

Psalms 32

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Preacher: Chris Roberts

[0 : 00] Are you happy? Are you happy? Would you say? David in the psalm, he says to us tonight, I want to let you in on a little secret, the secret of happiness.

It's how the psalm begins, if you look down at verse 1, blessed is the one, something, something. That word blessed can be translated as happy.

He wants to give us the secret of happiness. And David in this psalm, he tells us that happiness comes in the last place you'd expect. Happiness comes in one of the hardest places. Happiness comes at a price.

It comes in one of the hardest experiences that anyone can go through. It's found in a place that we naturally run from.

It's when we put our reputation on the line, when we swallow our pride, and we bring into light the things that have been kept in the dark about our lives.

[1 : 28] Happiness, he says in Psalm 32, is in that unknown and scary cliff-edge experience of confession.

He thinks about his own testimony, doesn't he? In verse 5, he says, there came this moment when I acknowledged my sin to God.

When he confessed his transgressions to God. He says, I want you to come to that place with me. To a place that naturally you are afraid of going to.

To a place that naturally you are afraid of going to.

There is the kind of covering that God does when we come to him with our wrongdoing in verse 1. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered by God.

[2 : 49] But then there's another kind of covering that David was trying to do himself. Do you notice in verse 5 there came this moment, wasn't there, where he decided not to cover his sin anymore.

Which means that that was what he was doing. He was covering his sin. And happiness is knowing the difference between the two. Between us covering it, and God covering it.

He said, let me tell you, number one, when we try and cover our sins, it's miserable. When we cover our sins, it's miserable.

He refused to acknowledge, didn't he, what was true deep down. That he knew of himself. That his conscience told him about himself.

He was covering his sin at one point. Remember, King David, he is the man, he is the king who used his power to have sex with another man's wife.

[3 : 53] He murdered that man, and then lied about it. And he lived with that lie for quite a while.

And maybe he was thinking about that, or maybe he was thinking about something else that was on his conscience, that was heavy upon him.

But rather than admitting it, he covers it up. And he says, that was a miserable time of my life.

Spurgeon says, alas, for a poor soul, when it's learnt its sin, but forgets its saviour. He knew about his sin, didn't he?

He knew that he'd done something wrong, but he covered it over. His conscience accused him, but he'd forgotten his saviour. And that hidden issue, that hidden conscience issue, was kept in the dark.

But mould grows best in the dark, doesn't it? And it was so stupid to keep it in the dark. He knows that now, because really, I was miserable when I did that.

[5 : 02] See the unhappiness of the cover-up in verse 3 and 4. He says, when I was doing this, it affected my health. He says, when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long.

Day and night, your hand was heavy upon me. God's hand was heavy on his conscience. His strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. It's weird that, isn't it? How is a spiritual issue, like a conscience issue, affecting his physical health?

How does that work? Is he just talking figuratively here, saying it was really bad, as if my bones were wasting away inside me? I don't think it is that.

Because we know, don't we, just in normal human relationships, that estrangement from anyone, a breakdown in an important relationship, causes a great amount of stress.

It can cause depression. And it can cause illness. If a person is always ill, maybe, it's not always the case, but maybe it's not a physical problem, but it's just that they're sad.

[6 : 18] They're sad about something, and that is where the injury is. And it shows itself in being run down all the time, and ill. But the problem might be emotional, or it might be an anxiety thing.

And here there is a rift with someone he loves, and that makes him ill. For him, it was a spiritual issue, wasn't it? It was an illness caused by conscience.

And he feels rotten. His bones waste away. Notice, the strongest parts of his body became weak. He becomes lethargic.

His strength dries up like on a scorching day. He becomes weak in battle. People maybe saw David, if they had church on a Sunday. They maybe saw him, and they'd say, You're looking a bit off colour this week.

You're looking a bit weak. Let's get into the doctor. Let's get into medicine. But his problem was hidden, wasn't it? He groans inwardly, with a deep unhappiness, a heaviness.

