

## THE WAY TO TRUE HAPPINESS

Psalm 119:1-8

**Intro:** There are different ways by which the Spirit of God has sought to attract our attention to important passages of Scripture:

- 1) The beginning of the Bible.
- 2) The end of the Bible.
- 3) The beginning of the NT with four books on the life of Christ.
- 4) Psalm 136 with its repetition of a certain phrase or statement.
- 5) The shortest Psalm – Psalm 117.
- 6) The longest Psalm – Psalm 119.

And other ways – the space given to particular periods or events, not just in one place, but repeated throughout the Word of God. E.g., on creation.

But we would also include the structure of a Psalm like Psalm 119 where we have twenty-two sections, the verses of each section beginning with words which begin with that letter, and the sections in sequence following the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

So this Psalm has characteristics which indicate that it is a passage of great importance.

The one characteristic about this Psalm is to be seen in the various words which are used to speak of the Word of God. I am sure that most of you have probably noticed this in your own reading of Psalm 119. In this first section we have, for example, “the law of the Lord” in verse 1, “His testimonies” in verse 2, “His ways” in verse 3 (although not all expositors include this one, yet I do), “Thy precepts” in verse 4, “Thy statutes” in verse 5, “Thy commandments” in verse 6, “Thy righteous judgments” in verse 7, and “Thy statutes” again in verse 8.

Another way of attracting attention to a passage is the use of what we call *beatitudes*. And this is what we have here in Psalm 119. This word is found only three times in Psalm 119 – once in verse 1, again in verse 2, and a third time in verse 12. But you can tell from the way the word is used in verse 12 that it has to be a different Hebrew word because it is used of worshiping the Lord. The word used in verses 1 and 2 can be translated, “Happy,” or “O the happiness.” And in a very definite way it strikes the keynote of this entire Psalm.

Everybody wants to be happy. At least all normal people want to be

happy. But you and I know that people are usually deceived because they seek happiness in their own ways, and they learn, often by sad experience, and often in expensive ways, that what they thought was going to bring them happiness brought them a lot of unhappiness. And if they could have seen what the end of the road was that they took, they never would have started in that direction.

Those words “blessed” at the beginning of verses 1 and 2 ought to make each one of us stop and ask ourselves, “What do I think would bring me the greatest joy?” A lot of people think that money, and lots of it, will do it. And the more money, the greater the happiness. But experience shows that money itself never satisfies. With money we can buy what we want, and go where we want to go, but some of the most unhappy people in the world, are rich people. The Lord said that we cannot serve God and mammon (money). A Christian who makes it his business to make as much money as he can, will soon dry up spiritually. I’ve seen money break up homes, and break up lives.

The world around us often looks so alluring. Young people are inclined to feel that if I just didn’t have to do what my parents want me to do, I would be happy. But when they start to give us a little slack, that’s when we start making a new set of mistakes. It is easy to get into the wrong crowd,, and get headed in the wrong direction.

From what is going on in California now you can see that there are over 100 candidates who believe that they would be happy if they could only be the governor of California. They want power, and the pride of their hearts makes them feel that they are equal to the job. But does that lead to happiness? Ask Governor Gray Davis.

I was in university with a young man who taught me some very important lessons. I don’t mean that he took any of us aside to instruct us on how to be happy. I didn’t know him that well. He was an outstanding athlete. He made good grades. He was big and good looking. When he was a senior he said that he had come to the university with great hopes, but when graduation time came he expressed himself in words which I would not want to repeat, but in them he expressed total despair in the worst language possible. Why? Because he had gotten into a lot of immorality, and he said that he had always looked forward to college and graduation, but he was thoroughly disillusioned because he had taken advantage of all of the situations his popularity had brought to him, but he came to gradua-

tion thoroughly miserable.

Now the Psalmist began this Psalm by saying in so many ways, “I want to tell you how to be truly happy.” And the people of the world, and even a lot of people who profess to be Christians would say, as they read through this Psalm, “This man is crazy!” Why would they say that? Because what he was recommending would mean that the Bible would have to be their guide for daily living.

People say, “What does an old book like the Bible have to say about happiness in the twenty-first century? That might have worked two or three or four thousand years ago, but things are different today.” But the fact is that Psalm 119 is just as true, just as reliable, just as certain to point us to the way of true happiness, as it did when it was written probably three thousand years ago!

What do you think it will take to make you really happy? I am not asking, “What do you think that it will take to avoid all of the problems of life?” Nobody can do that. But the Bible talks about joy and peace in spite of all of the troubles that we might have. It speaks being able to rejoice always. It speaks of a peace that passeth all understanding. And these are some of the ingredients that make for true happiness.

What is the Psalmist prescription for true happiness? Let us begin by looking at verse 1. (Read.)

It tells us, and we are going to come across this again and again, that happiness is not a matter of what you have, but it is a matter of the way you live. Live the wrong way, and you will find unhappiness abounding in your life.

So the Psalmist indicates in this first verse those to whom he is writing. The KJV uses the word “undefiled.” The Hebrew would agree with the translation “blameless,” or even “perfect.” One lexicon suggests that this is probably a term of endearment for one beloved” (*Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies*, p. 461).

