

WHAT *HAPPY* SHOULD MEAN TO A CHILD OF GOD?

Psalm 1:1-6

Intro: For several years on the last Sunday of the old year, or the first Sunday of the new year, I have spoken on Psalm 1. I never have brought the same message even though it is the same Psalm. However, each time I have tried to bring out more truth from these words which probably were written at least three thousand years ago. And yet the Word of God is timeless.

In the booklet written by J. C. Ryle, a contemporary of Spurgeon in the nineteenth century and a very devout expositor of the Word of God, he cited several reasons for being that the Bible is the Word of God, not the product of men. And among the reasons that he gave is this:

. . . there is in the Bible an extraordinary *suitableness to the spiritual wants* [needs] *of all mankind*. It exactly meets the heart of man in every rank or class, in every country and climate, in every age and period of life. It is the only book in existence which is never out of place or out of date. Other books after a time become obsolete and old fashioned. The Bible never does. Other books suit one country or people, and not another. The Bible suits all. It is the book of the poor and unlearned, no less than of the rich and the philosopher. It feeds the mind of the laborer in his cottage, and it satisfies the gigantic intellects (of scholars) and is valued by the lowliest of God's people . . .

It is only book, moreover, which seems always fresh and ever green and new. It is still the first book which fits the child's mind when he begins [to learn about the Lord], and the last to which the old man clings as he leaves the world. In short, it suits all ages, ranks, climates, minds, conditions. It is the one book which suits the [whole] world [in all generations] (pp. 9, 10).

It is just as needful for us to read it and to meditate on it in 2008 as we have been doing in 2007. In fact, if you have been faithful in reading and studying the Word of God in 2007, you will want it even more in your life in 2008. We can go back again and again to the same passages of Scripture, and always continue to find that which ministers to our hearts and meets our needs.

So I invite you to join me again to feast upon the truth of this Psalm even though it may be so familiar to you that you can quote it without looking

at it a single time.

Many feel that Psalm 1 is the keynote Psalm for all of the others which follow. The Psalms were sung by the people of Israel. Singing is primarily to express joy, happiness, or at least contentment in trials and suffering. But this Psalm is particularly concerned with *happiness* for two reasons: 1) first, that is the meaning of the word “blessed”; and 2) in the original Hebrew is in plural. Fausset in the JFB commentary series translates it, “O the happinesses of the man . . .” meaning “not merely happy in one respect, but in *countless ways*.” Another writer says that it speaks of great or complete happiness. A happy person is a contented person, a peaceful person, a satisfied person.

In a very real way the Psalmist was describing what it means to be a child of God, so that Psalm 1 would compare in many ways with 1 John in the NT. If a person claims to be a child of God, he is to be described in the words of this Psalm.

In the world happiness is often looked upon in terms of what a person has, or what he can do in seeking the so-called pleasures of the world. Happiness in the world is not defined in terms of God, or a person’s relationship with God, but in terms of what we have, or of the pleasures that are available. This is why most people are really dissatisfied, always looking for that which will give them the pleasure that they desire in their hearts.

In verses 1, 2, and 3 the Psalmist describes the truly happy man, first by what he is not, or what he does not do, and then by what he does do and the effects that will be observed in his life.

In verses 4 and 5 we see the ungodly man, following the description given of him in verse 1.

And then in verse 6 we see the contrast between the two.

In 2 Timothy 2:19 we read that “the Lord knoweth them that are His.” But the way that we know that we are His, and the way that others can know that we are His, is by the kind of people we are and the way we live. So we need to test ourselves by Psalm 1, paying close attention to the way the a child of God is described here by the Spirit of God. We don’t really know who wrote Psalm 1, but we don’t need to know. We know that it is the Word of God, and that is really what matters.

Everybody wants to be happy. The Lord has put that desire in all of our hearts. But the problem is that sin has blinded us as to what true happiness is, and so most people keep looking for happiness, but have to confess that they have not found it.