[7 : 27] Day and night, your hand, God, was heavy upon my conscience. And maybe that's you tonight. Maybe you're a great actor when you're with others.

Maybe you're all brightness on the outside. We can be really good at that kind of thing, can't we? But deep down, is there a rift between you and your God?

Because you keep covering something up. And it's miserable, if you're honest. The misery of that life. Even when you're not caught, or nobody else knows the real you.

The misery of a heavy conscience. But here's the thing, isn't it? There is a reason why we do that. Even though it's miserable, to keep our sins quiet and covered up.

We think the alternative would be much worse. Verse 2.

[8 : 33] He tells it, it's not a happy thing when a person has a deceitful spirit. That's not what it is to be blessed. And that deceitful spirit thinks, I will cover up this conscience issue.

Because the only other option is going to be worse. So he lies to himself, he deceives himself, he deceives himself into thinking, if I stop the cover up, things will get worse.

I'll refuse the help that is offered by God, because it is going to destroy me, if I open up about this. I don't know if you watch The Simpsons.

It's kind of a bit old now, isn't it? But I still watch it from time to time. And there's a great episode where Homer Simpson and Bart Simpson are out on this rubber dinghy in the middle of the ocean. And Homer wastes all the water, washing his socks, and he eats all of the rations within the first five minutes. And suddenly they're kind of left stranded in the middle of the ocean.

[9 : 39] And eventually a rescue plane finally flies overhead. And Homer fires a flare, but it hits the plane and it explodes. And they've got no way of being rescued.

At one point then, this thick fog clouds in around them. And Homer gets into an hysterical panic. We're doomed, we're doomed, he cries. We're going to die.

The fog clears, and suddenly this boat appears. It's a rescue boat. And it comes into view. And somebody from the boat says, are you okay? And Homer, the typical man who doesn't admit his need, he shouts back, yeah, everything's fine.

And the boat drives on. The fog closes back in, and Homer returns to his hysterical shouting, we're doomed, we're doomed. And we can be like that, can't we?

We can't rescue ourselves, we can't deal with ourselves. ourselves. And when God offers help, we refuse to admit our need. We've learned about our sin, haven't we?

[10 : 45] But we've forgotten our saviour. Despite the misery of that, we'd rather reject his help than acknowledge our sin.

And we cover it up. We can do that in quite a few different ways, can't we? We might minimise the problem. It's not as bad as that.

There's only a little thing that I did. We play the victim. It's how I was brought up. It's the circumstances that I'm in.

It's their fault. We don't want to lose face, do we? We don't want to be ashamed. Jesus, I think, tells us to confess our sins to one another.

The Lord's Prayer is corporate, isn't it? Forgive us our sins. And I think part of the problem of covering up sin is that to uncover it, we know that we'll need to do that with another trusted brother or sister in Christ.

[11 : 50] James tells us, confess your sin to each other. Now, there's a way we can go wrong on that, isn't there?

Some Christians treat this kind of thing, talking about our sin, as almost like a badge of honour. The more kind of stuff I can dredge up and tell you about it shows how great I am as a Christian that I'm doing that.

It's not the right way of doing it. But we are told to expose those things that are on our conscience. And doing it with another brother or sister, that is the really scary bit, isn't it?

And the deceitful spirit says, keep covering this up. Because there is no worse a fate than people knowing what you are really like.

Tim Chester, and the writer, puts it like this. Think about it. We're prepared to choose sin, reject God, abandon freedom, and even risk hell, rather than have people think badly of us.

[13 : 01] Let me read that again. We're prepared to choose sin, reject God, abandon freedom, and even risk hell, rather than have people think badly of us. We cover up sin, don't we, so often, because our greatest God is not God, it's other people's praise of us.

If there is something, and I don't want you to look for things that aren't there, to become kind of hypersensitive with a conscience, but if there is something that we cover up, and keep covering it up, we need to realise that the misery of that is so stark, isn't it, in our lives.

