

## **Intro**

This holiday season we find gladness in a variety of things: decorating, baking, vacation days, family gatherings, gifts (giving and receiving). There's nothing wrong with gladness in these things. God has designed us with creative and relational capacities. These are good gifts from God.

But today David gives us reason to celebrate the giver of all good gifts. David helps us to find gladness in God. That's the blessed life. David teaches us...

**BIG IDEA: Be glad in God.**

## **READ PASSAGE**

### **Body**

#### **Passage Focus**

David uses personal experience to motivate gladness in God.

Possibly referring to David's sin with Bathsheba. But we can't be certain. God could have disciplined David on another occasion.

#### **Point 1: Rejoice in forgiven sin (32:1-5)**

*Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. <sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

#### **Blessed**

This should feel odd. The one who's done wrong (transgression, sin, iniquity) is blessed.

Blessed = happy, fortunate. Life goes well for people who've done wrong. That's odd.

#### **Sin**

David describes sin in three ways.

Transgression = rebellion, revolt, crossing a boundary, violating the limits God's word has placed on us.

Sin = miss the mark, miss the way, fall short of God's standard.

Iniquity = deviating from God's way, choosing the wrong way, twisted/crooked living.

#### **Forgiveness**

David describes God's forgiveness in three ways.

Forgiven = taken away. Can mean lifted away or carried away.

He took it somewhere else. It's gone. If we've trusted Christ, doesn't see us as guilty.

Covered = cover, conceal, hide. Meaning out of sight. If we've trusted Christ, God doesn't see a record of debt anymore.

Counts = impute, reckon, credit. When God takes away transgression and covers sin, he decides to not count our iniquity against us.

Through Christ he lets us off, even though we're guilty.

### **David highlights man's sin and God's mercy!**

The guilty are pardoned. The guilty are blessed. God must be merciful. God must be willing to forgive our rebellion.

### **God's requirement**

However, God has requirements. He doesn't pardon everyone. We can't have "deceit."

Meaning we can't hide or deny or attempt to justify our sin. We must admit failure. We must confess our law-breaking.

### **David's experience**

*For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.*

"For" (32:3) = David explains from personal experience.

David's silence (his failure to confess sin) brought him emotional and physical agony. As human beings, we are a unified whole. We have an inner man (spirit or soul or heart) and an outer man (bones). We are spirit and body, or soul and body. What affects one part affects the other part.

As David groaned his bones suffered. Emotional agony led to physical pain. David continues.

*For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.*

Silence (failure to confess sin) resulted in God's discipline ("your hand was heavy upon me"). Because of God's discipline, David was physically and emotionally spent ("my strength was dried up"). David understands God to be the cause of his physical and emotional suffering.

David doesn't say how he knew it. David doesn't say what God did. But he knew unconfessed sin was the cause.

*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.*

David came to his senses. When he acknowledged his sin, God forgave him. The picture is instantaneous forgiveness upon confession. Discipline removed.

### **Application: forgiveness**

In terms of general truths, 32:1-2 speaks to justification (declared righteous and not guilty). Paul quotes these verses in Romans 4:7-8.

Salvation is a gift that isn't earned by our deeds because God justifies sinful people through faith. When we trust in Jesus, Jesus' perfect life is credited to our account.

Our works only condemn. They never justify. But Jesus' death is worthy to cover your sins, no matter how bad.

We experience forgiveness through faith and repentance. Turn from rebellion to trust. Turn from trust in yourselves to trust in Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus died on the cross as a substitute such that whoever trusts in him will be forgiven. If we believe, Jesus has taken the punishment in our place.

The guilty can be blessed. But only through Jesus. The blessed are those who trust Jesus.

### **Application: discipline**

32:3-5 speaks to our after-conversion relationship with God. David isn't explaining how he came to faith. David is explaining how God dealt with him as a believer.

David sinned. David failed to acknowledge his sin. God sent discipline. David suffered emotionally and physically. David confessed his sin. God forgave him. Discipline ceased.

It's not that David lost forgiveness or salvation. It's that David's present relationship with God was disturbed by unconfessed sin. When David confessed, his relationship with God was restored.

### **Illustration**

How does unconfessed sin affect a human relationship? Say you speak harshly to a child, a spouse, a friend, a church member. What does the harsh speech do? It creates hostility. The person is wronged, offended, angry, hurt. They want apology. They want confession. They want humility.

What does failure to confess do? The offense is unaddressed. The relational obstacle remains. A wall remains.

What removes the wall? Open, honest, sincere, confession. Presuming forgiveness on the part of the one wronged, the relationship is restored.

That's how it works with God as a believer.

### **Discipline**

When we remain silent. When we excuse sin, deny sin, pretend sin didn't happen, God sends discipline.

Hebrews 12:10-11 explains the why of God's discipline: *"he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. <sup>11</sup> For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."*

God disciplines us to produce righteous lives. This is what's good for us.

It's better to keep short accounts with God. To confess sin before hardness sets in. But if necessary, God will send discipline for our good.

The blessed life is the forgiven life. The blessed life is life lived with unhindered relationship with God.

### **Point 2: Rejoice in answered prayer (32:6-7)**

*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.*

“Therefore” = since you forgive those who acknowledge their sin, the godly should pray in times of distress (“*the rush of great waters*”).

“godly” = those who are loyal, committed, faithful to God. It’s in the same word group as “steadfast love.” Steadfast love is God’s commitment to us. Godly speaks to our commitment to God.

That’s pray to God before it’s too late. David’s Psalms frequently are set in situations where his life is endangered by enemies. Pray before the enemy strikes.