Now let’s stop and think about this for a moment.

We are reading God’s book. This is what the Bible is. We are not told who wrote this, but if we know the Bible’s description of itself we know

that “men of God spake as they were moved by the Spirit.” This is true of every book of the Bible. Men wrote the books, but they did it under the direction of the Holy Spirit, using their gifts, their knowledge as they had been taught by God, and yet guiding them as to the very words which they used.

So an “undefiled” person is one who is not only morally clean before men, but undefiled, blameless, and even perfect *before God!* And these are people upon whom God has set His love in a very special way.

Now you would know that there is only one way to describe people that way, and that is through the Gospel. So basically what the Psalmist is telling us here at the beginning of these 176 verses is that if you are going to find true happiness, genuine happiness, lasting happiness, the first thing that you have to get settled is your salvation. The only people who are “undefiled” before God are those who have been cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. It is through the Gospel that defiled sinners become undefiled before God, not because they are perfect, but because they have become new creatures, new people, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those in authority in our country are seeking to close the door and lock it to such talk. This is nonsense in the eyes of the world.

I was talking to a young couple one time about getting married. The girl was a professing Christian; the young man was not. And so I started to talk to him about the Lord. I hadn’t gone very far before he came at me with the question, “What does this have to do with getting married?” And just moments later he got up, opened the door of my study, walked out, and slammed the door behind him. They went across town and got someone else to marry them. But it wasn’t even a year before I heard that they were getting a divorce. The Gospel has everything to do with marriage. It has everything to do with life. And this Psalm wants us to know that it has everything to do with being happy—everything! True happiness, genuine happiness, lasting happiness cannot be found anywhere but in God, in Christ, and in the Word.

Now if this term is a term of endearment, that fits right in with the Gospel also, doesn’t it? Paul was giving expression to his own faith when he wrote to the Galatian churches, saying, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God,” or *in the Son of God*, “Who loved

me, and gave Himself for me.” What came first, His love, or the gift of Himself? Obviously His love did. Rom. 5:8 says the same thing, “But God commendeth His love toward us . . .”

So the only people who are really going to profit from this Psalm are those who know the Lord, and who are walking “in the law of the Lord.” What is “the law of the Lord”? Well, originally that word “law” was used of the law which God gave to Israel in the days of Moses. But as time went on, even before the Bible was completed, it was an expression which applied to all of God’s Word. Cf. John 15:25 where our Lord called a quotation from Psa. 69:4, “their law.” And in 1 Cor. 14:21 where Paul called a quotation from Isa. 28:11, 12 “the law.” Even Calvin in his sermons on the Psalm 119 said that he no doubt but that David used the term “law” to include all doctrine which God has given to His people.

In many respects verse 2 is a repetition of verse 1, using other words. “His testimonies” speaks of the fact that the Word has come to us from God Himself. He is the faithful and true witness, as is our Lord Jesus Christ. He stands behind His Word. Kidner says that it speak of the outspokenness of Scripture both as far as its high standards, as well as its warnings. And “His” is emphatic.

Keeping God’s testimonies and seeking Him with the whole heart are conditions of the happy life. If we stop keeping and fail to seek Him as we may have sought Him before, the joy goes.

In verse 3 we see that the behavior of verses 1 and 2 keeps us from sin because we are walking in his ways. God’s ways and our ways are not the same. See Isa. 55:8-9. Man’s ways lead to death according to Prov. 14:12 and 16:25.

Verse 4 indicates that the life of holiness is not optional for a child of God, but it has been commanded by the Lord. Happiness is to be found in submitting to the authority of the Lord, which is the idea in the commandments.

Verse 5 indicates that God’s ways are so far above and different from our ways that we are made to pray for God help in even setting our hearts in His direction. As “statutes” they are binding and unalterable.

Verse 6 brings up a subject which is mentioned a number of times in

Scripture, that of being “ashamed,” meaning disappointed, or finding that we have really taken the wrong way

In verses 7 and 8 we find that the Psalmist makes two vows to the Lord.

That which are called “judgments” here are sometimes translated as “ordinances.” Here the Psalmist was thinking of the decisions of an all-wise Judge, with an emphasis upon our relationships to each other. Our relationship with the Lord must come first; then our relationships with each other and with all people. This parallels the love for God first, and then love for our neighbors. Salvation not only changes our relationship with God, but it changes our relationship with people. Illus: the Hispanic who was baptized at Grace Community Church, was in the country illegally, and declared his intention to go back to Mexico and apply for legal entry.

In correcting the social ills of our country, our politicians and educators concentrate exclusively on the human level, and do nothing about a person’s relationship with God. This is the reverse order of things. God must come first, and then human relationship will be corrected.

Notice that the Psalmist mentioned “the whole heart” in verse 2, And “uprightness of heart” in verse 7.

**Concl:** So we have started on our journey through this glorious Psalm.

Let us make sure that we are in agreement with it, not only in what we read here, but in the application that needs to be made to our own lives.