

Real Happiness For All The People of the World

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[0 : 00] Well, good afternoon and welcome to our Wednesday lunchtime talk. Well done for battling through the rain and it's not too cold, but well done for getting here promptly.

Good, well, before we get going, I just want to flag up for you a series of talks that we'll be having here on the Wednesday lunchtimes through the second half of October.

And we're really trying to aim those talks at our unbelieving friends. So do be thinking and praying about folk you can maybe bring along to those set of talks towards the end of October.

We'll be looking at the opening chats of the book of Genesis and hopefully we'll have some flyers for you next week. So you can maybe bring those to friends and bring them along to hear about the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So that'll be the second half of October. And in a bid to try and make those lunchtimes as easy and accessible for folk as possible and to keep them running to time, I think for those set of Wednesdays, we'll not sing the hymn as we normally do at the end of the service.

[1 : 04] So for those set of talks, we'll not do that just so we can keep things running smoothly and on time. But you've been warned, so don't panic when we don't do that. Good. Well, we're in Psalm 32 this morning, so do turn with me there to Psalm 32 and you'll find it on page 462, page 462, Psalm 32.

And just your turning there, I'm going to pray. So let's pray. Father God, you have caused the scriptures to be written for our learning.

So would you grant that we would together hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them. That by patience and comfort of your holy word, we, each one of us, that we would embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Well, Psalm 32. A mascal of David. 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. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

[2 : 47] For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledge my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity.

I said, I will confess my transgression 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 curred with bit and bridle, or it will not stay in you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked.

[4 : 00] 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. Well, this psalm gives us the answer to the question that everyone asks all the time.

What is the key to happiness? What is the key to happiness? The pursuit of happiness is the basis upon which the entire advertising industry is predicated upon.

The topic fascinates us. It consumes our thoughts, our time, our energy. The pursuit of happiness is enshrined even in the United States Declaration of Independence.

It's right there. There is an online talk that you can go and watch, and it's been watched almost 17 million times.

[5 : 05] And the title is, What Makes a Good Life? Lessons from the Longest Study on Happiness. Now, the man giving the talk, he's the director of a 70-year-long study into what contributes to general well-being and happiness.

And through the course of that seven-decade-long study, they've discovered lots of things. But it boils down to this. This is the big headline conclusion from that study. The answer to happiness is not money or fame, but good relationships.

Now, that finding, it shouldn't really surprise us, shouldn't really surprise a Christian. You see, the Bible is interested in the happiness of people. And at the very root of its answer is good relationships, and of one relationship in particular.

And it's the restored relationship between you and the God who made you. That is the key to true and lasting happiness, at least according to the Bible.

And so that talk I just mentioned, the one that's been watched 17 million times, that talk, it was right, but only up to a point, because it ignored the fundamental relationship.

[6 : 26] It didn't take into account the relationship between the creator and his creation. And it is that that our psalm addresses this afternoon.

It's about the happy, the blessed believer. And it points us to the true deliverer of happiness, namely, the restoration of a broken relationship.

But the source of happiness our psalm points us to is surprising. Because this is, at heart, a psalm all about penitence.

It's about repentance, confession. That action of showing real sorrow and regret for having done something wrong. Look at verse 5. We have the very essence of what repentance is, and it's profoundly relational.

Look at 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.

[7 : 32] This is a psalm that starts and finishes with wonderful outpourings of praise. And yet, at its core, the very heart of this is repentance.

You see, this confession of sin in verse 5 is the means by which men and women are led afresh into the joy of the Lord. It's right there in the very first verse.

Blessed, or happy, is the one whose transgression is forgiven. It's the blessing of belonging to the Lord when once you were alienated.

So David, the man who wrote this psalm, David's message is that real happiness is found in sins forgiven.

And that can't happen without confession. That is at the heart of our psalm this morning. So, let's look more closely at this psalm. And it falls into two sections. Verses 1 to 5, we see David's testimony.

