

"The Best Way to Experience God's Blessing"

Psalm 32

When Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount with 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of God', Jesus touched probably every listener's heart. Rooted in each person is the desire to be blessed, or happy/joyful. But most people have different ideas about what it means to be blessed, or full of joy. Most would define being blessed as being free from problems. You have your health, you have some useable money that you can spend occasionally, and you and your family have no major problems. People will even tell you that God has blessed them because of these things. And that's okay to acknowledge God is behind our blessedness or happiness.

But God's idea of blessing is more than that. When Jesus said 'Blessed are the poor in spirit ...' he just changed the media's definition of blessing [when I say 'media' I mean what the power players of the day keep telling you – regardless of whether it was correct or not]. The 'media' in Jesus' day was run by the religious rulers and Rome. And the religious leaders said that God blesses you with health, wealth and no major problems if you follow Him. In other words if you happen to be healthy, wealthy and no major problems you are following God. So every-one who doesn't have wealth or has occasional health issues or has family or work or relational problems supposedly isn't following God.

So when Jesus says His eight blessings, He was shattering what the people thought about God. How did He do that? He brought them back to the Word of God. Every time Jesus said 'Blessed' the people thought about the Old Testament statements about blessing. A few of the beatitudes are even quotes from the Old Testament. Jesus didn't quote Ps. 32:1-2 (a double blessing!) but Paul did in Rom. 4.

Had I asked you what Psalm 32 is all about, most of you would probably say 'It's about the need to confess our sins instead of hiding them from God and people'. Well, not completely. Confessing our sins is the means by which God wants to bless us. The Psalm is really about how

God Desires to Bless Us **(Ps. 32:1-2, 11)**

¹ *Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*

² *Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.*

¹¹ *Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!*

See how the Psalm begins and ends? Blessed, blessed, rejoice, be glad. And the ones who are happiest are the upright in heart. Why? Because your heart has been cleansed (vv.3-10). We'll come to that for sure but let's make sure we don't miss the most important thing in this psalm.

The opening two verses are a declaration but also an invitation. Who does God want to bless? The rich, healthy and problem free? No.

'Happiness' is available to any who ask God for forgiveness of sins (v.1; Rom. 4:1-8)

'Blessed is the one'. If your translation has 'man' we understand it is generic for mankind, so most newer translations put 'one' or 'they' here. The word for 'blessed' means 'happy or joyful, but it is rooted in a relationship with God, one that requires asking forgiveness of sins. So anyone in any circumstance can have this. Has no conditions regarding race, economic status, sex or physical/mental limitations. God desires to be in a relationship with anyone who is willing to ask Him for forgiveness of sins. The context in the psalm is that David, someone who is already in a relationship with God is looking to have his current sins forgiven. But the apostle Paul quotes these verses and applies it to how we have a relationship with God, not based on our works. We read in Rom. 4:1-8,

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³ What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

⁴ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶ David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

⁷ "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

This of course presumes that we admit we have sin. David uses three different words here for sin to describe any type of sin in case we doubt whether we have a sin problem. The word "transgressions" means to rebel. Rebelling against God means I reject what God says and choose my way instead. We can do that overtly or subtly. Subtle ways of rebelling against God is making excuses or telling little lies why we don't do what His Word says. Sometimes we explain our situation as if our excuse let's us off the hook. But it's all rebellion against God.

"Sin" means we miss the mark. We fall short of being perfectly obedient. Our efforts to please God with our best behaviour always misses the mark of true holiness, perfection. Often we admit we aren't perfect but we don't confess that as sin. We even use it as an excuse for our sin without any repentance.

"Iniquities" means twisted or bent, referring to our moral choices. Sometimes we twist things in our favour or bend around God's Word and feel we are justified by our poor moral choices. These three words encompass every form of sin we can think of. There is none righteous, not one.

But he also has 3 words for how our sins are removed. "Forgiven" means taken away. "Covered" means hidden fro sight. "Not impute" means no record is kept. Blessed is the one who confesses they are rebellious, unholy, morality twisters and God will take away, hide it and wipe all records of our sins. When we do that we discover true joy. Therefore,

'Happiness' results when we believe God's promise to forgive (v.2)

God wants to bless us by forgiving our sins and the only proof we have for that is His Word. But His Word reveals His character. He is true and holy and just and righteous. God declared the payment for our sins was paid by His Son Jesus Christ on the cross, and we who recognize we are moral failures and completely incapable of being sinless and of saving ourselves, will receive the blessing of being forgiven. Which is what gives us true joy; a secure relationship with God.

And David believed that is always true for one who has a relationship with God because he continues to ask forgiveness for the sins he committed as a believer. And his assurance of forgiveness results in his being able to assure us that

'Happiness' continues as we remain faithful (v.11)

He concludes with,

¹¹ *Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!*

When we are upright – living right with God – we live with the joy of being forgiven. We experience His joy, so we rejoice and sing. We praise Him. We enjoy life. We want others to know this joy through forgiveness of sins.

Ps. 32 and 51 are related. The title for Ps. 51 says when 'Nathan the prophet came to David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba.' Psalm 32 probably describes what he went through before and after he confessed his sin. In Ps. 51:12 David asked God,

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

When we sin, and we know it, yet refuse to ask forgiveness, we don't lose our salvation but we temporarily lose out on the joy that our salvation brings us. Because our heavenly Father is disappointed in us and we're trying to hide it from him. There's a fracture in our relationship. We're not talking or we're pretending that there isn't a problem but we know in our heart there is.

