

Psalm 32

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Preacher: None

[0 : 00] Please do grab your Bibles again and turn to Psalm 32.! Psalm 32, Psalm 32, Psalm page 462 of the Church Bibles.!

Let me pray for God's help. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word and we thank you for the grace that is in Christ.

Help us today by your Spirit to grasp the grace and forgiveness that is in Christ. Help us to know that our sins have been laid on him.

And in his name we pray. Amen. What is the American dream? Does anyone remember those three things that make up the American dream? I think we have some Americans here today. Maybe they'll know.

The American dream is life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And that last one is really interesting. The pursuit of happiness.

[1 : 05] It really captures something, I think, is in all humanity. In our lives, we're all pursuing something. We're seeking something.

There is a deep desire for happiness. For a good life and inner peace. And people look for it everywhere. Meditation apps have become a big phenomenon recently.

As people try to find happiness and inner peace in this world. People go from one relationship to another. Seeking that happiness, thinking they'll find it.

And maybe people can't always put their finger on what this happiness exactly is and where to find it. But we're all seeking it. We're all in the pursuit of happiness.

Of this deep down true happiness. And David, in this psalm, he reveals the secret of true happiness. That's what he means by blessed in verse 1.

[2 : 04] Blessed is the one. Blessed him, it means happy. But happy, it doesn't quite do that justice. Because we use happy in quite small ways, don't we?

We'll say, oh yeah, I'm feeling happy today. We'll say, well, England won the last test of the ashes. Yeah, I'm quite happy about that. We use happy in a small way. It's often used just as this kind of fleeting feeling we sometimes have.

But David is using happy, blessed, in a big, deep way here. This is true, permanent, deep down into your soul happiness.

Happiness that the world is seeking. Reuben Hunter preached on the Beatitudes a few weeks ago. And in the Beatitudes, Jesus uses the word blessed as well. He said, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And Reuben very helpfully said that blessed in the Beatitudes, it means flourishing. A flourishing, truly good and happy life. And that's really helpful. That captured, blessed here.

[3 : 14] David is saying, here is the true secret to deep happiness. Here is the secret to a good, flourishing life. Here is the secret to a happiness and a joy that sinks deep down into the depths of your soul and never leaves.

A peace that underlies your whole life. So that even when troubles come along and it feels like your life is unravelling, there is still this deep down contentment and happiness.

Blessed. So in this psalm, David is saying, here is the answer to the pursuit of happiness. Here is what every human being has been longing for and searching for across the whole world, in all cultures, for thousands of years.

They've been looking for it, but they've never been able to find it. Well, here it is. And do you want it? Are you in the pursuit of happiness, of true soul deep happiness?

Well, here is the secret. Happy is the one whose sins are forgiven. And this is my first point today. Happy is the one whose sins are forgiven.

[4 : 31] David opens with a secret straight away in verse 1. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

What makes the truly happy life? Having your sins forgiven by the Lord. Forgiven means your transgressions, your sins against God, your iniquity.

Forgiven means it's all lifted off you. Like a weight and a burden pressing down on you. To be forgiven means it's lifted off you, taken away. And David uses other phrases.

Look at verse 1 again. Blessed is the one whose sin is covered. Covered here, it literally means covered over, disappeared. The picture here is that sin is this huge, blatant, shameful stain on you. And to be forgiven means it's just covered over. It's disappeared. It's out of God's sight. He doesn't see it anymore, ever again. And then verse 2.

[5 : 43] Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity. When God doesn't count your iniquity, it means he doesn't charge it against your name.

So it's almost like if God had a big list of everyone's name on it, and next to their name was a list of every single sin that they've committed.

And when God forgives us, he wipes out all those sins next to your name. It's not counted against our names anymore.

He doesn't mean sinless here.

He means happy is the one who doesn't hide his own sin. Who doesn't pretend that he has no sin. Who doesn't try to cover it up himself before God.

[6 : 42] But instead, he's open about it. He presents his sin before God, and God covers it up. And David says, this is true deep down into your soul happiness.

This is where the pursuit of happiness actually leads. The good life, true happiness, it's not about money, or holidays, or life experiences, or food, or relationships, or career goals.

No, true happiness is about being forgiven. The happiness this world has been searching for, the pursuit of happiness, it's actually the pursuit of the forgiveness of sins, of being made right with God.

Happy is the one whose sins are forgiven. Augustine, a fourth century theologian, and maybe one of the greatest theologians since the Apostles, he said these words.

He prayed to God, you have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. This is the longing of the human soul.

[8 : 03] The happiness we all long for, it's opening our sins before God, and being forgiven. And to grasp this, we need to understand what it's like when we try to hide our sin.

When our sins aren't brought before God, when we don't experience God's forgiveness, when we feel the unbearable weight of sin. Because David felt it very sharply.

He felt the reality that unconfessed sin wastes us away. And this is my second point to see.

Unconfessed sin wastes us away.

Look at verse 3. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away, through my groaning all day long. David kept silent. He pretended he had no sin. His spirit was deceitful. He deceived himself. He had unconfessed sin before the Lord.