We are in the midst of numerous bowl games right now which are drawing huge crowds. People will go to a football game on Sunday instead of going to hear the Word of God because they like football more than they do God. Now there is nothing wrong with sports. But people turn to that form of pleasure, or some other kind, in their search for happiness, but they are looking for happiness in the wrong place.

I. THE WRONG WAY (Psalm 1:1).

But as we pick up our Bibles and read Psalm 1, we need to ask ourselves, why did the writer start out on a negative note instead of starting the Psalm with verse 2? And the answer to that question is because it is in the wrong places where most people begin looking for happiness. And we need to notice that there is a decline in a person's life the more he looks for happiness in this world. The Psalmist speaks of walking, and then standing, and then sitting.

Let me point out from these words that where you walk determines where you are going. And so we need to pay close attention to the way we live. So when a child of God reads this Psalm he needs to think, not just about a happy new year, but a happy life. None of us can control what is going to happen to us in the coming year. We don't know how many years we are going to be here. And so we need to be thinking about the way we are living, and whether or not we are looking for happiness in the right place.

The first statement of the Psalm, "Blessed is the man that walketh NOT in the counsel of the ungodly," should be a major warning to all of us. What is an ungodly person? He, or she, is a person who has not place for God in his or her life. Let us not think of an ungodly person as a criminal, or as someone who is trying to do us harm. It can be that kind of a person, but it might be a relative, or someone you work with, or a neighbor who is really interested in helping you. But they are going to be counseling you and me by wisdom that is of this world, wisdom that has no place for God in the way they live. The Bible has a lot to say about the wisdom of men in contrast with the wisdom of God. The Psalmist is saying that a true child of God is not going to get his guidance from people who do not

know the Lord, and who have no place for God in their lives. This does not mean that every Christian will give you good counsel. There are many professing Christians who are not as familiar with the Word of God as they need to be. So be sure that the counsel you are receiving is in agreement with what God has revealed in His Word. We need to begin with God.

If you take counsel from the ungodly, you are going to find it easy to do what may be in direct disagreement with the will of God. The more we proceed in the wrong way, the easier it is to be satisfied with. We can be sinning against God, but it doesn't bother us like it should. That is where we are standing. And have you noticed that the more a person sins, the less he is bothered by what he is doing that displeases the Lord. We live in a nation that has been greatly influenced by people who have no place for God in their lives, and so masses of people are content to live in sin and don't look at the things that they do as having anything to do with God, or His Word. Why is it wrong for a man and a woman to live together with marriage? Because the Bible says so. The Bible calls it adultery. Why is it wrong for two men or two women to live together and call it marriage? Because the Bible says that it is wrong. Why is it wrong to abort babies? Because life begins at conception, and to kill an unborn baby is murder, and the Bible expresses condemns murder.

What is the third step? The person who started out by leaving God and Christ and the Bible out of his life, becomes a scorner of God and the ways of God. People who are living the way they want to live, despising God and His Word, are never going to find true happiness. And if a person claims to be a child of God, his life is not going to fall into the pattern of Psalm 1:1.

I. THE RIGHT WAY OF HAPPINESS (Psalm 1:2).

The first word of verse 2 suggests a different way. Have you noticed how there are people in high places who either are totally silent about the Bible, or they are actively doing everything they can to keep others from knowing what the Bible teaches us? If we want to be truly happy, truly satisfied with our lives, we need to take pleasure in the Word, look to it for guidance, and follow it wholeheartedly! Nobody but a true child of God will delight in the Word of God. "Law" is used here for all of Scripture, not just the ten commandments. To be on the road of true happiness, is to give priority to the Word of God. And if we are going to

do that, we need to read it, and re-read it, not just on Sunday, or once in a while, but “day and night” of every day. The happiest people in the world, are the people whose lives are being directed each day by the teaching of the Word of God. It is just as plain and simple as that!

Now the only person who will do this, is a person who is a child of God, and the only way to become a child of God is “by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” When God blesses us with faith in Christ, He gives us a new life and a new objective in living. And that objective is to put God first in our lives. We need to meditate on what we read, or on what we are taught that is in the Bible. We need to understand the Scriptures. We pray before we read. We pray as we read. And we pray after we read that the Lord will enable to us live to please Him. The ultimate object of meditation is a holy life.

