

God Wants You To Be Happy!

I. Introduction:

A. God Wants You to Be Happy—

1. Do you know that God wants you to be happy? The Scriptures say, “Let those that seek [God] rejoice and be glad...Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, and give thanks....Shout joyfully to the Lord all the earth; break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praise... Be glad and rejoice with me...Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice...Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks” (Psalm 40:16; 70:4; 105:3; 97:12; 98:4; Phil. 2:18; 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:16–18). There can be no doubting that God wants us to be happy and is pleased when we are happy. Christians are to be a joyful people.
2. When I think of the wonderful land in which we live and the abundant freedoms we enjoy, it is difficult to comprehend so many are unhappy. The vast majority of Americans, and among them some Christians, cannot say truly without qualification, “I AM HAPPY!”

B. Why Are So Many Unhappy?

1. How is it that the majority of citizens in the most blessed nation on earth are unhappy and, therefore, miserable? How can it be that among them the most religious and spiritually blessed people in the world are professing their own unhappiness? What possible explanations can be offered for this miserable mess of unhappiness, especially when there are literally hundreds and hundreds of passages in the Bible that speak of God’s desire for our happiness and which provide guidelines that will lead us to real happiness? Basically, I believe that there is only one hindrance to the happiness of the people of God.
2. Abraham Lincoln observed, “People are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” Centuries before Lincoln, the Roman Emperor Marcus Antonius said, “No man is happy who does not think himself so.” Roger L’Estrange the English journalist said it best, “It is not the place, nor the condition, but the mind alone that can make anyone happy or miserable.”
3. I have concluded that the unhappiness of Americans in general and Christians in particular is a result of not having a proper disposition toward the people, things, and circumstances which we encounter every day. The Scriptures indicate that this happiness which we all seek is found only by properly ordering our lives in relation to Christ and his will.

C. A Spiritual Mind Is a Happy Mind—

1. Matthew chapter five is the great chapter on “happiness” or as the King James Version says “blessedness.” I am reading from the Amplified version this morning, “Blessed—happy—are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed and enviably happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed—happy—are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed—happy—are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they

shall be completely satisfied. Blessed—happy—are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed—happy—are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed—happy—are the makers and maintainers of peace, for they shall be called the sons of God. Blessed and happy are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed—happy and to be envied—are you when people revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil things against you falsely on my account. Be glad and supremely joyful, for your reward is great..."

2. In these verses Jesus tells us that our happiness is the result of having our minds filled with a right understanding of reality and our hearts set on a desire for spiritual things. When our lives are so ordered we will be happy.
3. Let's develop this idea by considering some specific principles that govern happiness.

II. Discussion:

A. *Happiness Cannot Be Found in Having Everything You Desire—*

1. The American preacher Henry Van Dyke wisely said, "It is better to desire the things we have, than to have the things we desire."
 - a. He got that from Solomon, who after he had sought every desire of his heart said, "Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun."
 - b.. Solomon was arguably the richest man that ever lived and he indulged every desire, whim and inclination he had—when all was said and done he was miserable—his life was empty and his spirit was vexed (Ecclesiastes. 2:1–11).
2. Chauncey Depew, one time Chairman of the Board of the New York Central Railroad and a two term US Senator, said, "Unhappy is the man who is not so much dissatisfied with what he has as with what the other fellow possesses." Mr. Depew recognized that too many of us make ourselves unhappy because we covet the possessions of our neighbors, friends, and brethren.
 - a. Charles Spurgeon recognized this truth and observed, "Happiness is being satisfied with what we have got *and* with what we haven't got."
 - b. Both of these men had been reading after the Apostle Paul who said, "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Tim. 6:6–10).
 - c. Paul understood that we can easily deceive ourselves into believing that others are happier than we are because of their possessions; therefore, we

struggle to have what they have in order to be as “happy” as we perceive they are. This vicious cycle of struggling “to keep up with the Jones” fills our lives with all sorts of sorrows and disappointments.

- d. Solomon finally figured out, “All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied” (Ecclesiastes 6:7). You see he learned it; things do not make us happy.

B. We Will Not Be Happy Seeking to Be Someone Different than We Are—

1. The American clergyman Charles A. Stoddard observed, “We love in others what we lack in ourselves, and would *be* everything but what we are.”
 - a. I have heard people say, “Oh, how happy I would be if I only had the _____ that she has.” And I know you have heard someone say, “I know that I would be happy if I could do _____ like he does.”
 - b. However, none of us will be happy until and unless we are able to accept ourselves as we are. The Bible recognizes that we each have limitations in ability, personality, and resources.
 - c. The Lord illustrated this truth in the parable of the talents. There were three men each having his own ability (Matthew 25:15). The Lord expected each one to do what he could in accord with the ability he possessed. When He condemned the one talent man, it was not because he was not like the other two, but rather because he did not use the ability he had. I wonder if he was one of those that stood around saying “I could if...” While we all are different, it is this diversity that makes the church function at its best. If all were preachers or singers, there would be no caring and loving folks to minister to the weak and helpless.
2. Basically, there are three kinds of people in the world—the “wills,” the “won’ts,” and the “can’ts.”
 - a. This first kind does everything, the second kind opposes everything, and the third fails at everything.
 - b. Too, many of us are failing because we will not do what we can do and be pleased with it.