[8 : 32] And then, verses 6 to the end, David's teaching. See, David's personal experience leads him to burst out with passionate exhortation.

So first then, verses 1 to 5, David's testimony, his personal experience. And first we see verses 1 and 2, he knows the joy of sins forgiven.

Look again at 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. David is emphatic here, isn't he, with the description of the man whose transgression is forgiven.

He describes such a man as blessed or happy. Complete wellness of being. Happy and fortunate is that man because he fully realizes the plight from which he's been rescued.

And so unless we see the horror and the darkness of sin, then we'll never appreciate why a man is considered blessed when he's been forgiven his sin.

[9 : 38] Three words are used here which illuminate for us the true state of the unforgiven man. He talks about transgression, verse 1. He talks about sin, verse 1.

And then verse 2, he talks about iniquity. So transgression, what does that mean? Well, it's a deliberate wandering away from the Lord, a deliberate rebellion.

Knowing full well what he demands from us, we walk defiantly in our own way, denying his rightful rule over our lives. That is transgression. And the word sin, it carries with it the idea of missing the mark, falling short.

Like an arrow aimed at a target which falls miserably short, so man falls far short of God's standards. And then iniquity, that carries with it the understanding of a fundamental crookedness of

our character, a twistedness in our very being.

Now suppose most of us don't think of ourselves in those terms, do we? We don't think of ourselves as crooked, deliberately rebellious, twisted people.

[10:50] But the problem is, God says that we are. Sin is a grave affront to the Lord, and we need sin to be utterly removed from us, not just explained away, not just overlooked, but rather forgiven, totally wiped out, totally removed.

But how is that possible? Well, look again at verse 2. David writes, Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity.

It's what God himself reckons that matters, not us. And according to God, when we confess our sin, the Lord forgives us because he does not count our sin against us.

And the New Testament shows us how this is possible. It's possible through the cross of Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul says, for our sake, he made him, that is Jesus, to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Jesus we might become the righteousness of God.

It's because of the cross God counts the righteousness of Jesus to the believer. And the believer's sin is counted to Jesus on the cross.

[12:12] But the Old Testament message isn't any different. The Bible's at one on this issue of the forgiveness of sins. David knew that. He knew that confession led to forgiveness. That is the very first and primary thing that you and I must do.

There's no other way to be truly happy, to enjoy the blessed life, the life of being counted righteous, forgiven, before our Creator and Father.

Unforgiven transgression, it bars the way to the Lord. Which is why David is able to say that the blessed man is not the rich man, not the one with the best job or the biggest house.

No, the blessed man is the forgiven man. The forgiven man enjoys relationship and belonging with his Creator. So that's the first part, the first element of David's testimony.

It's the joy of forgiveness. How he came to know and enjoy this forgiveness, we'll see in a few moments in verse 5. But before we get there, we need to consider verses 3 and 4.

[13:20] And we see here that David knows the pain of stubborn refusal. David's confession in verse 5, it wasn't immediate, was it? For a time, look at verse 3, he said nothing, refusing to turn to the Lord in repentance.

And David's delay in confessing his sin, it did not go well, did it? His time of silence, it led only to disaster and misery.

My bones, he says, verse 3, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. His unconfessed sin, it weighed him down, gnawing away at his very being.

He was unable to forget about it, unable to let it go. All day long, it was like a millstone around his neck. His strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

Requires a bit of a stretch of the imagination, doesn't it, for the Glaswegian? Imagine heat in summer, sapping your energy to that degree. But this is how David describes the results of his unconfessed sin.

[14:29] His strength was dried up. Quite a contrast to the blessedness of verse 1. And the source of his pain and anguish is perhaps surprising.

Look again at the first part of verse 4. For day and night, your hand, your hand was heavy upon me. It's the Lord's heavy hand convicting him that brings David to this low air.

But it is a merciful and gracious heavy hand. Why? Because his misery drove him to his confession in verse 5.