Look at what the Lord told Joshua to do when he took over the leadership of the nation of Israel after Moses died. You will see what the Lord told him to do Joshua 1:8:

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

And when we go into the NT we find the Apostle Paul telling the younger Timothy, this:

13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee (1 Tim. 4:13-16).

Note how simple this is. The Lord wants us to meditate on His Word. One problem that all of us are inclined to do, is to meditate on the wrong things. If you and I will consistently take time, “day and night,” to think about the Word, we will be amazed at the results that it will produce in our lives under the blessing of God. We think about that which we love, don’t we? And so if we love God, we will love His Word, and continue to think about it “day and night.” Act upon this, and do it today. For our

encouragement look at verse 3 where we have the results that God has promised to give us.

III. THE RESULTS (Psalm 1:3).

Don't you regret how unstable you can be spiritually, especially when you are tested? Think of being a strong, unmoveable, fruitful tree. What makes it strong? The nourishment it receives from "the rivers of water." What is that? It is the Word which we have been meditating on. The tree was being nourished underground. Meditation is what we do in our hearts. The fruit of all that we are and do, goes back to the meditation that we do upon the Word of God. God makes Himself known to us through His Word. And constant meditation on the Word will have a transforming effect upon our lives.

Notice that at the beginning of verse 3 we have, "And he shall be." At the end of the verse, "and whatsoever he doeth." Being precedes doing. We will do, we will live, we will serve the Lord, all according to what we are! This does not mean that we will have an easy time. The Devil is going to do everything he can to keep us away from the Word. He will distract us when we are reading it. He will disturb us when we are like we are today, hearing the Word. But in spite of all that the Devil will attempt, if we are faithful in meditating on the Word, blessing is certain to follow.

IV. WHAT ABOUT THE UNGODLY? (Psalm 1:4-5).

"The ungodly are not so." The person who selfishly does his own thing, and forgets about God in his life, will be like "the chaff which the wind driveth away. Do you want to be like the chaff of the wheat, or like a tree?"

The person who "standeth in the way of sinners" shall not "stand in the judgment." People do not take into account that they are responsible to God, and that they are going to appear before Him in judgment. So take the "ungodly" and "sinners" from verse 1, and bring them down to verse 5.

V. THE FINAL OUTCOME (Psalm 1:6).

There are just two ways. The way of the righteous which the Lord knows and blesses. The way of the ungodly leads to eternal death. The ungodly

will find out in the day of judgment that they have to face God whether they want to, or not. May God give us ears to hear His Word, and hearts to obey and do His will.

Concl: What are we going to do about what we have heard and seen in this wonderful Psalm? We ought to be warned if we claim to be a child of God, but are living in the ways of the world – ungodly, sinners, scornful.

On the other hand, what are we doing, or what are we going to do about meditation. What is meditation? Let me read to you Matthew Henry's answer to that question:

To meditate in God's Word is to discourse with ourselves concerning the great things contained in it, with a close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, till we be suitably affected with those things, and experience the savour and power of them in our hearts. This we must do *day and night*; we must have a constant habitual regard to the Word of God as the rule of our actions and the spring of our comforts, and we must have it in our thoughts, accordingly upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time is amiss for meditating on the Word of God, nor is any time unseasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to meditate on God's Word morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and of the night, but these thoughts should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day and with the repose and slumber of every night (Vol. III, pp. 239, 240).

The people of the world may think that they have found the meaning of happiness in all of their ungodly ways, but eternal tragedy awaits all who ignore the importance of finding their way to God, and doing His will.

For those of us who know the Lord, let us ask the Lord to teach us what it means to meditate on His Word for His glory and for our happiness now, and even greater happiness in eternity to come. What should the word *happy* mean to us who know the Lord? It should mean staying away from all sin, and filling our hearts with the precious Word of God.

Closing verse: Psalm 19:14:

Let the words of our mouths, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength, and our Redeemer.