C. Happiness Will Not Be Found Running from Here to Somewhere Else—

1. James Oppenheim a 19th Century American author discovered that “the foolish man seeks happiness in the distance; the wise man grows it under his feet.” Dear brother or sister, you can be happy wherever you are.
 - a. The story is told of a man who was responsible for the gate to a small town. One day a man came to the gate and asked, “What kind of town is this?” The gatekeeper replied, “From what kind of town did you come?” The newcomer’s report was one of dissatisfaction, disharmony, and disgust. The gatekeeper replied: “You will find this town to be the same.” The man went on somewhere else.
 - b. The next day, another man came and inquired of the little town. The gatekeeper again asked, “From what kind of town did you come? The man gave a glowing report of his former home speaking of the love, the sharing,

and the goodwill which characterized the inhabitants. To this the gatekeeper replied, "Come in! This place will be to you just as that from which you come!"

2. Israel's experience in the wilderness is a good example of how people blame geography rather than examine their heart's weakness of character.
 - a. The nation you remember was under terrible persecution and oppressive bondage at the hands of the Egyptians. God sent them Moses to deliver them out of their suffering and into a new land—the land God promised to their Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When the prospect of inheriting a land flowing with milk and honey was set before them they were delighted to go and made preparation to depart that dark land of misfortune.
 - b. Once on the way and the hardships associated with a challenge began to appear their views of Egypt changed. Now their memories were of flesh pots and garlic, melon, leeks, onions and cucumbers. If they could just get back to Egypt, things would be better. God gave them water, manna and quail and still they murmured and complained every step of the way.
 - c. Finally, God showed them the land, truly a land flowing with milk and honey, a land of rivers and streams, orchards and vineyards, a land the plenty of which was beyond imagination. But, a lack of faith and confidence in God made them again turn back to Egypt in their hearts.
 - d. Israel could not be happy anywhere, until they had God in the center of their hearts. I love the words of Caleb in response to the fear and doubt of the majority—"We are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30). The fearful, the doubtful and the negative will never be happy no matter where he goes.

D. Happiness Cannot Be Found in Not Having to Conform to Any Rules—

1. Jesus gave us an accurate picture of those who live in disobedience to God in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–24).
 - a. This young boy was certain that his life would be joyful and satisfying if he could just get away from his father and all his rules. Oh, how that young man sounds like so many today young and not so young. They want to live life without any rules, without any obligations, without any responsibilities. They do not want to have to work but just waste. They do not want to answer to any authority, but rather be a law unto themselves.
 - b. You will remember that the young man went away from his father into a strange land where there were more people just like he wanted to be. At some point all of his living was gone and he was friendless and penniless. The young man who wanted to be free of his father was reduced to being a servant in a foreigner's hog wallow. Fortunately, the young man came to himself—he changed his attitude, his mind and heart—the young man went home and submitted to his father.
2. I am amazed that young people sometimes think they are the only ones' who have to obey rules, submit to authority and yield to the wishes of others. But, let me tell you, everyone has to submit to someone. That is life.

- a. There is no place on the planet where there are not some rules that people have to obey. Youth is the time to learn that important lesson or else you will grow up to be one very bitter and disappointed adult.
 - b. Jeremiah the prophet observed, “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth” (Lamentations 3:27). That is the kind of training that prepares one for what life will throw at us. Learning to wait, learning to serve, learning to endure, learning even to turn the other cheek is what makes men of character that can overcome and conquer. That is the kind of life that produces happiness because those are the kind of people who succeed and achieve.
3. The apostle John saw the condition of those that lived without restraint in the vision on Patmos in Revelation chapter nine (vv. 1–12).
- a. There came out of the bottomless pit a tormenting plague of locusts with scorpion tails. This locust plague tormented men to the point that they sought death in order to die, but it fled from them. They were miserable in their lives because they were not sealed unto the God of heaven.
 - b. Men who reject God and refuse to obey him are unhappy. Who are the people who are most miserable and discontented in our land today? It is those who will not work, those who have enslaved themselves to drugs and alcohol, those who have no regard for morality and are promiscuous living in adultery and fornication. Satan wants us to believe that these free livers are the happy ones, but Solomon told us well, their laughter is like dried thorns burning under a pot (Ecclesiastes 7:6). They make a big blaze, but there is no heat. Appearances are deceiving.

III. Conclusion:

God wants you to be happy and He has made it possible for you to be truly happy through Jesus Christ. All that is left for us to do is make up our minds that we want to be happy. Turn to Jesus today and be truly blessed—truly happy in the kingdom of heaven.