So we will enjoy our relationship with God more as we keep our hearts pure and ask consistently for regular forgiveness of sins. But when we're refusing to deal with our sin, instead of happiness we find as David did here,

That Sin Drains the Blessing out of Life
(32:3-5)

This is David's personal account of how he tried to keep his sin hidden. The words 'kept silent' means didn't take action. He refused to do what needed to be done and confess his sin. When he didn't confess he found out that

Unconfessed sin weighs us down (vv.3-4)

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴ *For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.*

David acknowledges God's hand was weighing him down. He knew what he had done but tried to hide it. David committed adultery with Bathsheba which he tried to cover up by bringing Uriah her husband, home from the war. Hoping that Uriah would go home and enjoy his wife, making it look like Bathsheba's pregnancy was a result of her husband's visit. But he refused to go home while his fellow soldiers were at war. David arranged then to have Uriah killed in the battle and then married Bathsheba as if he was looking after her.

One sin leads to another when we refuse to repent and confess it. God wouldn't let David get away with it. Our sin will always find us out. I hope we can't relate to this type of heaviness, but

perhaps we can recall a childhood memory where we did something we didn't want our parents to find out about and we tried to hide it from them. And it bothered us. The problem however is that our God-given conscience won't let us forget it. It's always on our mind. Our known unconfessed sin just sucks the joy right out of life. This is what David is talking about.

Hiding our sins is so much work and can consume your mind because you're afraid of people finding out. Finally, David broke and confessed and once he confessed his sin to God healing began.

Healing begins with confession (v.5)

The word order of v.5 is very emphatic: *'My sin I acknowledged to You; my iniquity I did not hide.'* The words 'acknowledge' and 'confess' mean to reveal something that you had intimate awareness of and now are uncovering. He tried to hide it and now he revealed it, admitting his sin and asking forgiveness from God and from those he hurt. Because healing can't take place if there's no admission of hurting someone. It's always there like a brick wall if you don't confess. Yet once confession begins, healing can start (doesn't mean it won't take awhile, it might) and eventually,

Restoration with God Creates Opportunities to Bless Others **(32:6-11)**

I say eventually because we need to remember David is writing a short psalm about a past event giving no details but an overview, in order to help others with their sins to deal with them before God and others. Once confession takes place and healing is allowed to happen, the forgiven believer can use his life lesson as an opportunity to share his story with others so that 1) they won't go through what he did and confess their sins regularly; or 2) if they have or need to confess their own sins they need to be encouraged that God will forgive and not count against them their sins.

David encourages those who need to deal with their own unconfessed sins,

- ⁶ *Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.*
- ⁷ *You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.*

God is a refuge and hiding place for those who seek Him. *'While He may be found'* may be a reference to remain godly because you and God have been maintaining a consistent relationship, whereas if we continue to refuse to confess sin our relationship with God is a distant one and we may have a hard time getting back to God because we've been hardening our hearts and making excuses.

There is something else I think we need to be aware of here. At the end of v. 4, 5 and 7 David adds 'Selah' at the end of each. The term Selah is understood as a term to pause in the psalm or song. To let what was just said or sung to sink in. If David has thrown a little warning here to someone who has delayed in asking forgiveness and thus hardening his heart, he is encouraging us that

We need to pause our life to hear and see God (vv.6-7)

Perhaps God has been trying to get your attention about an area of your life you need to deal with, but you hardly ever sit down and read His Word or pray to Him (which is the main way we see and hear God). People with unconfessed sin don't want to pause and hear God because they know what God will say. If my 'time with God' is always on the go [I'll just listen to Christian music on my

way to work”; I’ll just skim the Daily Bread at breakfast’ or ‘I’ll pray as I drive’ or ‘we’ll do devotions before bed’] we won’t hear what He has to say. Is that how your relationship is with your spouse, your kids, your friends; hit-and-miss, on the go, quick text here and there? Hopefully not. Then let’s not do it with God. Some Hebrew words sound like what they say ‘Selah’ pause, reflect.

⁸ *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.*

⁹ *Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.*

David has a desire to share what he learned with others. We don’t know if he meant an informal atmosphere, one-on-one with people or a testimony time in a public gathering but either way since this is God’s Word then God wants us to

Share our own failures to help others (vv.8-9)

God doesn’t want to waste anything; He can even use our pain and hurts and sins to help others who might be dealing with the same thing, learn from our failures so they can avoid falling into the sins. And most of us probably have shared our failures or hurts with others who have been helped in their own hurts and failures.

This is why we have this psalm – and all the Scripture - to learn from others how to come to God, how to walk with God, how to pray, how to listen to God and how to return to God in confession and repentance. As we begin our journey through Lent and our small groups, let’s help each other grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Let’s pray for, encourage, and possibly share our own failures and hurts as God leads so that we can know the joy of being in a close relationship with our Father in heaven.

Gracious and forgiving God Almighty, I thank you for this psalm because it tells us none of us are sinless and we all are in need of your lovingkindness. But also that it is available to anyone who wants to know true joy through a relationship with You through Your Son Jesus. Father, if there is someone here today who thinks they are without sin, show them that none of us are without sin and all in need to forgiveness for salvation. On the other hand if there is anyone who thinks they are a worse sinner than others, help them see that this is for them; that they can experience the blessing of your joy if they confess their sins and their need for salvation in Jesus alone. And Lord, thank you for reminding us who know You, of the need to seek forgiveness regularly and not hide it from you or others so that the blessing of our joy in You continues to encourage us each day ...

* * * * *

If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net