And sometimes the Lord must bring us to moments like this when the weight of our sin just seems unbearable. Perhaps you're looking back on things done and said.

Perhaps many years ago with a heavy heart. You cannot possibly begin to imagine knowing happiness when you've made such a mess of things. You look back with regret.

[15:39] You just don't think you can bear it. God and the Lord does sometimes bring us to a moment like that in his grace to that real low point to points where we see our sin for what it really is so that we then seek him.

Maybe this is you. Maybe this is you even today. You've been brought to that point of misery. The reality of the disastrous consequences of your selfish actions.

You just cannot escape them. You can't sleep. You can't think straight. The question haunts you. How can I ever get up from this?

It's real misery for you. But if so, let me tell you it is a merciful misery. It may not feel like it. But it is because the Lord is driving you to confession.

And that is the only path to forgiveness. So how can you and I, how can the rest of us know the Lord's forgiveness? How can we know this joy and happiness that David speaks about in verse one?

[16:52] Well, the key as we've seen is there in verse five. That's where your road to recovery begins. And we see here verse five that David knows the necessity of confession. So after the silence, the groaning of verses three and four comes, all of a sudden, this outpouring of confession in verse five, I acknowledge my sin to you.

I did not cover my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Three simple things to note here.

First, we need to acknowledge our sin. Before confession can take place, there must be acknowledgement, mustn't there? David was eaten up by his refusal to face up to his sin.

He let the guilt fester until he got to the point where he just had to acknowledge his sin. And perhaps you know that feeling. And so we must acknowledge our sin.

It's fundamental we come to that point. And it's not just the consequences of sin that need to be acknowledged. Look closely at the end of verse five where there's that slightly curious phrase.

[18:03] David writes, the Lord forgave the iniquity of my sin. It doesn't just say the Lord forgave my sin but rather the iniquity of my sin.

It's the sinfulness of our sin that needs to be acknowledged and confessed. We're to be sorry for the sin itself. Not simply for its consequences, not simply because we've been found out.

You see, our sin is primarily an assault on the Lord's rule over the whole world and over my life.

And so we must come to that point of acknowledging our sin in all its fullness, our wrathfulness to our core.

And without acknowledging our sin, without coming to terms with it, we cannot begin to confess it.

So whether it's the spiteful words we aim at our closest family, whether it's some secret but fundamentally destructive pleasure that no one else knows about, whatever it is, we need to acknowledge it and then confess the iniquity of the sin.

How at its core it's an affront to the God who made us. So have you made an accurate self-assessment of your own life and heart?

[19:18] Have you acknowledged that sin? But it's not mere acknowledgement. The second thing we see is that we need to confess it. We need to confess our sin.

And to whom? Well, it's to the Lord. Look at the second half of verse 5. I will confess my transgression to the Lord. It's not primarily to another human being.

It's to the Lord. He is our first point of call when it comes to confession of sin. And David knows that confession leads to forgiveness. Confession is the only path to true blessedness, to true happiness.

And so we confess. And how do we do that? Well, you might want to say something like this, perhaps in the quiet after we finish, or maybe when you get home, you might say something like this, Oh Lord, I can hardly imagine what it's like to create and sustain someone and then be ignored by them day in, day out, to have promises broken, to have them live just how they like.

Lord, I'm sorry for how I've lived, thought and spoken without a second thought for you. Please forgive me. We confess our sin.

[20:37] But it's not only acknowledgement and confession, but we also need to receive forgiveness of sin. The link between the confession and forgiveness is seamless and immediate, isn't it?

I said, David writes, I said I will confess my transgression to the Lord and you forgave. The Lord's forgiveness is definite and immediate. How is that possible?

We've seen already, haven't we, that the Lord wonderfully does not count sin against the believer. Instead, it's counted against the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. It's done. It's done.

But this poses a question. Do you and I, do we, have the humility to receive from another something we can't do for ourselves?

Proud hearts can't receive gifts easily, least of all, the gift of forgiveness. And so humble acknowledgement and humble confession, that's the only path to receive forgiveness of sins.

