

CHAPTER 11

The Law and Happiness

How happy are you? What would it take, right now, to make you happy? “If you have to move even ten inches from where you are now in order to be happy, you never will be.” ~Tim Hansel

Psalm 119:1-8 Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. ² Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. ³ They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways. ⁴ You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. ⁵ Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! ⁶ Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. ⁸ I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

There are several things I want to bring to your attention concerning the above passage.

I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE PERFECT WALK Vs.1-4

According to this passage of scripture, there is a single word that should characterize the daily walk of every Christian. It is mentioned twice in the first several verses—*blessed*, and means fulfillment, joy, happy — all of the areas of life that reflect contentment. Happiness is to be a predominant characteristic of our lives.

II. THE MOTIVATION FOR A PERFECT WALK Vs.5-6

Do you believe that God is concerned with our happiness? Or, do you feel, as many do, that happiness is in conflict with holiness? If the “selling point” of Christianity were the countenance of its masses, evangelism would be almost nonexistent. Psalm 1:1 says, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.” Aristotle said,

The end, or good, of humankind is not merely to live, but to lead a good, flourishing life that manifests the rational nature of humanity and thus satisfies human needs. The pursuit of happiness is a search for the good life, which is composed of virtuous actions.

(John)Locke (17th Century English philosopher) maintained that the state of nature was a happy and tolerant one, that the social contract preserved the preexistent natural rights of the individual to *life, liberty, and property*, and that the enjoyment of private rights led, in civil society, to the common good. ~Emphasis added.

When framing the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson included that “trinity” of inalienable rights but changed “property” to “the pursuit of happiness”. Perhaps our point of error

is not so much in the *pursuit* of happiness, but in the belief that it is our inalienable right. Christian Pastor, A. W. Tozer, wrote,

The doctrine of man's inalienable right to happiness is anti-God and anti-Christ, and its wide acceptance by society tells us a lot about that same society.

With such diverse opinions, it is easy to become confused about the place of happiness in the life of Christians. Some have gone as far as saying that God is not concerned with how *happy* we are but how *holy* we are. It never ceases to amaze me how we as human beings manage to put at odds things that God never intended to be in opposition. Scripture is very clear on both subjects. God wants us to be *holy*, and He also wants us to be *happy*. One was never intended to become reality at the expense of the other.

One manufacturer's slogan was "No unhappy customers". The same is true from God's perspective in relation to His people. I think I know what the framers of that statement of *holiness and happiness* were trying to portray: God will not sacrifice His standards of Holiness for your happiness. But *He* didn't pit the two against each other, but rather shows us that both can be achieved. C. S. Lewis stated, "God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing."

Lest we misunderstand what A.W. Tozer meant, he also said, "God has charged himself with full responsibility for our eternal happiness and stands ready to take over the management of our lives."

There are over 300 references to happiness in Scripture. When coupled with the Scriptures on Joy (the internal root of happiness), that number jumps to over 500. I think we can safely conclude that our happiness is important to God,

Psalm 128:1 Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways.

John 13:17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

James 1:25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it-- he will be blessed in what he does.

The pursuit of happiness is an incredible motivation, not an end in itself; and, when coupled with a correct relationship with God it can become the catalyst for holy living. "Seek for happiness and you will never find it. Seek righteousness and you will discover you are happy. It will be there without your knowing it, without your seeking it."¹ Eric Hoffer said, "The search for happiness is one of the chief sources of unhappiness."²

Hear the anguish of heart as David cries out in Psalm 119 verse five, "*O that my ways were established to keep thy statutes.*" In other words, he was prone to wander away from the Lord and craved an autopilot type of walk. He came to realize that his desire was not realistic.

¹ Parson's Technology, Bible Illustrator; —D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones British Pastor (1899-1981)

² Ibid.

III. THE DIRECTION OF A PERFECT WALK Vs. 1-8

There are several road signs that need to be heeded if we are to progress in the right direction in our quest for both *holiness* and *happiness*.

Moral Integrity

Verse One shows that we can be *Undefiled in the way* or in our walk when we walk in the Law of the Lord. Psalm 1:1 states much the same truth, “In His Law does he meditate day and night”. Such a walk becomes a discipline of time and thought. Verse Three says, “They do no iniquity”. What an incredible statement! It certainly does some damage to the philosophy that we *can't* keep the Law. Proverbs 16:6 says, “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and, by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil”. Psalm 25:10 says, “*All* the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to them that keep covenant” ~emphasis added.

