

Psalm 32

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- [0 : 0 0] It is lovely to be back with a few weeks more notice than the last time. Although at Calderwood we've developed a bit of a habit recently of having to cover at very short notice.
- Our preacher this morning is in London and he chose not to travel. And three weeks ago he was stuck in the floods and couldn't travel either. So Cal and Thomas have been learning to put together sermons at very short notice.
- If you have your Bibles it would be lovely if you could turn to Psalm 32. This was the passage, I think these passages were chosen quite some time ago.
- So we're trusting in the providence of God to speak to us through his word. And to speak into the situation that we find ourselves in at this time.
- Let me read Psalm 32 to us. David writes, Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven.
- [1 : 0 4] Whose sin is covered. Blessed be the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity. And in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent my bones wasted away.
- Through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you.
- And I did not cover my iniquity. And I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Therefore, let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found.
- Surely in the rush of great waters they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me. You preserve me from trouble. You surround me with shouts of deliverance.
- I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule without understanding, which must be curbed with a bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.
- [2 : 2 2] Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.
- Amen. And we trust God to bless the reading. It was a word to us. As I've been preparing and thinking this week, this was the passage that is before us.
- Perhaps if we'd been choosing, if I'd been choosing it this week, you may have found yourself in Exodus and the plagues or something, but we're in this, and as I was reading and preparing, especially the first two verses, I could not escape them.
- I could barely get past verse two, because they are so foundational to everything that we believe as Christians. And a foundation is what seems to be so lacking in our society.
- This week, I think this virus has exposed the hollowness of secular thinking. All the gods of this world are crumbling. Health is gone.
- [3 : 3 3] Wealth, leisure. Suddenly, everything's being taken away, and people don't know what to do. And then we get the response, which is ultimately, it's the selfish response.

It's the panic buying. It's the every man for, every man or family for themselves. Community is gone. And I sometimes wonder, if this has happened in the 1950s, would people have responded in the same way?

Because we still had a Christian culture and a Christian heritage then, and that foundation, sadly, is now, is now gone. But for us as believers, our, our foundation has not changed.

You know, we're in a, things are shifting so quickly, probably from the notice this morning to what we've just announced this evening. But, but this, this hasn't changed. This doesn't shift.

It's not fluid. Okay, this is a foundation that we can build our lives on. And it's the foundation that we can share with those around us who are wondering what to do.

[4 : 37] Okay, and we have the answer. It's good news in the midst of bad news as such. Psalm 32 is, is written by King David.

It, it, it doesn't really appear to refer to any one particular time in David's life. It's that it, it speaks perhaps more of a general life experience. And it's very much intended as a teaching psalm.

It's a psalm of instruction to his people. In, in Psalm 51, which is about a very specific time in David's life after he's been, after he's sort of pleaded before God because of his murder and adultery.

Uh, he says in verse 12 and 13, he says, restore, restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit. He says this, then I will teach transgressors, those are God's sinful people, your ways and they will return to you.

David has a desire as the king of his people to underpin their faith with great truth and with the hope that the truth about God and his own personal experience of that time with God will drive his people back to God when they fail or when they fall.

[6 : 02] Which they will. which we will. And that's what makes this such an important psalm because it, it underpins so much of the gospel and so much of what we believe.

So I'm going to break it down for us just into three parts if that's helpful for us. We're going to look at first thing, we look at the verses one and two which is really, it says only the forgiven are truly happy and then we're going to look at verses three through to verses seven which really is how did David discover this great truth of forgiveness and then finally what is his counsel to his people and to us and there's a little bit of overlap in verses six and seven.

To feel the weight of verses one and two first of all I want us to imagine a moment now most of you probably remember the TV series This Is Your Life. Now I remember it when it was Michael Aspel was the presenter and I believe it was Eamon Andrews before that and that was before my time so I just had to look that one up on the internet to see who the presenter had been before.

