

December 31, 2000 by Steve Brandon



# The Blessed Man

## Psalm 32:1,2; 119:1, 2

"The Blessed Man"  
Psalm 32:1,2; 119:1, 2

### 1. A Forgiveness Man (Psalm 32:1, 2) 2. An Obedient Man (Psalm 119:1, 2)

This evening, as we gather around the word of God, I would like to deviate from our normal plan. We have recently been going through 1 Thessalonians, verse-by-verse, phrase-by-phrase, in an effort to expose the heart of the apostle Paul in connection with a very young church, of which we are also. Tonight, we are not even going to open up 1 Thessalonians. Tonight, I am going to preach a topical message. I am not going to tie all of my thoughts to a single verse of scripture this evening. I am rather going to tie all of my thoughts to a single thought instead.

I firmly believe that our pattern of preaching and teaching out to be characterized by sequential exposition through Biblical passages, because this is the way we read our bibles, we read them verse by verse, looking for the flow of thought. Furthermore, this is the best way for us to constantly keep context in mind, as we travel through the context of Biblical books. In the long run, we need to know our Bibles well, and exposition helps us to see verses in the Bible as parts of a whole, not proof-texts to prove our doctrine.

However, while I believe sequential exposition is our best diet of preaching, we need also to learn to feast upon other styles and methods themselves. God will do what He thinks best with the proclamation of his word. God is not limited to styles or techniques or giftedness of preachers of the word. So beloved, know that there is a place for topical preaching. And today, we have come to such a place!

We are facing a new year before us. In approximately 5 hours, it will be a new year. Depending upon whether or not you are quite technical about it, we are beginning a new millennium tomorrow. New Years is always a good time for us to reflect upon a year past and anticipate the year to come. It is good to keep in mind what John Piper has said about the New Year: "The last hours of New Year's Eve [and that is what we are experiencing right now] are like the ticking away of the final minutes of my time on earth. The 365 days leading to the year's end are like a miniature lifetime. ... It's a great advantage to have a trial run at my own dying every year." Tonight of all nights provides us with an opportunity to evaluate our lives and reflect upon whether or not we are on the right track. New Year's provides us with a good point to take stock in what we are and seek to be what we would like to be.

And so I ask you all this evening about the upcoming year... Have you thought about this year? Have you evaluated your life in this past year? Perhaps you have made goals for yourself. Perhaps you have made plans for yourself. Perhaps you have made practical goals for yourself (i.e. with respect to work or home). Perhaps you have made spiritual goals for yourself (i.e. Reading the Bible through this year, Memorizing Scripture).

This evening, may I put one simple thought into your mind, which will govern your activities during the year 2001? May I propose for you all, a path of life which will reap dividends both in this life and in the life to come?

As we approach the new year, I would exhort you to seek to be "A Blessed Man." And so, I have entitled my message this evening, "The Blessed Man." Though I have entitled my message this way (i.e. The Blessed Man), know that this also applies to you women among us as well. I would exhort you to be "A Blessed Woman." Likewise, for you children, I would also say that these things apply to you as well. I would exhort you to be "A Blessed Boy" or "A Blessed Girl."

The Scripture often says, "Blessed is the man who does (such and such)..." or "Blessed is the man who is (such and such) ..." or "Blessed are they that are ..." It has often passed through my mind that if God declares such a man or woman to be blessed upon some characteristic of this individual's life, would I not seek to be that man? For instance, suppose that the scripture said (in 1st Thessalonians, 2:10) - "Blessed is the man who eats Vitamin C after dinner every night." What is going to be offered at your dinner every night? Or, suppose that another verse in Scripture says, "Blessed is the man who drives a blue car." What color car would you get your next time purchasing a new car?

So likewise, whenever you see a "blessed is the man who ..." in the scripture, my admonition to you would be to seek to be what that man described is like. For instance, if we take the Beatitudes of Matthew, chapter 5, Jesus said, ...

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.  
Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.  
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.  
Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:3-12).

When Jesus says, Matthew 5:3 - "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Note that this is *not* a command! Jesus isn't saying "Be poor in spirit." He is simply acknowledging the truth that those who are poor in spirit receive a blessing. Particularly, that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." You see someone poor in spirit and theirs is the kingdom of heaven. However, the implication certainly follows that if you work to become poor in spirit, yours is the kingdom of heaven. So, though this isn't a command, I exhort you, anyway, to seek to fulfill the requirements of first part.