The Apostle Paul seemed to be describing our era when he wrote in Romans about humanity's passion for sin, “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:18). Psalm 36:1 speaks much the same truth, “Transgression speaks to the wicked within his heart, because there is no fear of God before his eyes”. The fear of God is a critical component in our Covenant Walk and its corresponding war against sin. The Law is a great contributor to the fear of God in our lives.

Spiritual Introspection

Spiritual introspection is speaking of our Heart. Verse Two says, “Blessed (happy) are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart.” Note the use of the word *keep* which means to keep in view. What are we to keep in view? His testimonies, which also includes the Law. Have you ever seen Rabbi's with what appears to be a block on their forehead? It's part of what they call *Sheba* meaning “hear”. It's the Hebrew word that begins the most important prayer found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

So that “block” is literally Scripture that is the frontlet between their eyes. You may have also noticed the Mezuzah that many Jews place on the doorpost of their homes. That's literal obedience to the above scripture!

When we keep His Law, and seek Him with our whole hearts, this Scripture promises that the result will be happiness. C.H. Spurgeon said, “Have your heart right with Christ, and He will visit you often, and so turn weekdays into Sundays, meals into sacraments, homes into temples, and earth into heaven.”³

George Mueller said this about God's word:

³ Ibid.

The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts. I solemnly state this from the experience of 54 years. The first 3 years after conversion I neglected the word of God. Since I began to search it diligently the blessing has been wonderful. Great has been the blessing from consecutive, diligent, daily study. I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over the word of God.⁴

Perhaps one of the reasons that so many Christians are to be found “pursuing happiness” at the same pace of the world is because they do not truly understand or believe that true happiness is a result of faithfulness in the Covenant Walk. David wrote, “Open thou my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law.” (Psalm 119:18). That should be our prayer also, because the “god of this world” works through blinding his enemies to the goodness of God. He attempts to draw their attention to what we *can't* have. We need the Spirit of God to reveal these “wondrous things” to us. Indeed, He promises to do exactly that,

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 However, as it is written: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him'—¹⁰ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.'

Our understanding of the relationship between our heart and the Law would not be complete without coming to grips with our conscience. I remember seeing a bumper sticker that read “Let your ~~conscience~~ Bible be your guide.” That statement gave the impression that the conscience is irrelevant or unnecessary if you have a Bible. I strongly disagree! The *conscience* is God’s means of speaking to man about sin. Romans 2:15 reminds us that everyone has the work of the Law written in their hearts and that their *conscience* bears witness to it and that the thoughts either accuse or excuse. Paul spoke of serving God with a clear conscience (Romans 9:1) and the need to exercise care that we do not wound those with a weak conscience and so sin against Christ (1 Corinthians 8:12). There are numerous other New Testament passages that speak of the role of the conscience in our covenant walk. I am not saying that we should shelve our Bibles and only heed our conscience, but neither should we seek to downplay such a critical part of our being. If there is a crisis in our conscience, the Word of God can put it right!

IV. OUR DETERMINATION FOR A PERFECT WALK Vs.7-8

Our wills also play an incredible part in our *walk*. Without the personal determination for holiness, we are doomed to repeat the cry of Verse Five, “O that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees”! We glean from this passage that this is a *learning* process. It is not an end in itself; it's *The Journey*. Look what he determines to do in Verse Seven, “I will praise You with an upright heart (the place of the Will!) as I *learn* your righteous Laws”. —Emphasis added.

⁴ Ibid.

Consequently, one of the things we need to learn is “Happiness is not the destination, but *The Journey*”. The Cross made it possible for us to not merely pursue happiness but to experience it. Are you happy? Have you been to the Cross? We have come to realize that too often too many of God’s people view the Christian life and God’s Law as a difficult burden! We understand, too, that God never intended for our walk to be as difficult as many of us make it!

In Psalm 1:1, the Psalmists’ *delight* is in the Law. The word, *delight*, means: “pleasure.” That same word is used by Samuel when confronting Saul about his sin,

1 Samuel. 15:22 But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Note: This is the first occurrence of our word *delight*. The Hebrew word “Chepes,” translated *delight*, can mean not simply what one takes pleasure in or what gives someone delight but one's wish or desire.⁵

Psalm 112:1 Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands.

Jeremiah 15:16 When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's *delight*, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty. ~Emphasis added.

Have you ever wondered how those Old Testament Saints got to that place? They believed God. In like manner, Paul writes in Romans 7:22 “For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man.” (KJV)

Matthew 11:28-30: Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Are those Scriptures descriptive of you? Do we, as the present-day people of God, delight in His Law? Why not? What has happened? What hinders us? In the next Chapter, we will consider the greatest hindrance to God's work and our happiness. Hint: it's not the Devil.

⁵ BibleSoft; Ibid.