But imagine the scene you're there on the couch in the audience of your entire family all the people in your life who you respect and love your colleagues people you've known and the presenter starts to read from the big red book and as he reads the scenes from your life flash up on big screens all around and you look up and to your horror you realise that these are not the highlights of your life that are on display but the lowlights on the screens all around in the studio and on national television all your sin is on display your thoughts even the sins that no one else even knows about they're all exposed for the world to see imagine the moment imagine it how are you feeling as you look at the faces in the audience shame guilt regret panic maybe feel ruined and verse 1 and 2 in Psalm 32 is the remedy to that to those feelings because in order to understand the weight and feel verse 1 and 2 we have to understand what sin is and we have to understand the dreadfulness of sin in order to truly grasp what David is saying in verses 1 and 2 and the danger for us if we've been a Christian for a while if you've been on the road as a Christian for some time we can lose the sense of importance of these verses but cast your mind back perhaps to whatever time when you became a Christian you'll remember the moment the sweetness of the forgiveness when you first tasted it and try and have that in your head tonight as we study what David is saying essentially

David's key message in these first two verses is this the people of God are forgiven people and out of that forgiveness should flow great joy and happiness he uses this word 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 this word blessed is it carries so much weight it's it's not you know today all over the internet people put this hashtag blessed you know they see a nice picture you know a nice landscape we'd want one up a moment to go with a nice lock with the hills in the back and someone put hashtag blessed it's such a diluted meaning when they do it that way but actually what David is talking about here is this abundant happiness it's true happiness it's true fullness it's true joy is found in knowing forgiveness the question is why is there such happiness how is this possible that forgiven people should be and are the happiest people on the planet well if we look at what he's talking about here in verses 1 and 2 he uses very key language he says blessed is the one whose transgressions is forgiven this is an idea of things being lifted off okay the sin itself and is removed and the consequences of the sin are taken away he says sin is covered it's covered over and he's going to say in verse 2 and God is not going to count it against us this is where the blessing comes see God is

[11 : 30] God is holy we've been singing this he's glorious he's perfect he's just and this is no easy thing for God just to for God to forgive sin because he says himself the wages of sin is death sin comes with a price sin and he right right of he right of hebrew says in 922 without blood there can be no forgiveness now the old testament here of this here to this psalm would instantly recognize the sacrificial language and associate this forgiveness with the need to sacrifice an animal the blood of the animal covers the sin now there's a problem for us as new testament believers and as city dwellers most of us I don't suspect anybody here maybe well anybody else here owned a sheep or a cow

I have I grew up on a farm so does that mean the blessing which he's talking about here is only for those who could sacrifice an animal oh no we're new testament believers this blessing is for us because the right of the hebrews goes on to say in chapter 10 verse 4 that the blood of bulls does not lead to forgiveness of sin but rather that the whole sacrificial system in the old testament points to a greater sacrifice and he goes on to say in verses 11 to 14 of hebrews it says this these are amazing words it says and every priest stands daily at his service offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sin but when christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins he sat down at the right hand of god waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet for by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified christ's sacrifice is a single perfect offering for all time it provides atonement for all who believe and it lifts us out of a position of guilt and shame and it sets us on a sure foundation of god's forgiveness through christ and we are now declared perfect or righteous in the eyes of god and david himself recognises this in verse 2 he says god counts no iniquity the apostle paul in romans 4 actually quotes david in in psalm 32 and essentially what he's saying is but when david says that god doesn't count our sins against us it's the same as him saying he actually declares us as righteous without works and this is such good news it's because it's not that god just deals with our sin and then leaves us to try and earn our righteousness no the righteousness of christ is given to us he takes away our sin and he gives us the righteousness of christ in this great exchange and it's unearned it's free costs jesus everything but it's free to us it's told that martin luther the great reformer was asked one day by his friends of of all the psalms which did he think were the best and he answered them in latin so he did he said sami paulini and when his friends pressed him to know what he meant he said the 32nd the 51st the 130th and the 143rd psalm he says for they all teach that the forgiveness of our sins comes without the law and without works to the man who believes and therefore i call them the pauline psalms luther loved psalm 32 but it gets better because it's not just that the blessing of our forgiveness that david writes about here is merely a legal declaration of righteousness derrick kidner in his commentary in the psalm says christ's atonement is the propitiation the covering the making and end of sin and where this is seen and trusted in the soul knows itself to be accepted in the beloved read that last and the

soul knows itself to be accepted in the beloved we don't just lose our guilt and our shame and our regret there are many who would happily accept forgiveness of god if that was all he was offering because no one wants to feel guilty we don't like guilty no one wants to feel shame and sadly there are those who will peddle a false gospel and that's really all they offer they treat god as some kind of therapy tool but what they miss is the most important part see god doesn't just offer us forgiveness no he offers us forgiveness in christ forgiveness is about a it's a relational restoration between god and you and me and in christ we can know the forgiveness that leads to deep joy and true happiness the forgiveness of god that david is talking about here is a key it opens the door to another life in the c.s.

