

## BE HAPPY ALL THE TIME!

Text: Psalm 34

David sang the thirty-fourth Psalm after he was removed from the presence of the Philistine king of Gath Achish also know as Abimelech. David was on the run from Saul and now he was in danger when his cover was blown and he therefore feigns himself insane in the most humiliating manner. After escaping, he writes under inspiration this beautiful Psalm. Later in the history of Israel, the Israelites would use this as a song of personal encouragement when they, too, were in danger or had been captured by the enemy. The key verse I want to bring to your attention this morning is Psalm 34:1: *"I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth."* This verse, although I have read it many times, jolted me this past week. For you see, I, like many of us have said, "No one can be happy all the time. This is unreal." I have used the analogy that there can be no mountain top if it were not for the valleys between. But as I remove my reasoning and adjust my thoughts to God's words, I am have a difficult time defending my right to be blue and unhappy. I will often go to those three verses that say virtually the same thing: *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of His countenance (who is the health of my countenance, and my God)"* (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5). In retrospect, I see most clearly that those verses are telling me, don't stay down! Get up! God is your helper and emotional health during the darkest days when we are tempted to give in to depression. This truth is documented in Philippians 4:4 where Paul tells us to, *"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."* And also in I Thessalonians 5:18, *"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."*

The more I study this out in the Bible, the more I realize that happiness is a decision. It is easy to wallow in the "slough of despond" (term borrowed from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress), when God wants us to pull up and pull out of our personal "dark night of the soul" (term borrowed from Brother Lawrence). In my youthful days when rarely a week would go by without a match of tennis, I can recall coming in from a long, taxing, tiring day and collapsing in the easy chair and then I would receive a phone call that would change the complete way I felt

in one question, "Do you want to play tennis?" I might have felt I could not put one more foot in front of the other, because I was so tired, but now I suddenly feel this new burst of energy when I said a one word answer, "Yes!" So much has to do with our mental process that God's word says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). I feel I am on sacred ground when I read, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). Our Lord looked beyond the pain and shame of the crucifixion for the joy He would have at His finished work of redemption, which would situate Him back on the throne in glory along with those who accept His finished work along side of Him. And in this most amazing comparison the Bible says in essence, now do the same with this admonition, "Looking unto Jesus...."

In the Old Testament the word "happy" is translated from the Hebrew word "makarios," meaning supremely blest, fortunate or well off. In the New Testament the word "happy" is translated from the Greek word "esher" which means blessed or, in the exclamatory way we say how happy! In a brief overview of the word "happy" as used in the Bible, we observe we are to be happy over the birth of children (Genesis 30:13; Psalm 127:5). We should be happy for worthwhile employment (Psalm 128:2). We should be happy to serve Jesus as a servant serves the king (I Kings 10:8). We should be happy that we have God to help us in all our needs (Psalm 146:5). We should be happy for the wisdom God has given us (Proverbs 3:13, 18). We should be happy when we have done the right thing wisely (Proverbs 16:20). We should be happy that we have the Bible and the personal application of His word (Proverbs 29:18). We should be happy that God has forgiven our sins (Prov. 28:13, 14). We should be happy when we help others (John 13:17). We should be happy because we have found the will of God and are doing it (Acts 26:2). We should be happy for the freedom that we have in Jesus (Romans 14:22). We should be happy for the enduring quality that God puts in our life through trials (James 5:11; Job 5:17; I Peter 3:14; 4:14). Let us return to Psalm 34 and examine contextually five ways happiness may be inculcated in our daily lives:

### **1. Our confidence must be resolute.**

Psalm 34:2, "My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." When God is praised He distributes more of His goodness. And if we really knew how good God is, we could not help but praise Him more. This is one reason praise to God will last through all eternity. Let us

have confidence that God is good and all that He wants to do in our life, through the sunshine as well as the rain, is for our good and His glory! The Bible says, *"Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes"* (Psalm 119:68).

## **2. Our coalition must be reinforced**

Psalm 34:3. *"O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together."* We desperately need to get along with those whom the Lord has teamed us with in life. Away with the worldly philosophy that insinuates that our interactions with family, church or work is a "me" versus "them" approach. It is so important to God that we get along that He declares, *"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered"* (I Peter 3:7).

## **3. Our connection must be re-established.**

Psalm 34:4-11. In these verses you find these words and phrases: *"I sought...cried...the LORD heard...taste...they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."* There is probably no activity that Satan fights more than our prayer life. This is where the blows are made that change history and eternity. I have never known a happy Christian that was not also a person of a serious prayer life.

## **4. Our calibration must be reinvigorated.**

Psalm 34:12-16. In these verses we discover the man who has a quality life (Psalm 34:12). He or she is the person who exercises the proper use of their speech (Psalm 34:13). He or she is also one who purposely separates themselves from all known evil and incorporates all known good (Psalm 34:14-16). In a study that revealed the importance of calibration, this example was given: "You are going to work with a chemical that will explode when it gets in contact with air temperature above 50°C., so you adjust the room temperature before you start working, then check the temperature with an uncalibrated thermometer. If the thermometer gives a lower temperature than the true temperature, then you will be working in an unsafe environment." To make the application, our happiness

is going to “explode” into deep depression if we do not calibrate our life with the righteous life demanded by the Scriptures.

### **5. Our cautiousness must be relinquished.**

Psalm 34:17-22. In these verses deliverance from not some, but all our troubles is promised. God is furthermore promising healing of our broken heart and help with all our afflictions. The requirement is total abandonment to God. We must throw caution to the wind and fall into God’s open arms, *“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them”* (Deuteronomy 33:27). We must move off the shifting sand of man’s “best-to-offer” life and stand firm on the Rock of Ages, Who gives us our best life now and eternally. *“And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock”* (Exodus 33:21). *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding”* (Proverbs 3:5).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.