So, tonight, I would like for us to consider several passages of scripture that speak of "the blessed man." As I said before, my sermon tonight is going to be topical. We are going to look at characteristics of "the blessed man." And simply all that I have done is taken out my concordance, and looked up the word "blessed" and seen where it is used, and how it is used in Scripture.

Before we begin to look at the characteristics of such a man, we need first to have a Hebrew lesson. There are two words in Hebrew, which we translate "Bless." The first, is the word, *barak*, which is easy to remember. (Ehud Barak is the prime minister of Israel right now. His name comes from this word.) At its root, this word means, knee, like the joint in your leg. Thus, this word, at its root, means to kneel, and thus, to bless (or worship). Most often, it is used to express praise and adoration to God. For example, Psalm 103:1 says, "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name." Though, it is also used to represent one man blessing another (as in the Patriarchs "blessing" their sons). Still, its primary reference is to man bestowing favor upon God. The best way to understand this word is to think of an up arrow, because it denotes adoration to God. This word simply saturates scripture. Its root is used over 400 times!

The second Hebrew word which we translate "bless" is the word, *asher*. By contrast, this word, and its roots are used less than 70 times. This word, at its root, means, "happiness or blessedness." This word also, isn't too difficult to remember, for one of the tribes of Judah was named Asher. Genesis 30:13: When Zilpah bore Jacob a second son, "Leah said, "Happy am I! For women will call me happy." So she named him Asher." This word describes the inward blessedness and happiness that the world so longs for. In fact, many have thought that the best way to understand this word is see the picture of the man who is so contented and happy in his situation that others can only envy his situation. Thus, it may be translated, "to be envied." The best way to understand this word is to think of a horizontal arrow. Rather than expressing praise to God, this word, better expresses a life that is filled with happiness and joy.

It is this second word that we will focus upon tonight - a life that is so blessed that others see it and are envious of the life!

Let me also note that our study tonight will in no way be exhaustive. In fact, we will only look at two usages of this word. And yet, these passages are very practical for us tonight. I do want it, however, to be practical as we face the New Year. The first characteristic of a blessed man is that he is a ....

## 1. A Forgiven Man (Psalm 32:1, 2)

I get this from Psalm 32:1, 2, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is now deceit!"

In this passage, David simply declares the straightforward blessing of the man who has experienced forgiveness: "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." To understand the blessing of forgiveness, you need first to understand the need we all have of forgiveness before a Holy God! J. C. Ryle has written of our great need to be forgiven. He called it, "the first thing of true religion." He said, "Sin is a burden, and must be taken off. Sin is a defilement, and must be cleansed away. Sin is a mighty debt, and must be paid. Sin is a mountain standing between us and heaven, and must be removed. Happy is that mother's child amongst us that feels all this! The first step towards heaven is to see clearly that we *deserve hell*. There are but two alternatives before us -- we must either be forgiven, or be miserable for ever." (Old Paths, p. 183).

David described his misery in the next few verses, "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away, through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer" (Ps. 32:3,4). Such descriptive language does David use in this Psalm. He said that he was weak and hurting. He said that he was oppressed and depressed. His unconfessed sin crippled him, and he knew it well. Well does the catechism we have been using with our children put it:

Q: "How did Adam and Eve change when they sinned?"

A: "Instead of being holy and happy, they became sinful and miserable."

You simply need to examine David's words to verify that he, through his refusal to humble himself, and through his refusal to call sin, "sin," was also a crippled, miserable man. He said, "My body wasted away." Literally, David described his body as "getting old and becoming worn out." He felt like an old man. Many of us know what it is like to have a body that doesn't work as well as it used to - simply because it is old. That is what David felt like. Like the man dying of old age, so was David in his refusal to acknowledge his sin.

David said that he was "groaning all day long." The picture here is of the man in such agony and pain that he can do nothing but moan. Have you ever been so sick that you simply feel like moaning because the pain is so great? I remember a few months ago, when I had a migraine headache that was soooo bad that all I could do is moan and groan. I couldn't even lie in bed the pain was so great. I was on all fours. My wife recently banged her toe on some furniture. He moaned because of the pain. Such was David in his refusal to acknowledge his sin.

