

Repairing our broken relationship with God (Based on Psalm 32)

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I wanted to share some thoughts with you if I could today on the subject of forgiveness. And there are some just beautiful things that this particular Psalm has to say about it so look with me in Psalm 32, beginning at verse 1. We're going to look at the first 2 verses.

It says, *“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ² Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” (ESV)* Now stop there for just a moment.

Here's what's interesting. This word, blessed, is an interesting word because, like, in the Greek, this Hebrew word can also be translated, happy. In fact, the root word of this Hebrew word, translated ,blessed, actually means, happiness. Alright. So you could actually translate these verses, happy is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity. So what we find here in these first couple of verses is that David is talking about a topic that is a very popular topic today.

In fact, I just to find out how important and popular it is, I googled, how to find happiness. In 0.78 seconds, I got almost 89 million hits. Yeah, so obviously this is something people are talking about. And it's something that they care about.

But as much as the world seeks happiness, there remains in the vast majority of people a sense of incomplete, insufficient, unsatisfied sort of life. And I believe what people are sensing, and this is what I believe this Psalm is talking to us about. But what I think people are sensing, whether they know it or not, and I think the vast majority don't, they are sensing a broken relationship with God.

You see, cause we were created by God to worship, love, and to know God. And we were created to be satisfied by Him. But that relationship is obviously broken because we are born into sin. We are born sinners. David wrote elsewhere, I was a sinner from the time my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)

You see, we don't become sinners because we sin. We sin because we're sinners. And elsewhere, the Lord speaks of this separation. In the Book of

Isaiah, let me put this on the screen for you. From Isaiah chapter 59, the first couple of verses it says,

Isaiah 59:1-2 (ESV)

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

Listen, sin breaks down relationships, and we are born as human beings into a broken relationship with God. It's busted from day one. And so we're born into this place where what we were created to satisfy us is out of reach because of sin.

We're literally born singing that refrain of the old Rolling Stone song: I can't get no satisfaction, right? I mean, that's just life for you and I. We're birthed into that sort of a relationship or situation with God, because we've been separated from our Creator. The One who created us and the one who can only satisfy us.

And people are born into this, but they don't understand it. All they know is there's a nagging emptiness. There's a nagging incompleteness and they try to fill it. The more they feel the emptiness, the more they try to fill it. And so they look around the world and they think, okay, what can I do? What can I have? What can I possess That's going to somehow make me feel fulfilled, and satisfied, and so forth.

Some immerse themselves in their work. They just become all about what they do. People find their identity in their job. Some people become obsessed with earning wealth and having possessions. Other search for fulfillment in the music industry or the arts. And, some look for it in nature. They go hunting or hiking every weekend because they just need to connect with nature because somehow it helps them, and they feel like they might get a sense of fulfillment out of it.

Some people give their life to athletic competition. Still others believe that, if I can just get married, and find somebody who really is going to love me, and someone that I can love, then I'm going to be fulfilled. Then I'm finally going to be able to be happy.

But ultimately those things can't satisfy us because we were created to be satisfied and fulfilled by God. And those things can't, sorry, they can't take His place. As cool as they are, each one of those things, they cannot ultimately bring satisfaction. They cannot bring that sense of fulfillment.

So I want you to listen again to what David is writing and I want you to see it as a recipe for fulfillment and a recipe for happiness. Here in Psalm 32, again in verse 1, and I'm going to put happy there instead of blessed because that can be translated that way.

“(Happy) ...*is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*
² (Happy) ...*is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,...*”

I think the Bible's trying to tell us something here. It's trying to tell us that there is a path to happiness, and that's what we're seeing here. And what is that path? Well, we see very clearly in these 2 verses. He's talking about being forgiven: Happy is the man who is forgiven, whose transgressions, are forgiven. If sin isn't counted against him. But it's not just forgiveness that makes us happy, it's what forgiveness brings.

Remember I said we were born into a broken relationship with God? When we find forgiveness from Him, that relationship is restored. That's what brings happiness because when that relationship is restored, the One who created us to be fulfilled by Him, is then able to begin that work of bringing that kind of fulfillment into our lives.

But I want to look a little bit deeper if I could with you for a moment into the wording of these first couple of verses because there's you'll notice that there are 3 different sin words in these verses.

One of them is just sin and that's the one we usually refer to most often when we talk about sin. Is it a sin to do this? And oh, I'm sinning and it's a sin and that's what we use.