But we do it because the misery of that is almost not as bad as the misery of somebody else knowing it. It's what we fool ourselves into thinking. We say, don't we, I want to be known for my holiness, but that desire impedes growing in holiness, because we cover things up.

And of course, another reason that we do it is that we want to keep doing the thing. Uncovering it will mean fighting it and stopping it. But we sometimes love sinning, don't we?

Otherwise it wouldn't be tempting. Proverbs 28 says, whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

[14 : 33] mercy. When we cover it up, it is miserable. Verse 10, many are the sorrows of the wicked. I wonder if you know people like that, some people that just live their whole lives in this way.

Inwardly, covering up and pretending, trying to keep it hidden. Always looking over their shoulder, working so, so hard to put on the act.

And when the rescue boat finally comes, we say, everything's fine, rather than lose face. God is saying here, listen, we can deal with this thing.

We can get it dealt with. We can do it the hard way, or we can do it the easy way. You could be like a stubborn mule about this if you want to. Verse 9, It's a great picture, isn't it?

You can't talk to a mule, you can't counsel a mule. You've got to curb it with a bit and a bridle in its mouth. God says, don't let's do it that way.

[15 : 40] Don't make me do it that way. David says, don't be daft. When we cover up sin, it's just miserable when we do that before God and others.

But secondly, the truth is when we cover up our sin, it's miserable, but when God covers our sin, it's wonderful. When God covers our sin, it's wonderful.

There's this wonderful freedom that comes with uncovered sin when God covers it. I don't know if you've seen the movie Flight.

It stars Denzel Washington. It's a great film. It plays the character of William Whittaker. He's an airline pilot who has the reputation of being the best in the business at flying his airline.

At the beginning of the film, Whip Whittaker manages to rescue a whole plane full of passengers by doing this incredible upside-down flight and then landing it in a heroic move.

[16 : 52] It's a brilliant stunt that saves them all. But what we know as the audience is that Whip is a closet alcoholic and he performs the rescue whilst secretly drunk.

The story tracks Whittaker in the following investigation where he's lauded and praised by the press as this hero while the cover-up of his alcoholism gets more and more complex.

His lawyers work hard to guarantee him freedom and keep his reputation intact. But in the end, in a shocking twist, just as Whittaker is about to be freed by the court, he has a moment of clarity. He is high on drugs in this courtroom but he has a moment of lucidity. He decides to end the cover-up. He decides to confess to this investigative panel.

The film closes with Whittaker in prison for flying while intoxicated. And he describes that moment in the courtroom with his fellow prisoners.

[18 : 09] He says, that was it. I was finished. I was done. It was as if I'd reached my lifelong limit of lies.

I couldn't tell one more lie. And maybe I'm a sucker because if I had just told one more lie, I could have walked away from all of this mess and kept my wings and kept my false sense of pride.

More importantly, I could have avoided being locked up in here with you. But I'm here and that's fair. I wrote letters to the victim's family. Some of them will never forgive me.

Some of them will. But at least I'm sober and I'm grateful for that. And this is going to sound really stupid coming from a man who's locked up in prison. But for the first time in my life, I'm free.

I'm free. It was a painful confession. He lost face and it was a shameful thing.

[19 : 14] But Whittaker understood the freedom and the release of confession, confession of ending the cover-up. Didn't take away the consequences of what he'd done with it.

But he was free from the weight of a heavy conscience. And David says that place of confession, that place that we naturally want to avoid at all costs, that shame of confession, he says, it is worth it.

It's absolutely worth it. It's worth it for being free. We think God is like other false gods, don't we? We think that if we come to him and we're honest with him, and we say sorry to him, and we say sorry to others, that he is going to beat us up for that.

That he's going to punish us if we come clean. But that is how other gods work, isn't it? If you let other gods down, they will beat you up and they will punish you, but the Lord does not beat you up if you do that.