[21:44] And David knew this. And this is the very first and primary thing that we must do. There is no other way to the truly blessed, happy life. And that is David's personal testimony.

From the despair of verses 3 and 4 comes the acknowledgement of the darkness of sin in verse 5, the confession to the Lord, which brings wonderful, life-transforming forgiveness.

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. God is David's wonderful personal experience.

But then flowing from that, flowing from David's profound personal experience, comes this passionate exhortation, which we'll consider now in these closing moments, verses 6 to 11.

So we see here David's teaching. He can't help but move from testimony to teaching. And David's saying, here's what I did. Now do as I did.

[22 : 47] But don't hang about. Get on with it. So three things then as we close. Verse 6, we know the necessity of confession.

Therefore, confess today. Do you sense his urgency there in verse 6, the urgency of his plea? Offer prayer to the Lord at a time when he can be found.

That is, don't wait. Don't wait as David did. Learn the lesson he has shared about the misery of living with unconfessed guilt. There's no way to live.

So heed David's warning. Confess. And confess today. Confess. Whilst the Lord may still be found. That's the first thing.

Secondly, verses 7 to 9, we know the pain of stubborn refusal. Therefore, remember the benefits of the forgiven. Remember the benefits of the forgiven.

[23 : 50] So in contrast to that misery we see in there in verses 3 and 4, David outlines here the wonderful benefits of living as one who is forgiven. Verse 7, the forgiven man lives under the Lord's protection.

He is our hiding place, keeping us from trouble, surrounding us with shouts of deliverance. What a turnaround to the groaning of verse 3.

But not only does the forgiven man enjoy the Lord's protection, but he sits under the Lord's instruction. We get a change in speaker there in verse 8. It's the Lord who speaks now.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel you with my eye upon you. And so the response of the blessed man is to sit gladly under the Lord's instruction.

Don't be like a stubborn mule without understanding. Don't be like that. Constantly need to be yanked and put back on track. You ever seen a donkey trying to be told where to go?

[24 : 56] It doesn't happen. They go this way and that way. Don't be like that. Sit under the Lord's instruction. It's a great privilege. It's a wonderful thing to be sat under his instruction.

The God who made you. The forgiven man is a fool if he wanders away from the Lord's instruction. So that's the second thing. Remember the benefits of the forgiven.

And thirdly verses 10 and 11. We can know the joy of sin forgiven. Therefore rejoice. the psalm closes on this wonderful note of praise and joy.

David reminds us of the sheer wonder and attractiveness of the gospel of grace and the God of grace. And those that turn to him in repentance, he will not turn away.

He delights to forgive. And what joy it is to know that our sin is not counted against us any longer. And so if you're here this lunch time and you know the forgiveness of sin, be glad.

[26 : 04] Rejoice. Shout for joy. That is what it is to be happy and blessed. Don't listen to the world's lies. Don't be drawn in by the advertising which promised this or that to give you happiness.

Nonsense. True and lasting happiness is found only here. But if you've not known the joy of the forgiveness of sin then don't delay.

That's David's message. Don't delay. It's in forgiveness alone that true blessing is found. So turn today, confess your sin to the Lord today and know that wonderful joy of sin forgiven.

True happiness, true blessedness, true fulfillment is found only in the forgiveness of sin. acceptance from the God who made you.

And verse 10 sets out so clearly, doesn't it, the vivid contrast for us and we'll finish with this. Verse 10, many are the sorrows of the wicked, that is those who do not accept the Lord's forgiveness.

[27 : 13] Many are the sorrows who reject him, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. It's not about being perfect, it's about trusting in him.

And for those who refuse to turn from their sins, there is in the end only sorrow. David's quite clear, isn't he? But what a glorious contrast for those who trust in the Lord for forgiveness.

The Lord and you with nothing in between. That is true happiness, that is true joy. Amen.

And so may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and evermore.
Amen.