But did you notice there's 2 other words used and they are fairly significant. Those words, if you look at those verses, first of all, in verse 1, the word is, “*transgression.*” And then in verse 2, that word that's used is, “*iniquity.*”

I want to just very quickly talk about these because these help us to understand just exactly what He has done in forgiving us. You've noticed, I'm sure over the years, those of you that have been around. When we've talked about transgression, you've heard me say several times that the word transgression

refers to, breaking a known rule. In other words, transgressing or going past a known barrier.

In fact the word that is translated transgression here actually carries the idea of an act of rebellion and we all know how serious rebellion is. Any of us who have raised children know that when a child rebels.

Rebellion, isn't just this casual sort of a, thumb in their nose. It's an absolute total, I don't care what you say. I know you told me not to do that, or not to touch that, or not to pick that up, or whatever. I'm doing it anyway, and sort of a thing, right? That's rebellion. I mean, that's just that attitude, it's just that in your face sort of a thing. And the reason it's serious is because it involves a willful act, right.

In fact, David himself actually talks about how serious willful acts of rebellion are. Let me show you another passage from Psalm chapter 19. David is praying here. All right. He says to the Lord, please Lord,

Psalm 19:13 (NIV84)

Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

Keep your servant also from willful sins; (that's the rebellious act, he says, please Lord) *may they not rule over me.* (in other words, I don't want to be controlled by those passions that make me want to sin. And he says) *Then* (if You do that, then) *I will be blameless,* (look at this) *innocent of great transgression.*

Notice that David refers here to willful sins as “*great transgression*” so he's talking about the serious nature of this sort of thing. So he understood how serious it was to willfully say, I don't care, I'm going to do this anyway.

Now that is why we see the happy condition of the forgiven person in Psalm 32. As you look again here, it's again, it says happy is the one who's willful acts of rebellion, that's what transgression means. Happy is the person who's willful acts of disobedience are forgiven. Wow.

Have you ever done anything against God? Have you ever sinned because you just wanted to, and you knew that it was wrong and you did it anyway? Yeah, me too. We've all been down that road. But we've also found forgiveness for our disobedience.

Now listen, please don't misunderstand me. I'm not suggesting to you that God's forgiveness gives us freedom to be disobedient. I'm saying that it flows even when we are disobedient in a willful sort of a way. And that just underscores God's incredible mercy.

It's just, it's amazing that I can know what is wrong and then do it anyway. And I come to God and confess and He says, I forgive you. I mean, it just blows me away. And I think it ought to blow us all away, frankly. To know that we can be cleansed, that we can truly be forgiven for those times when we dug in our heels and just, and truly thumbed our nose at God and said, I don't care. I don't care what Your Word says. I don't care that You've told me this is wrong. I'm going to do it. And then He meets us with this just amazing forgiveness. Wow.

The other sin word that you'll notice that David uses here in verse 2 is the word, iniquity. I don't typically use that word in everyday speech when I'm talking, but it is an interesting word.

Once again, when you look at the Hebrew understanding of it, it carries the idea of guilt. Iniquity carries the idea of guilt. And guilt is a very interesting concept that I think is very important for us to understand, whether we want to admit it or not.

I believe that we all, and I'm talking about before we come to Christ, I believe that all mankind has this, sort of innate understanding that we are guilty before a righteous Holy God. I think we just know. I don't think we all can verbalize it necessarily or articulate it necessarily, but there's a sense that we know we're under judgment.

And, that's one of the reasons we don't like hearing about it. We don't like hearing the Gospel. We don't like hearing the Word. We don't even like being around people that read the Bible. It's been said, whenever you're in mixed company, don't talk about politics or religion. Well, it's considered to be impolite, but I'll tell you what it is. It just makes things uncomfortable.

I've told you guys numerous times that when I was, before I began walking with the Lord, every time something on TV would come up that was even remotely talking about God. I could not turn the channel fast enough. And that was back in the day when you had to get up off the couch and walk over to the TV. I know, giving away my age there. But guys, you guys that are young, we used to have to get up off the couch to turn the channel. And there was a dial, tick tick, tick, right? Our dial had broken off our TV when Sue and I first got married. It was a drum key we had in there that we, that turned the channels.

Anyway. But I couldn't move quick enough when somebody came on TV talking about God. And I thought about that later on after I came to Christ and I thought, why was I so bothered? Why was I so uncomfortable every time somebody is talking about the cross or the Bible or forgiveness or Jesus? And I came to understand that I was guilty. I felt guilty and I, but I couldn't articulate.

