

Friday Evening - English

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Preacher: Rev Colin Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Well these wonderful familiar words of praise and adoration speak to us of a God of mercy a God who forgives thy tender mercies Lord I pray thee to remember and loving kindnesses for they have been of old forever my sins and faults of youth do thou oh Lord forget can we take this to heart this evening and approaching the Lord's table this coming Sunday we absolutely can and if we turn together to in our Bibles to Psalm 32 the Old Testament scriptures we have this tremendous psalm a psalm of praise a psalm of adoration a psalm of thanksgiving where David speaks and says blessed are the forgiven 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 blessed are the forgiven well we know that if as we become more familiar with the Bible and particularly the book of Psalms that the Psalms are full of realism they're not just theological treatises they're not just poetry they're not just history they are full of real life and time and time again we find the psalmist recording their struggles their successes their failures as they seek to live to the glory of God and here is such an experience the psalmist is very much a realist a realist is someone who considers things as they are and so he's reflecting on a time where he wasn't doing so well where his things had gone wrong and where he tried to keep it from God he says here in verses 3 I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long for day and night your hand was heavy upon me here is someone who wanted to be in fellowship with God so much and yet knew that for that to happen something had to change the Psalms are full of realism they're full of struggles and setbacks joys and hopes and I believe we can relate to all of them in everyday life and this psalm then starts with an understanding that we know well this psalm starts with how things are in the sight of God and the psalm begins from that perspective with the realism and awfulness of sin but it doesn't stay there the psalmist moves on he doesn't stay fixated in on sin he doesn't focus in on it in anguish and despair holding on to sin and giving up because of sin he takes us through this valley of realism to the wonder and assurance of both who we are as Christians and whose we are this psalm then speaks of amazing grace and the transforming wonder of forgiveness blessed are the forgiven

I'd like us to think about that this evening to think about the forgiveness of sin to think about the reality of how things are before God how God sees us how we stand before him and what this means for us and what in effect the Bible tells us about how any of us can get right with God the first thing then to take from this psalm is very clearly the forgiveness of God the forgiveness of God now we know that if we give the Bible its due place in accord if we'll just read the Bible and open it up and allow the Bible to speak and listen to what God has to say to us that we'll find out very quickly that there is a problem and the problem is sin it's such a little word but it's such an awful awesome reality its presence and power is here fully felt deeply understood that before God there is guilt the Bible's record is clear on this some verses for instance in the scripture 2nd Chronicles 6 there is no one without sin

Romans 6 the wages of sin is death 1st John chapter 1 if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves Romans 3 all have sinned and fall short the Bible nowhere attempts to divert or deny the awfulness and the reality of sin people do that the Bible doesn't its seriousness is underlined by the fact that when it comes to sin the psalmist needs another three words to fully unpack what it really is in all its awfulness sin according to the scripture is any want of or conformity to or transgression of God's law sin is to deny God and to defy God sin is that natural position of folding up a shaking fist to God and saying not your way but my way you'll get what's left of my week and my time and my money and my effort and my energy if you're lucky if you're there at all that's the kind of natural pose of sin sin in its awfulness is here described with a further three words we have in just these first two verses transgression iniquity and deceit

David is in pain to acknowledge its seriousness and so he needs this language to help them what is transgression to transgress is to transgress transgress or trespass a known boundary iniquity is a word that speaks of inner corruption of our very nature and this word deceit or guile its root meaning speaks of falseness lies to deliberately hide the truth so sin is to fall short of the mark that has been set by God sin is to rebel against God sin is to defy God and to deny him and as it outworks itself within us and through us the psalmist would speak of transgression and iniquity and deceit such as its awfulness in verse 5

I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the iniquity of my sin you forgave the corruption of my failure actually we could literally translate that so nowhere do we find the Bible avoiding the awfulness of sin and its result the result of the spiritual state leaves David in anguish distress and silence he can't function he can't move he can't operate he doesn't know where to go he doesn't know where to turn and so he does all that he can do he comes to God he kept this iniquity and deceit and sin and transgression and he thought if he could just keep it hidden and keep it somewhere out of sight then all would be well and he found that he couldn't sleep that his bones were wasting away he had no energy his hand was heavy upon me he felt he was just giving up on life itself something has to give and it does the transformation in this psalm is total it's wonderful it's gracious and the transformation comes through