[20 : 26] See what happened to David in this psalm. As soon as David uncovers his sin, God forgives it. When your cover-up ends, God's cover-up begins.

And his, God's cover-up is different from what David had been doing, isn't it? It's not simply, let's pretend it's not there. He doesn't give David a wink and a nudge and say it's okay.

He doesn't do the deception thing. You see in verse two, blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity.

God's cover-up is when he counts no iniquity against us. It's not just let's pretend. It is a legal declaration of you are not guilty.

As soon as the issue is brought into the light, God doesn't just say to us, well, do better next time. I'll pretend that you're something you're not.

[21 : 37] He says, you are forgiven. And as far as I'm concerned, you are not guilty. How can that be? How can God do that? The Apostle Paul quotes Psalm 32 in Romans chapter 4.

You can turn to it if you want, but don't worry if you'd rather not. Romans chapter 4. And Paul here is speaking about the life of the one who has faith in Christ.

And he's saying to his readers, this is always how it's been throughout the Christian church. Ever since the beginning, it's always been about the person who has faith, who is justified by faith.

He says, to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift, but as his due. And to the one who does not work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works. Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered.

[22 : 46] Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. Paul here in Romans is dealing with the fact that you and I are considered counted righteous by God through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Jesus' righteousness is credited to our account. It's incredible isn't it? So when we come and we say we have sinned, we've done wrong, we've come to Christ, Paul is saying here isn't he, when we end the cover up and when we confess, this is what happens.

Christ's righteousness is credited to us just by faith. God doesn't just forgive us actually, does he? He piles Christ's righteousness on us.

Not because that righteousness has just sort of come from thin air, but faith trusts in Jesus who gives his righteousness. Psalm 32 is the voice of a king, King David, who takes his sin to God and has it dealt with.

He uncovers it. And his voice echoes until it finds its source in another king, King Jesus.

[24 : 13] A king who takes sin to God, but not his own sin, his people's. And he has it dealt with.

He exposes it to the light of God's judgment, where the mould of our sin is exposed as he dies on the cross.

And where he experiences the shame and punishment of the hidden things, the hidden conscious things now brought out into the light. So when we uncover it, God does not beat you with those hidden things.

when you bring them out to him, he dies for you. He dies for those hidden things. He exhausts the shame so that at uncovering sin, God can then cover it.

And that is wonderful. Imagine that. No more paranoia. No more looking over your shoulder. People might think something else about you for a while but you'll be free.

[25 : 26] Free from worrying about that so much. Just as we close, it's interesting how David ends the psalm in verse 11. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Shout for joy. Be glad in the Lord. Who's he speaking to there? He's speaking to the righteous, isn't he? And to the upright in heart.

And we've got to wonder, who are those people? Who are the righteous? Who are the upright in heart? The person that you look at and you think, they are so righteous.

They are so upright in heart. This song belongs to them. This is their song. I bet those people have never had to confess a thing in their lives.

The righteous, the upright in heart. But this song shows us, doesn't it, that the righteous, the ones that God considers upright, are that because confessing is precisely and exactly what they have done.

[26 : 42] They have uncovered sin. They have acknowledged it. the righteous that God speaks to in this psalm aren't people who don't think they've got to do that.

But they're the very people who have. And they've ended the cover-up. And they are people whose faith in Jesus Christ is counted as righteousness. So let me ask you again tonight, are you happy? I hope you are tonight. I hope you are happy in the Lord. And you've done what David has done here. And that you've got a clear conscience that you're free from sin.

But if David has put his finger on the reason why you are not happy tonight, and you are telling yourself, keep it covered.

David shows you here, doesn't he, and he shows you what you know, that that is a miserable experience. You know it.

[27 : 47] So come on, bring it into the light. If that is you, why not speak to someone tonight? Why not do that? Or this week?

David understands, doesn't he, I put this off for so long. I did that, I procrastinated. I know why you're doing that, because it's painful. But once I stopped covering up, I was truly happy.

So stop covering it so that God can. Let's pray.