“*they shall not reach him*” = David expects a favorable response. If the godly pray in time, God will deliver.

***You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.***

Hiding place = rescue and escape from danger by being hidden. Highlights God’s protection.

The point is, believers, pray to God because he rescues his people.

### **How David describes the believer**

David describes God’s people in two ways. First, they’re forgiven. Second, they’re committed. The faith that results in forgiveness is a faith that’s committed. When we come to grips with our sin. When we come to grips with the cross. When we come to grips with God’s mercy. When we grasp these things, we can’t help but be committed to our good God. The faith which saves isn’t alone. Commitment accompanies forgiveness.

How do I know a person’s a Christian? They’re committed to Jesus (e.g., allegiance).

### **Expectant prayer**

David exemplifies expectant prayer. We pray expectantly, trusting that God will act on our behalf. That God will intervene. That God will do the impossible.

Yes we submit to God’s hidden will. Yes our prayers don’t control God. But we pray with expectation that God hears and acts for us when we pray.

As a pastor, I pray for God to do what is humanly impossible in and for this church.

The blessed life is having the God who hears and answers.

### **Point 3: Rejoice in God’s instruction (32:8-9)**

***I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.***

David’s been giving counsel. This sounds like a shift to God’s speech (“*with my eye upon you*”). It seems like David is sharing what God says to his people.

David highlights three ways God speaks to us: giving us understanding (instruct), showing us the way (teach), giving us advice (counsel).

***Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.***

The bit goes in the horse's mouth. The bridle holds the bit in place. Reins are attached to the bridle and used to control the horse's movement by applying pressure to the bit.

This is a warning. Receive God's instruction. Don't force God to discipline you into obedience. It's better to obey God and confess sin quickly than to subject ourselves to God's discipline.

### **Application: God's way ends in blessing**

God's ways are the right way ("*the way you should go*"), so they lead to a blessed life.

The blessed life is the Proverbs life. The life lived under God's wisdom instead of our own foolishness. The life lived in submission to God's revealed will instead of making our own rules. The life lived with good consequences that flow from obedience instead of self-inflicted consequences that flow from sin (e.g., tongue, work ethic).

The life that goes well because we aren't going against the moral order of the universe.

### **Illustration**

It's like using a switchblade to clean your teeth or a brillo pad to dust your furniture. It doesn't work. And it ends in ruin.

### **Application: how does God instruct today?**

Reading **the Bible** and **gifted teachers** that explain the Bible. It isn't enough to just read our Bibles at home or read the Bible in the church and leave it at that. The Bible needs to be understood. So it needs to be explained and applied. Thus, the need for gifted teachers. In God's design, he's gifted men to instruct God's people in the local church. The pastor exists because God wanted to ensure correct understanding.

That isn't to say women can't be gifted to teach. Titus 2:3-5 speaks of older women teaching and training younger women.

We receive God's instruction today by following our Bibles and gifted teachers. Receive what's taught as long as it's accurate to Scripture. Gifted teachers demonstrate conclusions with Scripture.

My point? Make full use of gifted teachers. It's God's design.

The blessed life is having God's instruction.

### **Point 4: Rejoice in God's steadfast love (32:10-11)**

#### **The contrast**

***Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.***

The wicked are those who don't acknowledge their sin and aren't loyal to God.

Sorrow = sadness, mental anguish.

The idea is life is painful for those who reject God. There's the weight of guilt from sin. There's self-inflicted consequences for not doing life the right way, God's way. Not knowing how to do life in God's world brings sorrow.

But steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts God = believers.

## **Steadfast love**

God's fidelity, commitment, loyalty to his people. The consequence of personal relationship with God. God's obligated himself to us through covenant (e.g., sins remembered no more, eternal inheritance). It's committed love in the context of relationship that was freely given by God out of his kindness and not obligatory, but now entails an obligation because God pledged his commitment to us. God's commitment overflows in the ways he relates to us (e.g., kindness, benevolence, rescue, mercy). It's summed up in "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Heb 13:5). It's commitment that results in action.

## **Application**

God's steadfast love (mercy) follow us all the days of our lives (**Ps 23:5**).

Children/teenagers...

God is with you and acting for you when:

- 1) Friends are rare.
- 2) You're bullied.
- 3) You don't fit in because you value God.

Younger folks...

God is with you and acting for you when:

- 1) You're single and want companionship.
- 2) You lose a job.
- 3) Parenting is hard.

Older folks...

God is with you and acting for you when:

- 1) You have cancer.
- 2) A loved one has Alzheimer's.
- 3) You lose a spouse.

How this works for me:

As a pastor, this church matters to me. I want to see us thrive. I don't know where we're going. I don't have a Bible verse or a vision/dream/prophecy from God that assures me all will go well. When things were looking a little bleak a while back, what did I have? I had God. I had the promise of God's steadfast love. I had assurance that God cares for me, God is committed to me, God is with me every day wherever I go, and God is acting on my behalf.

Whatever happens, I have peace God is with me and will take care of me. This is the fight for faith. Trust in God's steadfast love.

The blessed life is having God's steadfast love.

## **Non-Christian**

You've learned who God is for his people.

He's merciful.

He listens and responds.

He corrects. There are right and wrong ways!

He loves through commitment and watchful care.

You've learned who God could be for you.

There's two ways to live.

Sorrow because we do life our own way or surrounded by steadfast love.

We're designed to find gladness in God. When we go our own way, we're working against the fabric of the universe. Like using a switchblade to brush our teeth.

It's better to trust God than reject him...in this life and the life to come!

### **The conclusion**

Forgiveness, prayer answered, instruction, steadfast love. The intended result? Gladness in God.

***Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!***