David continued, "God's convicting hand was heavy upon him." David describes the conviction of his sin as compared to carrying a heavy burden upon his back. You remember Christian in Pilgrim's progress was pictured as having a burden on his back. The burden never gets

lighter. As you get tired, it only bears down upon you more. I remember playing soccer and one of the conditioning drills we used to do was races when we carried another player on our back. It was wearing. But David's weight here was the weight of the hand of God upon him.

David goes further, "His vitality was drained away." Picture Rockford in August in the hottest day of the year: 100 degrees outside with 100% humidity. You are not going to do much on such a day. You feel lethargic. You feel like simply lying around and doing nothing. So David felt. He was depressed and void of energy.

David points a perfect picture of what unconfessed sin is like. It pounds and pounds and beats upon us. It weighs us down. It pains us. And here is precisely where we find the blessing of forgiveness. The burden is lifted. The pain disappears. Rather than a scorching heat, we have a cooling breeze. Rather than the condemnation of God, we have the joy of standing as forgiven before Him! Rather than being weighed down in our sins, we are free to rejoice in God's forgiveness experienced!

Look at David's contrast in verses 10 and 11, "Many are the sorrows of the wicked; but he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones, and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart." Remember how Charles Wesley said it ...

Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free;  
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

And notice how easy it is to know and experience this freedom! "I acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.' And You forgave the guilt of my sin." (verse 5). Notice that David simply acknowledged and confessed his transgressions to the LORD! Free forgiveness is available to all who would acknowledge and confess sin before God. David didn't secure his forgiveness by being more righteous. David wasn't forgiven because he amended his ways. David didn't say, "I'm not going to sin any more." He obtained forgiveness by faith that God would forgive sins that are confessed to Him.

Look at the lives of us all. Which of you could I not interview and ask, "Have you always succeeded in your Christian efforts? Is your faith strong or is it feeble? Is your hope unwavering or do you doubt? Is your love warm or is it cold? Is your zeal great or is it small? Are your prayers fervent or are they formal? Are your thoughts pure or are they sinful? Are your words building up or are they tearing down? Are you a servant to others or are you selfish in heart?" If we have failed in any of these areas, we simply need to acknowledge our failures and find forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

To know the blessing of forgiveness isn't by way of having a stronger faith, or loving with increasing affection, or praying with greater fervency, or thinking only pure thoughts, or performing only self-less acts. Rather, simple acknowledgement and confession is all that is needed to secure this forgiveness.

Prov. 28:13 says, "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." We are told in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." You remember the thief upon the cross? Jesus told him that he would be in paradise with Jesus solely based upon his confession and acknowledgement of his own sins.

You remember Isaiah standing before God's throne? When he saw the Lord, lofty and exalted, sitting on the throne, he said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people with unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." When the burning coal was touched to his lips, the seraphim said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven." **Confession of sin leads to forgiveness and forgiveness leads to blessing.**

So, I ask you, "Do you know this blessing? Are you forgiven?" I'm not asking you if you think yourself to be religious. I'm not asking you if your attendance at church is spotless. I'm not asking you if you read your Bible. I'm asking you if you have confessed your sin to the Lord and have experienced this forgiveness and know the blessing that comes from it. As we enter this new year, will you hide your sin? Will you continue to acknowledge your sin to the Lord?

If you refuse to acknowledge your sin before God, I believe that it amounts to simple unbelief. It is proud unbelief that refuses to believe God to be holy and yourself to be sinful. Is this not at the root of the fear of God? Realizing that God is holy and we are not! "How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in His commandments" (Ps. 112:1). "How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways." Ralph Venning, the Puritan, once said, "We can never sin but there will be two witnesses present to observe and register it, our own selves and God" (The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations, p. 263).