[8 : 18] God's forgiveness God deals with our fallenness he forgives he graciously removes the burden in verse 1 covers the condition in verse 1 and cancels the debt in verse 2 so while David has been so intimately aware of the awfulness of his own sin before God here we find him saying from the beginning of the psalm blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven whose sin is covered blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity what does he say to us here in this psalm speaking of the forgiveness of God God graciously removes our burden covers our condition and cancels the debt of all our sin friends this evening we rejoice tonight in the reality that what God does no one can undo what God does no one can undo and this is a point of attack frequently and repeatedly by the devil who will constantly want to undermine your sense of forgiveness and take from you your joy and your stability and your gratitude and your sense of praise and giving thanks to God for being forgiven and who will want to whisper his lies and deceit and pour his guile and his transgression and his rebellion into your soul through your ear by saying but are you really forgiven did you really confess did you see a light did you feel something did you have what she had did you have the testimony that he has could you speak like they do could you go up to a pulpit could you go to a mission field he will use anything to rob you of your sense of forgiveness

Christian friend don't let him what God does no one can undo the next time the devil comes to you whispering are you really forgiven read him Psalm 32 even better if you can sing it sing him Psalm 32 sing him the psalm that speaks of the reality of what God has done in your heart when you come in faith through his son to him how blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sin whose sins are covered from God's face whose debt is cancelled in God's grace there is no deceit in him Psalm 32 through the forgiveness of God by grace and through faith God forgives and God forgets great letter to Romans chapter 3 the righteousness of God has been manifested through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe all are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus for a verse to take home to take to heart to take into next week to reply when the tempter comes and saying are you really forgiven

God forgives and God forgets blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven whose sin is covered what does that tell us it tells us that God removes the burden covers the condition cancels the debt tonight we are preparing our hearts to gather on Sunday at the Lord's table and we go there because he commands us to go there we don't go there because we are something special and wonderful outstanding it's the opposite we go there because we've been forgiven of our sin we go there because we've asked Christ to cleanse us that we've asked him to take from us our sin to cover our condition to cancel our debt to remove the burden then we seek to come to the table and in Jesus we have only a record of righteousness God forgives and God forgets another thing the devil doesn't want us to remember and we remember tonight that forgetfulness is an enemy of faithfulness if we forget

Psalms such as Psalm 32 the devil the devil will wreak havoc with our spirituality and our sense of assurance and if he can wreak havoc with our sense of assurance he will certainly begin to impact and detract from our sense of usefulness and our witnessing our maturity our growth and that's

what he wants he wants to stunt all these things he wants to impact negatively all these things in the child of God he wants the church of Christ silent and uncertain fearful buffeted by the winds to and fro and not effective all the more reason Christian friend to be at that table on Sunday morning for feeding and nourishment and obedience and sympathy saying I go there as a forgiven sinner to praise and magnify my Lord 1 John says if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness what is it to be blessed this psalm begins blessed is the one whose sins or transgression is forgiven

Hezekiah in Isaiah chapter 38 puts it this way you have cast all my sins behind your back and in Isaiah 43 we read I am he who blots out your transgression for my own sake and I will not remember your sins what encouragement this evening to face down the devil to stand up to the world and to face the flesh and all its array of indifference and intolerance and atheism and its rejection of Christ and its ridicule of his church and his people his day and his word we remember that we love and profess a God who will not remember our sins and so the question is this have you come to him for forgiveness have you sought him out and asked him to take away your burden to cover your condition and cancel your debt my friends that is the condition upon which any of us not just come to a table on Sunday but in his grace and mercy will enter heaven in his time to take our place with our saviour because we came to him for the forgiveness that only he can offer the apostles said at the beginning of the church's explosive growth in the book of Acts we read it in chapter 13 through this man is preached the forgiveness of sin what a message and what a saviour and so we have the forgiveness of God we have secondly this in this psalm closeness with God because this is not just something that's forensic and cold methodical this is not something that's ritualistic this isn't all just about being liturgical and dressed correctly and doing things in a formal traditional manner it goes far far beyond that what we find in verses 5 and 7 5 to 7 is David not just reflecting on his forgiveness but now we find him he revels in closeness with God forgiveness of God is followed immediately by closeness with God

