

The Forgotten Secret of Happiness

Psalms 32:1-11 HCSB Davidic. A Maskil. How happy is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! (2) How happy is the man the LORD does not charge with sin, and in whose spirit is no deceit! (3) When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. (4) For day and night Your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer's heat. Selah (5) Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and You took away the guilt of my sin. Selah (6) Therefore let everyone who is faithful pray to You at a time that You may be found. When great floodwaters come, they will not reach him. (7) You are my hiding place; You protect me from trouble. You surround me with joyful shouts of deliverance. Selah (8) I will instruct you and show you the way to go; with My eye on you, I will give counsel. (9) Do not be like a horse or mule, without understanding, that must be controlled with bit and bridle, or else it will not come near you. (10) Many pains come to the wicked, but the one who trusts in the LORD will have faithful love surrounding him. (11) Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Introduction: Some suffering in life is hard to explain, but much of it is self-inflicted. Could your misery be due to poor choices? Due to apathy or indifference? Could our suffering be due to sin? Psalm 32 shows God's blessings for those who are forgiven. This psalm gives us the forgotten secret of happiness, telling us that sin brings sorrow, but confession brings forgiveness and forgiveness bring job.

I. **The Joy of Forgiveness** (vv. 1-2). Blessed is one of those religious words that's hard to translate into practical terms. Perhaps the closest we can come is "happiness". The psalmist says that the blessed person is the one who understands forgiveness. We can't understand the reality of forgiveness if we don't understand the concept of sin, so David uses three words to describe sin:

1. **Transgression** – rebellion against God.
2. **Sin** – missing the mark or falling short of a standard.
3. **Iniquity** – treachery, deceit.

The Psalmist was happy that His transgression was forgiven (lifted, carried away), and that his sin was covered (hidden, concealed by removal). The Lord does not impute iniquity. This is an accounting term, as in reckoning to an account; it is not counted against us. A rough illustration is when you get pulled over for speeding and the kind officer tells you it will not go on your record. Now taken together, we have the comprehensive nature of our sins and the comprehensive nature of God's forgiveness. This is a reason for joy!

Illustration: Marghanita Laski, one of England's best-known secular humanists and novelists, said in a television interview in 1988, just before she died, "What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness; I have nobody to forgive me."

II. **The Misery of Unconfessed Sin** (vv. 3-4). Notice the shift to a personal pronoun. David is giving us a personal illustration about the power of unconfessed sin. When I kept silent, he said, unwilling to confess sin, my body wasted away and God dealt with me so severely that my vitality was drained like a man suffering in the summer heat. Do you recall a time when the summer's heat was so oppressive you found it difficult to even breathe? Unconfessed sin hunts us down, oppresses us, keeps us awake at night.

1. You experience the weight of guilt as you begin entertaining the sin in your mind.
2. You experience the weight of guilt as you begin making plans to commit the sin and start passing all the warning signs the Holy Spirit puts in your way.

3. You experience the guilt of actually committing the sin.
4. You experience the consequences and the regret after committing the sin.

III. Confession and Repentance (v. 5). In this verse, David used the same three words he used in verses 1-2, saying that he had learned to acknowledge his sin, to expose his iniquity to the Lord, and to confess his transgressions.

1. You experience the first light of hope that comes from listening to the Holy Spirit.
2. You experience the relief of confession.
3. You experience the sweet lightness of being that comes from being forgiven.
4. You experience the pleasure that comes after you have made reparations.

IV. Instruction (vv. 6-7). Now the psalmist is going to pass along the lesson he learned. He calls on us to turn to God as he did, and to find in Him relief, release, and protection. He depicts God's protection in three ways:

1. A hiding place
2. Preservation from trouble
3. Surrounded by songs of deliverance

V. The Wisdom of God (vv. 8-10). Now Psalm 32 shifts gears, warning the reader not to be like a horse or mule that requires a bit and bridle. Those who do not want God, who do not care about God, choose the hard way, the way of sin.

VI. The Glad Response (v. 11). The one who groaned under the weight of sin (vv. 3-4) now rejoices and shouts for joy.

Conclusion: Repentance

We have a deficient view of repentance. Repentance isn't penance, reparation, or self-punishment. It isn't morbid introversion. True repentance involves contrition, sorrow, remorse, guilt, grief, and regret. However, it is primarily a turning, a changing, a choice.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness does not necessarily mean God removes the consequences of our sins. The only real happiness is forgiveness from sin. Apart from forgiveness, there's no real joy. To live in sin is to live in grief. To live in sin is to lose joy. The only real happiness is being forgiven. Everything else is an artificial attempt to dull the pain.

Assurance

The believer has assurance that God forgives sin. Forgiveness is the removal of sin. It is lifted. The debt is cancelled. All the debt of sin – impossible for us to pay off – is forgiven in Christ's work on the Cross. We can have full assurance of that.

Gratitude

When we understand forgiveness, we're thankful. This psalm has a thankful message. There is great joy in forgiveness.

Sin brings sorrow, confession brings forgiveness, forgiveness brings joy. How many struggles in our lives are due to sin! Why not confess it? Why not admit to God what He already knows? Why not ask Him this minute? Why not come to the cross of Jesus Christ?