keeps the heavy load of sin, the greater his inner being is becoming weak and it is killing him not only physically but spiritually. Then, he complains in verse 4 that ‘day and night the LORD's hand was heavy on him’ which implies the weight of sin he is carrying day and night is so heavy and it is pressing him to the ground, and it is so exhausting and sapping. That was why David cried in verse 10a, “too much pain (many sorrow) shall be to the wicked.” The idea is only God can bring relief from the heavy loads of sin (vv. 3-4).

The third one is grace. After David understood the excessive weight of guilt, if left unconfessed would kill him. Upon recognizing it he seeks God's grace. His next step was to apply the principles in verse 5. The Psalmist said, 5a “I acknowledge my sin to You, and I did not hide my iniquity (5b) and I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord (5c) and You, you *took away* the guilt of my sin.” Selah. To the Psalmist, a testimony to proclaim. He knew with all his heart now that only God can bring healing and restoration to the wounded

soul. That is grace! So, he proclaimed in 10b, “...he who trusts in the Lord, mercy (hesed) shall surround him.”

Nichol (1977:706) quoting White, “There is only one basis for the forgiveness of sin, namely repentance. Confession (1 John 1:9) is of value only when accompanied by repentance. Some Christians confuse the two processes and claim forgiveness on the ground of acknowledgment of guilt alone. But God is interested in the practical aspects of the case. Besides sorrow for sin, repentance includes the expulsion of sin from the life. Such expulsion is the act of the soul itself” (DA, p. 466).

As a result, the Psalmist concluded his testimony and teaching with hyperbolic gratitude. In verse 11 he said, Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart. God allowed King David to experience joy to the fullest. Expressed here was a gradual shift of words at its best. First, from “be glad” a feeling of joy or happiness to “rejoice” a facial expression; then with an action of e “shouting because of joy.” The words combined in Hebrew imply jumping, leaping, dancing, and shouting that joy out from the heart. That is the experience of a guilty sinner who received God’s justification.

## CONCLUSION

This is the intention of Psalms 32. When the Psalmist prayed his prayer in Psalms 51, God forgave him, and he received justification in a snap. Then he wrote Psalm 32 to fulfill his promise, where he wrote his testimony to instruct and teach others so they will also live a righteous life (v8). In other words, the Psalmist preached justification by faith to convert sinners for the Lord (51:13). There he preached the 3G of Justification. Guilt, Grace, and the Gospel. The result is Gratitude.

Remember, it all started from that very first step you take a lift of faith. Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of God (2 Cor. 5:17). Then another step that follows i.e., acknowledging your sins, that you are a sinner, and you are sorrowful for sin. The last step is in (v5), confess everything to the LORD and repent. Do not hide anything from Him, confess your transgression, your sin, and your guilt. The result will be amazing. God will forgive the repentant sinner, cover his sin, impute to him God’s righteousness, reckon the sinner justified as if never sinned before and the joy of His salvation will be restored immediately. That’s the experience of the sinner’s heart in an instant. That is the good news of justification by faith in Psalms 32.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is to acknowledge my students in God and Human Life class who inspired me to write this paper whose primary purpose is for them to understand the good news about justification by faith. May all people who read this paper will be blessed by the two-way street of the analysis. We, who experienced already the good news of justification by faith should use the two T’s, as a Testimony and to Teach. The purpose is to win many souls for Christ. For the Psalmist, ‘to convert sinners’ (Ps. 51:13). For the Apostle Paul, ‘it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes... For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live [righteously] by faith.’ Romans 1:16, 17. May all co-teachers of Christ proclaim it.

## REFERENCES

- Andersen, F. I., & A. D. Forbes. (2006). *A Systematic Glossary to the Andersen-Forbes Analysis of the Hebrew Bible*. Logos Bible Software.
- Arnold, B. T., & Choi, J. H. (2003). *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Atkinson, J. 1975. *Justification by Faith*, *Vox Evangelica* 9. London: School of Theology.
- Bainton, R. H. (1977). *Here I Stand: A life of Martin Luther*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Barrick, W. D. (2004). *The Masoretic Hebrew Accents in Translation and Interpretation*. Sun Valley, CA: The Master's Seminary.
- Benson, P. L., & Eklin, C. H. (1990). *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations*. Search Institute.
- Berlin, A. (1992). "Parallelism." Edited by David Noel Freedman. *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday.
- Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: SESB Version*. (2003). Electronic ed. Stuttgart: German Bible Society.
- Brown, F., S. R. Driver, & C. A. Briggs. (1977). *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Broyles, C. C. Ed. (2016). *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis*. (2001). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Carson, D. A. Ed. (2015). "Psalms 32." Page 1016 in *Zondervan Study Bible: New International Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Correa, T. (2020). *Class Notes for, OTST 542, Hebrew Readings*. Silang, Cavite, Philippines: Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, October 2020.
- Easton, M. G. (1893). *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Estep, J. R., & Kim, J. K. (2010). *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development*. B&H Academic.
- Elwell, W. A. & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). "Psalms, Book Of," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Futato, M. D., and G. M. Schwab. (2009). *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 7: The Book of Psalms, The Book of Proverbs*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Gesenius, W., and S. P. Tregelles. (2003). *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.
- Grant, J. A. (2006). "The Psalms and the King." *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*. Edited by David Firth and Philip S. Johnston. Westmont, IL: IVP Academic.
- Gugliotto, L. J. (2000). *Handbook for Bible Study: A Guide to Understanding, Teaching, and Preaching the Word of God*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association.
- Gulley, N. R. (2009): 113–48. "Debate over Justification by Faith: Evangelicals and Catholics." *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 20, no. 1 & 2.
- Harris, R. L., G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke, eds. (1999). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Jenni, E., & C. Westermann. (1997). *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Kelley, P. H. (1992). *Biblical Hebrew. An Introductory Grammar*. Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans.

- Koehler, L., W. Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, & J. J. Stamm. (1994–2000). *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Longman, T., III. (2014). *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*. Edited by David G. Firth. Vol. 15–16. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press.
- Nichol, F. D. ed. (1977). *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 3*. Review and Herald Publishing Association.
- Palmer, F. R. (1997). *Semantics. A new Outline*. England: Cambridge University Press
- Pratico, Gary D., & M. V. Van Pelt. (2019). *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*. Third Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Smith, C., & Denton, M. L. (2005). *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. Oxford University Press.
- Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.
- Waltke, B. K., & O'Connor, M. (1990). *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Indiana, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- Warren-Rothlin, A. L. (2006). “Body Idioms and the Psalms.” *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*. Edited by David Firth and Philip S. Johnston. Westmont, IL: IVP Academic.
- Weil, Gerard E., K. Elliger, & W. R. (1997). *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. 5. Aufl., rev. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft,
- Wintner, S. (1998). *Definiteness in Hebrew Noun Phrase*. Philadelphia, PA: Institute for Research in University of Pennsylvania.
- White, E. G. (1892). *Steps to Christ*. Pacific Press Publishing Association.
- Wu, Andi, & R. K. Tan. (2009). *Cascadia Syntax Graphs of the New Testament: Glossary*. Lexham Press.