[16:29] I acknowledge my sin to you I did not cover my iniquity I confess my transgressions therefore in verse 6 that everyone who is Godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found truly in the rush of great waters you shall not reach him you are a hiding place for me what wonderful closeness there is in these words David in his song of praise and giving thanks to God and reflecting and singing on the blessing of being forgiven is now reveling in the closeness with God that that forgiveness brings and establishes now we know that the fall into sin brought upon us the loss of communion with God that is the problem but God's forgiveness restores what sin destroyed you are a hiding place for me you preserve me from trouble you surround me with shouts of deliverance where are we now where are we this evening in Stornow or whatever it is you are living and working at this time how do you live what is our standing on earth you are my hiding place what a wonderful phrase that is

Psalms 119 has a very similar phrase in verse 114 my shielding and hiding place thou art it is good to know that in God we have such a place such a standing here then is a psalm that tells us that God preserves and surrounds his people God keeps us you are a hiding place for me you preserve me from trouble there is no promise here of an absence of trouble and we never ever make that claim anyone who promises you a stress free trouble free life just come to Jesus everything will be good no illness no unemployment no stress no uncertainty no difficulty no heartache don't believe a word of it nonsense and lies you don't find that in the Bible it doesn't say that anywhere what it tells us is that when trouble finds us it finds us hidden in God you are a hiding place for me I don't know how else to face life I don't know how to cope with life or deal with life other than being with God as my hiding place what a wonderful phrase it is my shield and hiding place thou art why is it so important because the opposite is a very unsettling and isolating experience to be alone and to feel threat and uncertainty and difficulty and danger that's what the devil wants he wants us feeling alone uncertain isolated he doesn't want the church to be strong and true and faithful and clear and concise and precise about what really matters he wants us talking about other things anything but the cross anything but forgiveness anything but the closeness with God that forgiveness can bring you are a hiding place for me you preserve me in trouble there's a great story recounted for us in the story written by

Stephen Ambrose Band of Brothers which tells the story of the 101st Airborne Division American unit that fought through from D-Day right through to the end of the war in Europe they were paratroopers so they very often went ahead of the main force and were dropped behind enemy

lines and they were always in the thick of it always in the thick of it and there was a great incident recounted in that unit's experience in the war that at one point they were very much cut off behind enemy lines surrounded by enemy forces and a young paratrooper in his foxhole was panicking and crying out and calling we're surrounded we're surrounded we're surrounded and his commanding officer jumped into the foxhole with him and said take it easy son we're paratroopers we're supposed to be surrounded a great perspective great perspective he was saying hi what's the problem this is the way it's meant to be and he just settled down that young man enabling him to get on with what he was there to do and it's good to take perspective with us every day we must not leave it behind when we go into a Monday or a Tuesday or any other day ending with a Y we must take perspective with us what is our perspective you are a hiding place for me you preserve me from trouble you surround me with shouts of deliverance closeness with God and so we take this great promise we take this closeness we give God thanks and give him glory for the forgiveness that he bestows upon us for the fact that he lifts our condition that he covers our sin and cancels our debt and with that comes closeness with God so the Bible tells us that when the devil comes whispering you are alone you are alone you are surrounded that actually the opposite is true yes we are surrounded because so many people tonight refuse to believe the scripture refuse to bow the knee to Christ refuse to acknowledge

God as the living true God reject the gospel despise the cross and ignore the claims of Christ to come to him for forgiveness they don't want to know they don't want to hear so they turn around and we can very quickly feel alone remember Christian friends the Bible tells us the opposite is true he is with us he is with us and so we just have one final thing this evening from this psalm the forgiveness of God closeness with God and we see here finally guidance from God I will instruct you and teach you in the ways you go in verse 8 I will counsel you with my eye upon you there will of course be difficulties and hardship in life David here could speak of the rush of great waters coming in around him go to many of the psalms and we find similar language language language where we find the rush of waters being used to describe the hardship and harshness of life and we know that times it can bite deep we are realists whereas we mean so what is the realist again the realist is someone who considers things as they are we avoid the ideals we deal with reality look at what we are told here my eye is upon you and I am with you this tells us tonight that God not only forgets our past he promises to guide our future that is the

