

David's life, and in this psalm the autobiography of a penitent soul. Remind the class that sin brings a bit of tragedy into almost every life, wrong-doing of some kind which causes bitter regrets; and help them to see that the only way out is the way David took, the way of a penitent soul. This song of a penitent soul contains:

1. *A Blessed Experience*, vs. 1, 2. How is this blessedness expressed? Dwell upon the different words for sin and the different words for forgiveness. What is sin? Quote the Shorter Catechism definition (see Ques. 14). What is forgiveness? Question the class about the possibility of knowing that we are forgiven, and show that David could not have uttered these words if he had not known that God had forgiven him. Can a man be forgiven and not know it? (See 1 John 5:13.) Without the sweet consciousness of divine forgiveness we are at best living at a poor dying rate. Impress upon the class that it is a more blessed thing not to sin than to enjoy the blessedness of forgiveness. The bird with the broken pinion never soared so high again.

2. *A Painful Experience*, vs. 3, 4. Note that the burden of unconfessed and unforgiven sin is too heavy for man to bear when the conscience is alive to the guilt of it. A heart full of bitter regrets and remorse is a painful thing, is a touch of what hell must be. We need to remember this when temptation comes.

3. *A Hopeful Experience*, vs. 5-7. Question the class about the only way out of the painful experiences of unforgiven sin. What must a sinner do to get relief? God has made the way of confession and forgiveness easy. Direct the class to Hymn 151, Book of Praise, as a good exposition of God's way. Remember that there is a time limitation (v. 6), so we cannot afford to put off this matter, and point out the advantages of living in right relationship to God and man, v. 7.

4. *A Helpful Experience*, vs. 8-11. Question out our need of divine instruction, of divine guidance, to keep the forgiven soul from wandering away again. Without divine guidance man is prone to be as thoughtless as a horse, as stubborn as a mule. Divine

guidance brings us into a blessed experience of mercy and joy, vs. 10, 11. Note that everything that is worth while comes in the way of the divine planning, and that we are making the most of life when we walk in that way.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

Begin with a little talk about psalms, making it plain that a psalm is a song. Then call for the title of the Lesson—The Blessedness of Forgiveness. Linger a little on the word "blessedness,"—it just means happiness. Ask the scholars to look at the Lesson psalm to discover how its first two verses both begin with the word "Blessed." Tell them that the Hebrew word thus translated means "happiness." The psalm, then, is about happiness and it tells the way to get it.

Who wrote this psalm?—that is a good question with which to begin the closer study of the Lesson. Bring out the facts that it was David who wrote the psalm and that he wrote it after he had sinned so dreadfully and had bitterly repented and been fully forgiven. Refer to the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke, ch. 15. He might have sung this psalm after he had come back to his father's house from the far country.

Take up the three words for wrong-doing in vs. 1, 2:—"transgression," that is, crossing a forbidden boundary, breaking the holy law of God; "sin," or missing the mark which God sets before us, making a failure of life; "iniquity," crookedness of soul, like a bent sword or a twisted tree. What an ugly thing sin must be when it is described by these three ugly words.

In a similar way take up the three words for pardon in these two opening verses of the psalm: "forgiven," taken up and carried away (see John 1:29); "covered," so as to be hidden completely out of sight; "imputeth not," no longer reckons against. The use of these three words shows how full and perfect is God's pardon of sin. Refer to such passages as Ex. 34:6; Isa. 50:18; 55:6, 7; Luke 6:36.

In vs. 3, 4 we see how the psalmist suffered before his sin was forgiven. Point out that it was his conscience which made him suffer