Main Thought – In this penitential (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143) psalm, David uses his own EXAMPLE of sin and forgiveness to EXHORT others to trust God.

INTRODUCTION – This psalm is a MASKIL (instruction) read on the Day of Atonement by Israel and on Ash Wednesday by Catholics. The occasion is thought to be David’s sins of adultery, murder, and coverup with Bathsheba.

PROLOGUE: THE BLESSEDNESS OF FORGIVENESS (1-2).

- There are many words for SIN in the bible: transgressions (crossing the line), error, missing the mark (Judg. 20:16), evil, rebellion, to fall away (apostasy).
- To COVER (kippor) sin is to take care of it; to COVER (like Noah’s ark – Gen. 6:14) it with blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippor).
- The believers sins are not counted (imputed – Rom. 4:6-8) against him. They are forgiven and ATONED (1 John 2:2) by Christ.
- These verses were directly quoted by Paul (Rom. 4:6-8) in defense of the doctrine of JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH alone.

DAVID’S EXAMPLE (3-5).

HIS SILENCE (3-4).
- For one year David kept his sin with Bathsheba secret (2 Sam. 12:12). He HID it as did Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:8-10) and Achan (Josh. 7:20-21).
- His year long GUILT brought devastating physical consequences (Psa. 38:3-8; 39:10-11; 51:8).

CHARLES SPURGEON said, “God does not permit His children to sin successfully.”

HIS CONFESSION (5).
- Like Adam, Eve, and Achan, David confessed his sin when exposed by Nathan the prophet (Num. 32:23); but made no excuses like Adam and Eve.
- David acknowledged that he was a sinner from birth (51:5 – original sin) – a sinner by nature (Rom. 3:10, 23).
- This painful acknowledgment of sin released the forgiveness of God. Like a fatal infection (Rom. 6:23), it was cleansed and washed away (Psa. 51:2, 7).

DAVID’S EXHORTATION (6-11).

- We should confess sooner than later. Bad news doesn’t get better with time. Seek God while there is still time (Isa. 55:6-7).
- David ran to God as his hiding place and refuge (34:8, 22).
- David uses his story (testimony) to teach others (Psa. 34:11; 51:13).
- Do not be stubborn like the mule, but trust in God’s mercy (103:8-12).