Your lack of confession will come because of your lack of belief. I love the story of Thomas, Christ's apostle. You remember when he said, "Unless I shall see in His hand the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). You remember once he did put his hands into the holes, he exclaimed, "My Lord and My God!" Jesus replied, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

If God declares that there is blessing in obtaining forgiveness, will you not pursue the condition? Will you not do what it takes to know how to obtain forgiveness of sins? And then seek it with your whole heart? I don't think that you all come and gather in this place week in and week out to inflict harm and punishment upon yourselves. No, I think that you come each Sunday night to gather in this place because you know of the benefits to you and your family by being and praying with other believers. You know the benefits of coming here to listen and learn from the Word of God. And so tonight, you know that it is true that, "Blessed is the man who's sins are forgiven," will you not seek forgiveness that you might know the blessing? If you will do so, you will be blessed. According to the promise of Scripture, you will be blessed. Your life will be filled with such happiness and contentment that you will be envied by others.

## 2. An Obedient Man (Psalm 119:1, 2)

I get this from Psalm 119:1, 2, "How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart." Again, (like Psalm 32 before), the meaning of this passage is clear. "The man who walks and acts in a blameless way is blessed."

This thought is so frequent in the scripture that it bears hearing from other quarters ...

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!" (Psalm 1:1).

"How blessed are those who keep justice, Who practice righteousness at all times!" (Psalm 106:3).

"How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways" (Psalm 128:1).

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6).

"Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it" (Luke 11:28).

"The one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25).

"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed [i.e. keeps] the things which are written in it" (Rev. 1:3).

"Blessed is he who heeds [i.e. keeps] the words of the prophecy of this book" (Rev. 22:7).

Blessing comes upon the man, who hears of what God says and acts upon it. You may hear many sermons. You may know the Bible very well. You may have read many, many Christian books. You may have listened to many tapes. But couple all of that knowledge with a lack of practical righteousness in your life, and you will not know God's blessing upon your life.

Notice how closely the Psalmist connects his desire for the word with his own desire to obey. "You have ordained Your precepts, That we should keep [them] diligently. Oh that my ways may be established To keep Your statutes!" (Ps. 119:4, 5). God has spoken that we might obey. The Psalmist has a great desire to obey. "I shall give thanks to Thee with uprightness of heart, When I learn Thy righteous judgments. I shall keep Thy statutes; Do not forsake me utterly!" (Ps. 119:7, 8). Here, he pledges to keep God's commandments.

The Bible is eminently a practical book. And God is eminently a practical God. As Gardiner Spring (a pastor in the 1800's) once wrote, "The religion of Jesus Christ is not a system of empty speculations, designed to have no practical influence. It is not the offspring of wild enthusiasm that exhausts all its force in feeling and leaves none for action. ... God never designed that saved men should have assurance, peace, and joy in any other proportion that they bring forth the fruits of holiness. If you would enjoy the pleasures of religion, therefore, you must practice its duties. If you will not do this, you will continue in darkness and doubt while you live. On the contrary, if you will awake to a life of Christian activity, you shall have the peace which passeth all understanding, that your joy may be full" (The Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character, pp. 74- 75).

The life that follows God in obedience is a blessed life. It couldn't be more clear that the Psalmist made it to be ...

How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD.

How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart.

Two times in these verses does God declare the blessedness of obedience. When the Psalmist speaks of a blameless life, he is simply speaking of a life that lives with integrity of character and conduct. (i.e. what we are and what we do). It is a life that when examined in the whole is found to be righteous.

This word, translated, "blameless," comes from the Hebrew word, *tom*. It is a very common Biblical word, which has as its root meaning the idea of being complete, finished, with wholeness, with completeness. When referencing one's moral life, it is often means integrity, or innocence. One has even translated this phrase, "O how blessed are the ones having integrity of manner of life." This same word was used to describe Job and the beginning of Job, "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was *blameless*, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil." (1:1). Abimelech used the word to describe his innocence in taking Sarah, Abraham's wife into his harem. He said, "In the *integrity* of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." (Gen. 20:5).

"How blessed are those whose way is blameless," (Ps. 119:1). Let this sink in.... "How blessed are those whose way is blameless," At the last half of verse 1, the Psalmist describes what it means to live a life of blameless integrity, merely expanding on the first half of the verse: "who walk in the law of the LORD." In other words, they live according to God's expressed will for our lives, according to what he has told us to do.

Lets get real practical. The blessed man is the one who hears God say, "You shall not have any gods before me" and seeks with his whole heart to give unfeigned worship to God and Him alone. The blessed man is the one who hears God say, "Honor your father and your mother" and expends much effort to see to it that his parents receive the place of honor and not dis-respect. The blessed man is the one who hears God say, "You shall not lie" and is sensitive to speak forth only that which is true, trying to flatter or manipulate no one.

