

I Think Myself Happy!

In Acts 26:2, Paul said, *"I think myself happy...."* These are the words of the Apostle after he had been afforded an opportunity to speak his heart. I want to lift these simple words and make a few strong points. First, be well aware it is God's will that our loving God who aided Paul in granting him this ethereal attitude in even the most dire circumstances is also willing to give you "happy." If we would examine the Greek word that has been translated *happy* in Acts 26:2, we would see this word: "makarios" is also used abundantly, especially in Matthew five when Jesus was giving His Sermon on the Mount. In this passage, our Lord uses the same word, which has been translated into our English word, "blessed." So whether we say I think myself happy or I think myself blessed, we shall find how a person may be this state of mind and heart by inquiring of Christ.

1. Happy people don't pretend to have all the answers.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:3). In a world that often demands performance-based acceptance, people try to play mind games and politics to win others' approval. And one big "fake-out" that we are tempted to pull-off is trying to pretend we know everything about anything, when we don't. God will bless the person who says, "I don't know all the answers, but I know who does (God) and where to find answers (God's Word).

2. Happy people keep sin in check.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). The person who receives comfort in this life are those who, when they have sinned, are truly sorry for it. Examine Peter's response when the Lord with loving and compassionate, yet convicting eyes looked on his disciple after he had sinned, *"And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly"* (Luke 22:61, 62). The mourning process was a channel to bring about Peter's ultimate "happy." Soon after this, Peter was leading the church and preaching the famous sermon at Pentecost where thousands were converted. God not only uses damaged goods, He can refurbish and make something beautiful out of any life that is willing to mourn over sin committed (I John 1:9). Because of the endorphin-like comfort that comes to a person who has mourned over their sin and received forgiveness, the happy Christian keeps his sin in check.

3. Happy people are humble.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Are you already getting the impression that God's way to happiness is the opposite of the way of the world? If you are, you are perceiving correctly. The way up is down! *"For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"* (Luke 14:11). *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time"* (I Peter 5:6). The meek person gains the earth; the one who grabs for all this earth will miss the blessing thereof. *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves"* (Philippians 2:3).

4. Happy people are holy.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). God is saying that those who long after His righteous life shall indeed have it, and these in turn are happy people. It is not the person who abdicates holiness and seeks for all the gusto and foolish frolic this world has to offer, but is the person who says no to vice and hello to virtue that is truly happy! *"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness"* (I Chronicles 16:29).

5. Happy people are forgiving.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). While preparing for our Fall program, we were wondering what sermon I have preached in the past that would be appropriate to

place inside the visitor's welcome bag. I asked Mrs. Lord and Mrs. Hawkins what is the number one requested sermon that I have preached. By far and away, it was my message entitled, "Living in the Suburbs of Forgiveness." In this message I deal with the need to be willing to forgive others who have hurt you or people you love. The relief that comes with forgiveness is so overwhelming that one may end up wondering why one didn't do this earlier.

6. Happy people are Christ-like.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Christ is the essence of purity. When we emulate Him, we find the happy this world elusively seeks after, but will never find, until they find Jesus. Purity is the lifestyle of one who has confessed his sin and continues in a perpetual quest of holiness. The added blessing of the pure life is that the vision of God is granted. The pure in heart see God, His ways and His plan for their lives.

7. Happy people bring others together not apart.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). When bickering and fighting is proliferated, trust is eroded, suspicion is on every hand, and general unhappiness abounds. But when someone surrenders their ego and desire to always be on top, then the blessing of unity follows, which is the very atmosphere of peace! *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"* (Psalm 133:1).

8. Happy people keep Heaven in view.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mathew 5:10). We can take all offense and be Christ-like, knowing that all these offenses will be passed one day and God, who is just, will make everything work out in the end. The promise is granted in the following two verses of our text: *"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven..."* (Matthew 5:11 and 12). "Great is your reward in heaven" is what we look with anticipation toward. Too many times we are pre-occupied with this world as we see and know it. But we are not living for the here and now; we are living for the hereafter. Knowing it will be alright in the end should bring that overall attitude of praise to God. If we follow these basic rules from The Beatitudes, we like the apostle, will "think ourselves happy!"

- Pastor Pope -

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