[9 : 08] And the burden and weight of his sin pressed down on him hard. My bones wasted away. And end of verse 4.

My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. It was physically wasting him away. We've seen over the past few Psalms, this relationship between body and soul.

When our souls aren't right, it can affect our bodies. And when our bodies waste away, it weighs on our soul. And it can be a vicious cycle between the two. Well, David is caught in this vicious cycle.

And what is causing all of this? It's unconfessed sin. His attempts to cover up his own sin, to pretend like it's not there, to live a life acting like he's all good with the Lord.

It's been taking its toll physically. Maybe he's not eating. Maybe he's not exercising. Maybe his sin is just leaving this very unsettled feeling in his stomach.

[10 : 15] That's the kind of picture going on here. But it's not just the sin that's producing this feeling. No, it's God.

Look at verse 4. For day and night, your hand was heavy upon me. The Lord's hand was pressing down on him, making him feel like his sin wasn't right.

The Lord was pricking his conscience, giving him this feeling of unease. And the Lord wouldn't let him escape this feeling. And the more he resisted, the more he wasted away. Unconfessed sin wastes us away. In the Lord's mercy, we all have a conscience. When Adam and Eve fell, and all humanity was plunged into sin, we never lost our conscience. That deep sense of right and wrong. Now we need to say, our consciences did become corrupt. Our moral compass, it started pointing in all directions. [11 : 29] We started to call evil good. But the very existence of our consciences, the existence of it, it never left.

A glimmer of truth remained. And so we all have a deep sense of God's existence, of his law of right and wrong. Even the non-Christian, every human being that has ever lived, deep down, knows that the God of the Bible exists, that he is holy, and that we are accountable to him.

And so when we carry our sin, we can't escape that uneasy feeling that God knows. And so unless we come to God, what can we do?

We try to hide our sin. We try to cover it up ourselves. We try to convince ourselves that our sin, it really isn't so bad. We suppress that uneasy feeling, and we pretend that God isn't watching. But deep down, we always know. That feeling is always there. And this attempt to ignore God, it wastes us away.

[12 : 49] And so we try to live a life trying to find happiness out there in the world. Trying to find something that will cover up that feeling. We think all the things in this world will fix that unsettled feeling, that unease in your heart.

But that restlessness that the world feels, that is the Lord's hand heavy upon the world. And it's wasting the world away.

And we go on this endless pursuit of happiness to find the cure to wasting away, to escape this feeling, to escape God. Unconfessed sin wastes us away.

And for the non-Christian here, this feeling you have of unease in this world, it's actually because you're not right with God. It's the deep down knowledge that God is there and you're not right with him.

That you have sins needing to be forgiven. Or maybe that feeling is not really deep down anymore. Maybe it's right at the surface. Maybe you've done things in your life that you know aren't right.

[14 : 01] And you don't know how to live with it all. You don't know how to deal with that feeling of guilt. And it's eating you away. Well, that is the Lord's hand heavy upon you.

He's pricking your conscience. He's saying you have sin to be confessed to God. And this goes for those in Christ too. As Christians, there will always be sin in our life until Christ returns.

But we can do two things with our sin. Either we can confess it to the Lord, acknowledge it, and open up to the Lord, and live in the light. Or, we can hide it in the dark, and try to cover it up, and try to convince ourselves that it's not really sin.

Deceive ourselves, and just keep it secret. Secret from the people around us, and from God. But it always festers there, and it wastes us away.

It weighs on us, and we can't enjoy our salvation. In Psalm 51, David confesses his sin, and he says to God, restore to me the joy of your salvation.

[15 : 20] When we cover up our own sin, we lose the joy of our salvation. Not that we lose our salvation. Christ never loses those who are his.

But we can lose the joy of it. When sin weighs on us, we struggle to come to God in prayer, we feel uneasy in church.

We can't enjoy the wonderful promises of the gospel as they're preached to us. And we struggle to have that deep down happiness that Christ brings.

Because we know we're not right with the Lord. We're trying to cover up our own sin. Unconfessed sin wastes us away. So what is the answer to all of this?

To you, non-Christian, without uneasy or guilty feeling. To you, Christian, losing the joy of your salvation. What is the answer? What can we do?

[16 : 22] Well, look what David did in verse 5. I acknowledge my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity.

I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the iniquity of my sin. He stopped covering his sin.

He let the Lord cover his sin. He confessed to the Lord, opened up, came to him seeking for forgiveness. And how did the Lord respond?
You forgave the iniquity of my sin. The burden of sin, it was lifted. The heaviness of the Lord's hand, it was turned into the comfort of the Lord's hand.
He felt the relief of being forgiven. That wasting away was gone. He was right with the Lord. And that is true happiness.
[17 : 23] The happiness we all long for. So what should we do with our sin? Verse 6. Therefore, let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you.

