

God's Happy People and How to Be One!

Texts:

Deuteronomy 33:29: "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

Psalms 144:15: "Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD."

Psalms 149:2: "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King."

Happiness is something all of us would like to have. Men, women, boys and girls. All nationalities and, I would even go so far as to say, all religions desire happiness. The second sentence in the Declaration of Independence makes the bold attempt to assure us our right to happiness, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Why, our Founders even capitalized the "H" in happiness! "Happy" sung by Pharrell Williams was the most successful song of 2014, with 13.9 million units (sales plus equivalent streams) worldwide. At the 1989 Grammy Awards, "Don't Worry, Be Happy" written and performed by Bobby McFerrin won the awards for Song of the Year, Record of the Year, and Best Male Pop Vocal Performance. It hit the top music charts in no less than 23 different countries and it still made the top music chart in Poland as late as 2016 and it was first released in 1988! Just out of curiosity, I made a search of songs with the word "Happy" in the title. I was overwhelmed! Here's just a few that hit the charts in the 20th and 21st Centuries: "O Happy Day (a resurgence in the 1960s of an old hymn, performed by The Edwin Hawkins Singers)," "Be Happy," "Happy Trails (one of my personal favorites by Roy and Dale Evans)," "Happy People," "Life's a Happy Song (Mickey Rooney)," "Get Happy (Judy Garland)." "Happy Together (a Baby-boomer anthem by The Turtles)," and I was amazed at how many songs have been written simply entitled "Happy." Would you not agree with me, the world is longing for happiness? This world is suffering for what the Germans call "Sehnsucht." It comes from *sehnen*, which means 'to yearn or long for,' and *Sucht*, 'an obsession, craving or addiction.' In just two syllables the word is describing an 'inconsolable yearning for happiness and the unattainable'" (Fluent U, the German language and culture blog).

What is happiness? Happiness is defined as the quality or state of being happy. Therefore, what does happy mean? Here are some definitions: delighted, pleased or glad over something in particular; that which is characterized by or indicative of pleasure, contentment, or joy; when one is favored by God (the world uses the word "fortune" in the place of God). Many years ago I read, "The world lives for happiness. It takes happenings to make someone happy. The Christian lives for joy and joy comes from Jesus and since Jesus lives inside the Christian, he or

she has joy all the time.” The preacher I originally got this from was only one of many who have said it since. I have quoted this as well. As I have studied the Bible through the years I found that “happy” and “joy” are used throughout the Scriptures interchangeably. A few years ago, I said from the pulpit, “Are you happy today?” and after the services I was rebuked by a rather cantankerous brother complaining that I should never ask Christians if they are happy. Of course, he was referring to the belief that the word “happy” belongs to the world and “joy” belongs to Christians. I smile as I reflect back to this encounter and it was as though our brother was pushing that we are prohibited from happiness. Now, I will agree with the premise that our happiness is not to be determined by happenings. It is very true that the Christian carries within him or her “...joy unspeakable and full of glory” (I Peter 1:8c) through Jesus Christ our Lord. So if one insists there must be a division between happiness and joy, I say, through Christ, we have a multiplication of happiness and joy. In the early part of our Lord’s ministry on earth He preached a message, which thematically uses joy as the underpinning (Matthew 5:1-11, commonly called The Beatitudes). Nine times the Lord started verses with “Blessed are...” The word “blessed” comes to us from a Greek word makarios, meaning supremely blest or happy. We see our Lord promising us happiness beyond the normal understanding. I hesitate to use this phrase because it is so over used and it may be a stretch to make it a metaphor, but allow me to say, the word we translated “blessed” (as Jesus so used it) is “happiness on steroids.”

As I studied the words in the Bible that are synonymous with happy, here’s what I discovered: the word joy is used 165 times in the Bible; joyful is used 25 times; happy is used 28 times; bless is used 127 times; blessed is used 302 times; rejoice is used 192 times; rejoiced is used 47 times. That is a whopping 886 times where the words that depict happiness is used! When “blessed” refers to God in the Bible, the Hebrew the word “barak” is used which means to kneel; adore, praise, salute or thank. In Greek the word in the Bible for “bless” is eulogeo, which means to speak well of, i.e., to praise. When “bless” or “blessed” refers to man, in Hebrew the word esher is often used which is translated blessed or happy. In Greek, the word makarios is often used which means ecstatic happiness, which we have already defined.

Proverbs 3:13: “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.” Let us pray for the wisdom to recognize true happiness as we see it in the Scriptures and the understanding to know how to apply the principles of true happiness.

I. HAPPINESS COMES IN KNOWING THAT WE HAVE GOD TO HELP US IN ALL OUR NEEDS.

Psalm 146:5; Psalm 46:1; Philippians 4:19

II. HAPPINESS COMES THROUGH THE ENDURING QUALITY OF LIFE THAT GOD PUTS INTO US BY MEANS OF TRIALS.

James 5:11; Job 5:17; Acts 5:41; I Peter 3:14; I Peter 4:14

Hebrews 10:34: "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

I Thessalonians 4:13, 14. The dialogue of Martin Luther and Phillip Melanchthon at death's door illustrates the joy of the journey.

III. HAPPINESS COMES FROM A ROOT AND BEARS FRUIT.

A. Consider

Proverbs 14:13; Ecclesiastes 14:13; Ecclesiastes 2:2; Proverbs 15:15

B. Compare

Proverbs 17:22; Jeremiah 8:22; Matthew 9:12, 13; John 8:56; Genesis 21:6.

Psalms 92:4; Psalm 31:7; Isaiah 25:9; Psalm 118:24; Psalm 126:2

Conclusion

Psalms 51:1-8; Exodus 12:22, 23; I Chronicles 15:25-29. The Hebrew word raqad is translated "dancing" which means to stamp, i.e. to spring about (wildly or for joy); dance, jump, leap, skip.

II Samuel 6:14. The Hebrew word karar is translated "danced" which speaks of one that whirls or dances with or as if with the abandonment. This is similar to the dervish. David is among the ancients who knew what it was to find joy in the Lord. David's dance expressed his joy that was intrinsic. The Muslims dance the dervish to invoke ecstasy from an extrinsic vantage point. David whirled his majestic robe off with enthusiasm because he had joy. The heathen whirl with their garments in an extravagant show in order to get joy.

-Pastor Pope-