If you had asked me, why did you jump off the couch so fast when that program came on, talking about the Gospel, I would have said, I don't know, I didn't want to watch it. But what was going on is, I felt guilty. And I think that there's a lot of people who innately understand that we are guilty as charged.

And I'll be honest with you about something else. And this is just my opinion and you know what my opinion is worth. But I believe that our feelings of guilt because of this innate understanding that we are under judgment are the great cause of much depression in our day and age.

As we've moved farther and farther and farther away from an understanding, a biblical understanding of the fear of God. We have tried our best to push Him out of every place of life, but we can't push that understanding away that tells us deep down, deep calling to deep, I'm under judgment. I am guilty. I stand guilty before a holy God.

You can't get rid of that. You can kick Him out of school. You can kick Him out of public places. You can't get rid of that nagging understanding. I stand guilty before God.

That's why David says, and in verse 2, again, if you'll take that word iniquity and you put guilt in, in that place, because that's essentially what it implies. Happy is the man against whom the Lord counts no guilt, right? That's what David is saying here.

When we come to Christ and He declares us not guilty, it's just amazing. And it produces a happiness that the world can't even begin to touch or even understand for that matter, because the happiness comes through a restored relationship. Suddenly, the One who created me to be satisfied only by Him.

Now that relationship has been restored, and now satisfaction can begin to flow into my life. Now real joy, real purpose can begin to flow into my life. See, I tried filling it with all those other things before I knew Jesus, none of them satisfied. Now the One who created me to be satisfied by Him is free to satisfy and free to fulfill. And the joy and the happiness that comes from that restored relationship is just off the charts.

So what are the steps to experiencing this kind of happiness? Well, David is going to go on here in this psalm and tell us that it centers around the idea of confession. Look at verse 3 through 3 with me here in Psalm 32.

He says, *“For when I kept silent, (he's talking about when I refused to respond to God who was convicting me of my sin. when I kept silent, he says) my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. ⁵ I acknowledged 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.”* Now, stop there, please, for just a moment.

We don't know what specific sin David is referring to in his own life. It could be the sin that he committed, with Bathsheba. The sin of adultery and then arranging the death of her husband. But we're not really sure.

What we do know is, he had committed some kind of a sin and rather than responding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, he resisted that, and he just held off. And he began to talk about the result it had in his life.

Did you notice that he talked about a physical manifestation of not responding to that conviction? Did you notice that? He says, your hand was heavy on me. He says, my—he talks about his bones; *“my bones wasted away.”* He's not just being poetic. He's talking about a physical manifestation.

And then he talks about how he was listless and there he was filled with fatigue. Did you catch that? He says, verse 4, *“day and night your hand was heavy upon me; ...”* He's talking about the hand of conviction you guys.

Have you ever had that happen in your life when you've been repeatedly just living in a particular sinful lifestyle, and the Lord is convicting you, but you're just refusing to respond to that conviction, right? And there's just this heaviness, and he talks about this fatigue, and he likens it to heat exhaustion. He says, *“your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was (sapped) ...as by the heat of summer.”* Or *“dried up”* he says, as in *“the heat of summer.”*

Have you ever had heat exhaustion? It's just, it not only wipes out your strength, but it actually makes you just feel sick. Sue and I were raised in the Midwest where there's really high humidity. Out here, kind of a piece of cake, I got to tell you.

The desert's a nice place to live. When it's 90 degrees with 10 percent humidity, that's not that bad. Believe me. Go to the Midwest where it's 90 degrees with 90

percent humidity. You walk out the door and your clothes are instantly wet. Your hand, your skin feels clammy, and you try to take a breath you go ooohhhh. And it's just this heavy air. You feel like swimming to the car just so you can get there and turn on the air conditioning. It's awful. And the point, is in areas of high humidity heat stroke is an ever more present reality and it's just, it's terrible, terrible. The fatigue that comes from it and so forth.

David likened to this time of conviction where he was not responding to God to that kind of heat exhaustion. Isn't that interesting? So he actually refers to this in a physical sort of a sense.

Eventually though, he came to his senses as it says here in verse 5. Notice, and this is very important. Verse 5 gives us 2 very powerful insights. First of all, he says, *"I acknowledged my sin to you,..."* *"I acknowledged my sin..."* That's so huge you guys. To acknowledge that what we're doing is wrong.

Now we're not surprising God by that revelation. I used to tell my parents things I did wrong and they, I'd say, I need to tell you something I did, and they go, what? And, because they didn't know. God never does that. He never says, what? He's like, I know, right? Because He sees it and knows it all.