Take any command of scripture. Find any single one. The man who hears it and heeds it will be a blessed man. The one who knows and does. The one who seeks righteousness with his whole heart is a blessed man. Take, for instance Micah 6:8, "He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you, but to do justice [i.e. seek to be fair in all of your dealings], to love kindness [i.e. seeking to be gracious and loving and caring toward others],

and to walk humbly with your God [i.e. not thinking yourself to be great as if God owes you something]."

But this is bigger than merely external actions. It also gets to the heart. As Psalm 51:17 says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite *heart*, O God, You will not despise." Deut. 6:5, "Love the LORD your God with all of your *heart, soul, mind* and strength."

When you see something practical to follow or obey, do you seek to do it? Do you respond like the Psalmist, "When Thou didst say, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to Thee, 'Thy face, O LORD, I shall seek'" (Psalm 27:8). Do you prove yourself to be a "doer of the word" and not "a hearer only"? When you hear the word, do you respond? When you know what is the proper thing to do, do you do it? When you see sin in yourself, do you quickly confess it and forsake it?

As I was thinking of an illustration of this, I can give no better one than what happened to me yesterday. This past week, one of our cars had a flat tire, so I took it in to be fixed. It was in the shop on Friday morning. I received a call late Friday evening (about 15 minutes before the shop closed) telling me that our car was done. It was not convenient at that time to get the car, so I told the owner that I would pick up the car on Saturday morning. They are open from 8-12 on Saturday morning. I thought, no big deal, I don't need the car tonight, I will just pick it up tomorrow (i.e. Saturday). Well, on Saturday morning, I was engrossed in other things and just plain forgot about the car. Yvonne walks downstairs, where I was yesterday morning, at about 11:30. She said, "Steve, what about the car? Are you going to pick it up?" What did I do? I was scrambling around for my shoes, my coat, everything, because I knew that I had to be at the tire place before noon to get my car. That is the picture of what pursuing righteousness is about. It is about hearing what one is to do, and seeking to do it, immediately and quickly.

You all know that I am not talking about religious perfection. I'm not talking about a life that never makes a single slip. No, for the Scriptures are clear that in and of ourselves, we are *not* righteous people. We will never merit or earn anything before God! Our salvation is solely in the hands of Jesus Christ--He who is our righteousness. You all know that we are saved by grace and not by works. It is not as if we will ever merit anything, ever, before God. But you cannot deny the truth of many of the scriptures that I have already read for you this evening (see [above](#)).

The best way to understand the relationship between being saved apart from works and God calling us to works is by understanding that we are saved "not as a result of works" but we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works." (Ephesians 2:8-10). Romans 6:14 also puts it well, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace." As George Swinnock said, "The holiness of the believer's heart is seen at his fingers' end." Or as another Puritan writer once said, "It is our bounded duty to live *in* obedience, but it would prove our utter ruin to live *on* obedience." Or, as another great teacher said, "You shall know the tree by its fruits."

May I say also unto you, brethren, "Obedience is for your own good." Serving God isn't cruel and unusual punishment. Moses spoke to the people of Israel and said, "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?" (Deut. 10:12,13). As Thomas Watson said, "to obey God, is not so much our duty as our privilege."

But here this, beloved. God delights to bless the righteous. God delights in prospering those whose hearts are completely His. I have a friend who has made Psalm 84:11 his life verse. It says, "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (i.e. with integrity, this is the same word we discussed earlier in Psalm 119, "How blessed are those whose way is *blameless*").

But those who walk in wickedness are an abomination before Him. Prov. 11:20 says, "The perverse in heart are an abomination to the LORD, But the blameless in their walk are His delight."

As you face the new year, will your days be filled with happiness and blessedness? Will you acknowledge your sin and find it forgiven? Will you be quick to obey what God says? Or will this new year be filled with burdens and sorrows? May the Lord bless you through your confession and obedience.

In a few hours, we will tell each other, "Happy New Year!" Perhaps we might change the expression this to "Have a Holy New Year!"

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 31, 2000 by Steve Brandon.  
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