This is what we can do with our sin, with your guilt. This is where you can find happiness. Offer prayer to God and confess your sin.
And this is my final point today. So confess your sin to God. So confess your sin to God. This is God's command for us. Let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found.
Confess your sin to God. This is where happiness is found. Don't cling to your sin. Don't be blind to it.
Don't try to cover it up. In verses 8 and 9, David speaks to us directly. He says, I will instruct you. I will counsel you.

[18 : 28] Do not be like a horse or a mule without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle. He says, don't be like a stubborn mule.
Don't fight against the Lord's hand over you. Don't be unwilling to give up your sin. Don't be unwilling to open up and confess your sin.
Don't be like a stubborn person. Don't be like a stubborn Why do we do that? Why can we be so stubborn like that? It's because we think when we come to God, it's going to be a bitter experience. But look how God is when we do come to him. Verse 7, You are a hiding place for me. You preserve me from trouble. You surround me with shouts of deliverance.
The Lord is a hiding place for sinners. A refuge. You don't need to hide your sin. You can hide in the Lord.

[19 : 37] You can hide in Christ. It is in Christ that we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
In Christ, united to him, hiding in him, there is the forgiveness of sins. For those who come to Christ, the stain and shame of your sin is covered by his blood.
The night before Jesus died, he held up the cup of wine and said, This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. His blood has been poured out for the forgiveness of your sins.
The taking away, the covering, it's not counted against your name anymore. And baptism is a sign of this. Just like the water washes away your dirt, well, Christ washes away your sin.
That's what's happened for Miriam. For all who are baptized, he's washed away your sin. It's gone, forgiven. So when you come to him confessing your sin, you won't get words of condemnation from God.

[20 : 54] Christ won't say to you, How could you have done that? No, you will be surrounded with shouts of deliverance. Christ says, come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.
He says, if you are burdened by your guilt, feeling the weight of your sin, come to him and you will find rest for your soul. Christ is the only hiding place for sinners.
Just think, where else can we go with our sin? Where else can the vilest sinner go? Where can celebrities go when they're caught in scandal and their sin is printed in the newspapers and it's only condemnation hanging over their heads?
Where does the world say the guilty can go? The world says there's no forgiveness. You need to pay for your sins.
You're staying forever. You're never coming back from this. Where in this world can the sinner go? Where can we escape the unease in our heart?

[22 : 14] Where can the guilty find forgiveness? Christ says to the world, come to me. There is forgiveness in me. In Christ is the forgiveness of your sins.

Blessed, happy, is the one who is forgiven in Christ. This is the happiness the world has been longing for. That underlying feeling every human being has been trying to satisfy, it's found in Christ.

It's found when the Lord says you are right with me and now it is well with your soul. if you're not a Christian here today, if you come to Christ, not only will you find relief from your guilt, you will find protection at the final judgment.

Look at verse 6. Surely in the rush of great waters they shall not reach him. Those are the waters of judgment.

judgment. And when judgment comes, what matters is whether or not your sins are forgiven. So if you come to Jesus and confess your sin, acknowledge it before him, he will be your hiding place for all eternity.

[23 : 34] And the time to confess your sin, it's now. Offer prayer to him at a time when he may be found. That is now.

It's when you hear the gospel. It's before judgment comes and it's too late. Come to Christ now. In him is the forgiveness of your sins.

Trust in Jesus and you will be surrounded, not by guilt, but by the steadfast love of the Lord. You'll be blessed, truly happy. That is the good news of the gospel.

It's the offer of true, soul-deep, permanent happiness. And for those in Christ, there might be sin in your life that you're trying to cover up yourself, and it's weighing on you.

Now, this doesn't mean you've lost your salvation, but it can mean you lose the joy of your salvation, and it can feel like your bones are wasting away.

[24 : 41] God's will be well now is the time to come to Christ. Come to him. Do this today. Go to him in prayer. Confess your specific sins to him.

Seek forgiveness, and you will always find forgiveness in Christ. confession may also mean confessing your sins to those around you.

Maybe sin is eating away at you because you also need to speak to your wife or your husband. Maybe you need to speak to your mum or your dad about your sin, and that is a good thing to do. Do you hear what this psalm is saying? That's a very good thing. Sin hates the light. Sin begins to die when it's confessed.

And all this may mean certain consequences, changes in your life to stop sin, but again, that is a good thing. There is a lightness, a relief, a happiness to confession, the burden of sin coming off you.

[25 : 54] Unconfessed sin, it wastes away, but confession, it's a breath of fresh air into your life. The joy of salvation hits you again. And that's why we confess our sin together every Sunday.

That's why we ask for forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer. We're not covering up our sins anymore. We're letting Jesus cover them so we can enjoy the happiness of being forgiven.

Being right with God, it's a wonderful thing. This is the happiness the world has been longing for. And it's all found in Christ.

Do you know what some of the most exciting and astounding words in the Apostles' Creed are? God, I believe in the forgiveness of sins. Who else can say that?

Who else can confess that? Where else can you find that? Church of Christ, we can say that. We believe in the forgiveness of sins.

[27 : 00] So if your sin is burdening you, let it burden you no more. Come to Christ. In him is the forgiveness of sins.

Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray. Let me pray.