lewis sense it's the wardrobe that leads to another land a place of rich spiritual blessing a place of hope security and certainty about the future the one thing that's missing this week in our culture and society how does david discover this well we see in verses three through to five like so many of the psalms david is so honest about his real life experiences and david learns about the blessing of forgiveness when he experiences his absence unrepentant sin is a relational barrier between us and god it's not that god has stopped loving us but it's more that sin has come between us now we see this in our human relationships okay we know that you know we've been if you're married you've been married and you're aware of how things can come between people and you still love each other but there's a barrier there's a blockage that has to be dealt with and clearly there's been something in david's life you know perhaps this perhaps he is referring to the time with uriah and bathsheba he doesn't say specifically here but he's experiencing the conviction of his conscience by the hand of god and he's being stubborn he's resisting and he feels rotten his energy levels drop sleep is impacted have you ever felt like this have you ever had that moment where you've done something you've upset a friend or spouse or your parent rather than repenting quickly we dig in we justify our actions to ourselves in our heads it's not my fault am I the only one here if my wife was here she would testify and you know because our relationships become a bit frosty and you know you need to say sorry and the guilt preys on your mind it's on your mind when you're at work it's on your mind when you're commuting it's in your mind in the middle of the night so how do you rediscover the blessing

David is really honest it's not rocket science he says in verse 5 so I acknowledge my sin to you I did not cover my iniquity I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgive the iniquity of my sin see David comes to the Lord with repentance and an honest confession in the knowledge that God is a God of justice mercy and open forgiveness the apostle John writes in 1 John 1 verse 8 he says that God forgives us because he is just it's an amazing statement essentially what he's saying it would be unjust for God ever to deny us forgiveness because Jesus has earned our acceptance it's remarkable forgiveness is ours

[21 : 31] God cannot refuse it to us and Christians this side of Christ's return we we're going to fail every day and we're going to fall and repentance is our best ally to listen to hear the voice of God calling us to repent and to respond to it Martin Luther I'm referencing a few times tonight in opening the reformation when he nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral the very first of these theses was this our Lord and Master Jesus Christ willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance the entire life of the believer is to be one of repentance is what we do now and on first level that sounds like oh goodness he's Christians they don't do a very good job but that's not what he means at all the sign of our progress in the faith is actually continual repentance because every time we repent what we're doing is we're continually restoring our relationship with God we're continually looking to move closer to

God we're turning back to God all the time and that is what being a Christian is about it's reorientating our lives to God to his ways and to his will now sometimes we can repent and we can have wrong motivations sometimes we repent and we say sorry merely to keep God happy or we think we're keeping God happy the same way we do in our earthly relationships we'll mutter a quick apology because it's easier it's the path of least resistance and we forget when we come to God that God is already happy he is the most happy being in the universe infinitely happy so we don't repent to keep God happy sometimes we think we need to repent in order to avoid punishment somehow the world coronavirus is the result of lack of repentance but on individual level we need to realize that

Christ has already paid the price we're not avoiding punishment when we repent neither are we punishing ourselves we don't have to beat ourselves up to come to God and repent us Luther when he was a monk before his conversion punished himself through sleep deprivation exposure to the cold even beat himself with a whip until his discovery that none of that worked we don't earn forgiveness and righteousness it's a gift it's a free gift to us it was his great discovery and we make progress when we repent with the intention and desire to restore our relationship with Christ that's what gospel shaped repentance looks like and David reminds us we don't jump down to verses eight and nine and I'll go back up to six and seven he reminds us in verses eight and nine of the importance of cooperating willingly with God when we feel his hand upon us convicting us of our sin we need to listen to the counsel of God when he speaks to us when he instructs us when he teaches us and he urges us to obey his voice swiftly to be receptive in our conscience when we feel guilt to deal with it quickly rather than being like a dragged like a stubborn mule or a horse we can be a wee bit slow to learn that lesson