But He wants you and I to come and just simply acknowledge that what we have been doing or what we have done is wrong. To simply acknowledge it. You might think that seems like a small thing. It's an enormous thing.

And then after that notice what David says. First *"I acknowledge(d) my sin to you,"* and then he says *"and I did not cover my iniquity;..."* Remember iniquity has that idea of guilt and so he's saying, I no longer attempted to cover my guilt. And I think about this idea of covering guilt, and I think to myself, wow, this has been going on for a long time.

You guys remember Genesis? The very first sin that was ever committed by the man and the woman in the garden. They were told they could eat from any tree in the garden, only one you want. There's one tree. One tree. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Don't touch it. Because the day you eat of it, you will die. They decided that they knew better than God so they ate of it.

What was the first thing they did? They went out to cover themselves. Knowing that they were naked, they went to a fig tree and tried to sew fig leaves together somehow to make coverings for themselves. What are they doing? They're covering their sin. They're covering their shame. This is what man does. This is

what we do when we sin. We try to cover it up. And believe me, here in the United States of America, we've gotten good at it.

Now, with all of our great learning and understanding, we've found incredible ways to cover our sin. We've come up with all kinds of scientific medical terminologies. So we don't have to call it sin anymore, even though the Bible might refer to it. Well, it's not a sin. I've got a condition or I've got a disease, right? Not really sure how I got it. We're not really sure how you get rid of it. But it's a disease for sure. See, I don't have to call it sin anymore. I found a way to cover it.

Notice what David says to the Lord. What's this pathway to this happiness he's talking about? First of all, I acknowledge my sin to you. And second of all, I didn't cover it anymore. I uncovered it, as a matter of fact, as the Bible talks in the New Testament about letting the light shine in that situation or shine upon it, as it were.

So what happens? Look at verse 5 again. He says, *"I acknowledged my sin to you."* I didn't cover it. In fact, he even uses his words. He says, *"I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.'"* And then look at what happened. Look at what he says at the end of verse 5, *"and you forgave the iniquity..."* And again. Iniquity carries the idea of guilt. You forgave my guilt or the guilt of my sin.

So we're forgiven. Now. Wonderful. What's the result of that forgiveness? We've already talked about it. When someone is forgiven by God for everything they've ever done or ever will do, the first thing that happens is your relationship with Him is restored. It's like somebody put the phone back on the hook and now you can make a call whenever you want to. That line was severed before, that connection with God was severed.

You were born severed in your relationship with God but when you acknowledge your sin, and confess it, and no longer cover it, He comes and He forgives us and that relationship. And you know what? When that relationship is restored, because remember, guys, we were created to be satisfied by God.

The very essence of our being is longing to be satisfied. We're just not sure what we're supposed to be satisfied with. So we reach out for all these things in the world. They don't satisfy.

We come to God finally, we confess our sin, and the One who created us to satisfy us, suddenly comes rushing into our lives and He begins to do that work

of fulfilling us in ways that we didn't even think were possible. And the joy, oh, the joy and the happiness that comes in to a believer's life at that particular point. It is just, it's absolutely amazing.

Peter actually writes about it. And I love it when Peter does this kind of stuff. I picture Peter as this big burly fisherman with bad breath or something. Not the kind of guy you'd expect to talk about, like, matters of the heart and yet he does. In fact Peter likes to use the word, precious. Anyway, let me show you this. 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 8 and 9.

1 Peter 1:8-9 (NIV)

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Though you have not seen him, (he says) you love him; and even though you do see him now, you believe in him and are filled (look at this) with an inexpressible and glorious joy, (why?) for (because) you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The phone's back on the hook, the relationship is restored, you're getting eternal life. And now you're filled with just this inexpressible, you can't even find words.

Remember when you got saved? Remember seeing somebody else you pray with to receive the Lord, and you know that you know they just, they came to Jesus and they're just, they got this silly grin on their face, and they can't wipe it off. They're just talking around, this is great. And they walk around like that for about a week. Just this smile, because something's different.

The relationship is restored, and all those things that I ran after that couldn't satisfy me, I found the One who does, I found the One. Oh, I thought I'd find it in marriage or I thought I'd find it in business, or I thought I'd find it in making money or, I tried to be happy some other way. And I believed all those stupid things that the world says, like, you can't make others happy until you're happy. And I just need to be happy.

And I wasn't happy because I wasn't fulfilled. I wasn't satisfied. Because I was looking for everything in the world to satisfy me, and those things weren't created to satisfy me. They can't do the job. They can't take God's place.

Listen guys, nothing can take God's place. Nothing.