[24 : 12] God we love as a God to whom we have prayed as a God this evening we gather to sing praise to he not only forgets our past he promises to guide our future in this psalm alone we are told he instructs teaches counsels and watches I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go I will counsel you with my eye upon you God forgets our past and promises to guide our future this is certainty this is clarity this is precision and we need this today perhaps more than ever especially in this day and age in which we live which is absolutely obsessed with celebrity we have celebrity everything celebrity chefs to celebrity dancers to celebrity we have got a version of celebrity everything everywhere we turn this is one such celebrity's take on life just taken from the press recently now this celebrity would speak about embracing a spiritual approach to life as a person

I follow more of a Buddhist way of life Christianity is still in my life but I'm also into meditation positivity and gratitude why is that why is that and people soak it up because it's a celebrity and this one is never offered TV screens morning noon and night pouring out this kind of stuff into our youngsters and into every generation that gives them the time of day my friends the Bible does not deal with nonsense like that it doesn't speak about trying to this and trying to that it talks about living for God and it reminds us here in the psalm verse 11 be glad in the Lord and rejoice so righteous and shout for joy all you upright in heart why how because you know what it is to be forgiven God is with us God is for us he will instruct us he will counsel us with his eye upon us so friends we are not alone the way of uprightness is shown to us in the word and by his spirit and we follow our guide as he leads us and this is where and how we experience this joy being spoken of at the end of psalm 32 in psalm 33 the very next psalm we read behold on those that do him fear the Lord doth set his eye even those even those who on his mercy do with confidence rely so let our confidence be placed not in the philosophy of the celebrity culture in which we are surrounded and engulfed in but let our confidence come from our Lord and our

Saviour through a personal belonging to him that comes in the words of verse 5 in this psalm I acknowledged my sin to you I acknowledged my sin to you these words remind me of how at one

point in my life I came to realise I knew all about Jesus but I didn't know Jesus everyone around me knew Jesus but I didn't know him myself and I realised this was the difference I acknowledge my sin to you so friends I want to ask you again as we close this evening if these words are your words if that confession is your confession that statement is one that you could make this evening if in your heart you have made that profession of sin then you know what it is to be blessed maybe at times it doesn't feel that way maybe life in the heaviness of the waters that crash in around you take from you that sense of joy that we find at the end of this psalm what do we do let's do what David did when his life got turned inside out and upside down he strengthened himself in the Lord he went to God he made sure he went to his God and friends if you do that tonight you go to God on his terms through faith in his son one on one and make this your prayer then you know what it is to be forgiven and in knowing what it is to be forgiven be sure to take your place at the table of your Lord with your brothers and sisters on Sunday there to profess everyone else beside you and in front of you and behind you will be doing we are sinners saved by grace who rejoice in the forgiveness of our God what a blessing to know his forgiveness what a joy to reflect on his steadfast love is there a group on the face of the earth who have reason to be heard in song such as the Christian church

I don't believe so when we sing our songs of praise let our thanksgiving resound behold on those that do in fear the Lord doth set his eye even those who on his mercy do with confidence rely we come to God for we need his forgiveness let us not be slow to revel in this truth let us not resist and stumble and be hard of heart and slow in understanding as verse 9 calls us to be aware of let us come to him let us not cover what we are called to confess let us not be slow in coming to our Lord let us give thanks that in life we face it hidden in him he preserves us from trouble and surrounds us with shouts of deliverance and knowing this to be true in our case let us give thanks to him let us seek to stir up this shout of joy and gladness of heart for God has made us good because of faith in his son the Lord

[30 : 53] Jesus there's that wonderful hymn that says he died that we might be forgiven he died to make us good that we might go at last to heaven saved by his precious blood with that song let us bow in prayer together as and man of fear