I feel sometimes and certainly for myself and occasionally we we do need to be dragged by the Lord back to where he wants us to be receptive of soft arms that feel the prick of conscience and the spirit reminding us and convicting us of sin so that we can restore that relationship both with the Lord and with each other quickly so it doesn't drag on so what's David's counsel to his people and to us what he says in verse six therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found essentially saying at the time when you feel the furthest from God which is often how we feel when we're feeling guilty when the time when you feel furthest from God is exactly when you should run to God when you feel you've offended

God don't run away from him rather return to him like be like the prodigal son just come to your senses a bit quicker don't run away in the first place would be helpful but be like the prodigal return to the father experience the blessing of the restored relationship I always find this rather ironic but the essence of fearing God is actually running towards him because only God can shield you from himself he is our hiding place verse 7 only God can save you from the flood of judgment and wrath only God can deal with your sin and restore you to himself so for those who fear God even though they're aware of the awfulness of the wrath of God they know that the only thing they can do is run towards

[27 : 57] God because that's where the sanctuary is the sanctuary is in Christ and in him we are hidden and have eternal life and as David teaches his people here in the psalm what we know is that this is not only not only is this a personal experience for David but there's actually a collective element to this there's a congregational element because at the end of verse 7 he describes the collective sound of many voices offering shouts of deliverance and that's one of the privileges we have as God's people we can gather like this and we can sing and as we sing we are singing songs of deliverance collectively to one another we are reminding one another this is who God is this is what God has done for me and it encourages us we were commenting this morning my wife sings in our praise group this morning our singing was some of the best the whole service had a feel to it which was really different it's because we're in a moment of crisis and suddenly people's minds were so much more focused on who God is and what

God is doing and his hand and God is still on the throne and it was incredibly uplifting it's kind of maybe how Peter and Paul and the boys felt when they were in jail when there's a dreadful situation and they're singing most uplifting songs and it's good for us to sing over one another and to remind one another of the joy that comes in salvation well David finishes his psalm with a summary of really everything he's been saying and he gives us a contrast he says many are the sorrows of the wicked but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord see the burden of guilt and sin will only lead to misery for the one who refuses to repent and the sorrow may come sooner or it may come later and that both applies to us as believers we can suffer we can make our own suffering sometimes by refusing to repent but also for unbelievers that's why the gospel we declare and proclaim says repent and believe enter into the joy of Jesus the joy of forgiveness forgiveness and that's the message that we take out it's the message we need to proclaim in the coming weeks that there is hope all is not lost but for the one who trusts in the Lord whose trust drives him or her to repent and to confess their sins for those look at what he says they are surrounded by steadfast love

Zephaniah chapter 3 16 and 18 says this this is one of my favorite verses in the whole bible it says the Lord your God is in your midst a mighty one who will save listen to these words he will rejoice over you with gladness he will quiet you by his love and this he will result exult over you with loud singing God sings over you loudly there is a whisper there is imagine God singing over you that's what David is grasping at we are surrounded by this steadfast love and therefore those who are righteous in God's sight can know gladness and they themselves can shout for joy and make a joyful noise in the midst of whatever so

I would urge you brothers and sisters in the weeks that lie ahead and we know not what lies ahead this is new territory but this is old territory this isn't going to change the truth of who God is the foundation that we have is unshakable we are forgiven people and therefore we are those who can rejoice and know great joy in the midst of whatever comes our way let me pray for us and then we're going to sing our heavenly father we do come before you and we we revel in the fact that you are the God who exalts over his people with loud singing that you love us okay that you are the God of providence yet you are also the covenant God who loves his people you are the mighty one who will save father in the coming weeks lie ahead whether we pray for that truth just to be burned deep into our hearts for it to provide security for it to provide hope for it to provide confidence for it to provide words when we're talking to our neighbours or our family or friends father may our lives and may your church be a beacon of light a place of confidence not madness a place of confidence and security and hope for all who would see father move in this nation we pray this in

Jesus name amen amen