

Sunday evening August 12<sup>th</sup> 2018 at CBC

Sermon outline Psalm 32

How do I know whether I am forgiven?

This psalm deals with the greatest of all human needs. It is a need that is not always acknowledged (indeed there is a reference to that very fact in the psalm) but it is a need that is always there. It is one of the functions of the Bible to draw attention to the need, because if the need is not met, the consequences are ultimately disastrous.

### [1] THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HAPPINESS

The opening verses [1-2] describe a very particular kind of happiness and it tells us four things that make the happy person happy.

#### [a] forgiveness of sins

The need for forgiveness is widespread in humanity if not universal. And our author is rejoicing because his sins have been forgiven. We are not given the background to this song, so we shall not speculate on what David had done, or not done.

#### [b] covering of sins

A sin can be forgiven, but it is not always easy – in fact sometimes it is quite impossible humanly speaking – to cover it. When you cover something you are in effect hiding it from view.

#### [c] annulment of the record of sins

Here we reach the real point of the psalm. The author's happiness arises the fact that he knows that the Lord does not count his sins against him. That reveals that the fundamental issue being addressed here is that human sin is always, first of

all, sin against God and that as long as that sin remains 'counted' against you by God, you are in trouble.

#### [d] being able to live in the open

As long as we know that our sins stand between us and God, we can never really live in the open. Our author is rejoicing because he is no longer has to run away!

## [2] THE ROUTE TO HAPPINESS

In verses 3-5 he tells us how he got to where he is, and he does so by contrasting a wrong road with a right one. His testimony is that he had gone down the wrong road; it had brought him no benefit. When he went down the right road, he found peace.

#### [a] the road to avoid (the road often travelled)

In verses 3-4 he describes the subjective experience of someone who is convicted (=convinced) by God as to what they ought to do, but they will not do it. They have a sense of guilt, they are unhappy, it is affecting them physically, and yet they will not speak with God. We don't know how long he travelled on that road, or what made him change direction. We may know Jesus's parable of the prodigal son. In the picture that Jesus paints, the son goes down this wrong road and gets himself into all sorts of mess (literally). **Then, Jesus says, "when he came to his senses ..."**. We are not told how he did, only that he did. It is the same in this psalm.

#### [b] the road to take (the road less travelled?)

David took a different road. I fear it is the road less travelled. It requires honesty. It requires an internal conversation, which David describes in verse 5. He is in effect talking to himself. He

decided that he would confess his sins to the Lord. He acknowledged his wrongdoing, rather than trying to cover it up.

And what was the consequence of acknowledging his wrongdoing to the Lord? He states it quite simply: “and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”

When we cover up our sins, there is no forgiveness. When we acknowledge our sins, the Lord covers them.

### [3] THE ASSURANCE OF HAPPINESS

Keeping, for the moment, entirely within Psalm 32, can we find indications of how the assurance of sins forgiven (and thus, the happiness of which this psalm speaks) may be known?

There are at least three themes which now seem to engage our author, David. They are not necessarily laid out strictly in order, but they are surely present.

#### [a] a desire to share

In verse 6 our author is looking outside himself to others – “therefore let all the faithful pray to you.” He clearly wants to share what has happened to him with others. He has found the Lord to be his hiding place. Notice that whereas he had tried to hide FROM the Lord, now, having confessed and been forgiven, he is hiding IN the Lord! [7]

#### [b] a desire to learn

The second sign that someone is indeed forgiven and walking with God openly is surely a willingness to learn, as expressed in verses 8-9. We should understand these verses as representing the Lord’s message to David and not just to him since the command in verse 9 is plural. And someone who

knows the peace of God through sins forgiven will be someone with a spirit of discipleship – they wish to learn.

### [c] a desire to rejoice

This is linked to the desire to share, because this is not rejoicing in private – this is a desire to rejoice with others of like mind. Singing is one obvious expression of rejoicing. It is not the only one, but we would expect singing to be mentioned in what is, after all, a song!

## CONCLUSION

In the NT, it is quoted by Paul in Romans 4 to underline the fact that God is willing to justify (not impute the sins) the ungodly people not on the basis of what they deserve, but simply as they trust him faith.

And today, the specific focus of our trust is in what God's son, Jesus Christ did on the cross. We discover in Christ that he covered our sins and so we look to him as our Saviour and Lord. So as we read Psalm 32 it as though we should see Jesus there. And if, as we read Psalm 32, we can see Jesus there, then surely the Spirit of God is witnessing with our spirit that we are children of God.

If we are not there yet, we can seek God's help here and now for he delights to share the joys mentioned in this song with all who will turn to him. Many millions have people have found the reality of Psalm 32, and, while he may be found, he receives all who come to him in faith.

To God be the glory, amen!