

SIN July 17, 83 Amc

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

Psalms 32

Who is the happiest person you know? Is he or she radiantly happy that he must go and tell everyone what has happened to him?

I'm sure that all of you are interested in the kind of happiness that Jesus had that he wants to give to you and to me. I think that we need to lay some foundations. You know if we are physically sick we have a way of determining symptoms that we are sick before we even find out what is the matter. Sometimes we feel a person's brow and say: "I believe you have a fever." We get the thermometer and measure the temperature and say: "You're sick because it shows here on the thermometer that you have fever."

Somehow I wish we had a spiritual thermometer that we could put into our lives and measure whether or not we are spiritually sick that would indicate the symptoms and sometimes give us the wrong. Often people will say to you---Well, you want to know the spiritual temperature of a person, go to them and talk to them about tithing or giving unto the church and they will give you a response as to whether or not they are spiritually sick.

There are so many misconceptions of what happiness is. Where do we get happiness? How do we get happy? Of course, you do not get it out of a bottle that's just a temporary escape. We do not get it

from drugs that is just another way to run away. They are crutches and they are incapable of helping us with happiness and when they wear away, we are most unhappy.

Happiness, some people think comes as a sudden discovery in life. We just find it---Oh, somewhere it has happened and I have found happiness. Maybe I have found a new girl friend and that's going to make me happy. We are miserable, frustrated, empty in life and suddenly we hope to make a discovery. No happiness is not something you just find; it is not something you just slip up on and discover accidentally.

In the National Geographics there was a story about a treasure ship off the coast of Florida which said there were millions of dollars of treasure. Some man had a map and he suspected that somewhere in a certain spot he would find it. He walked on the beach and kicked up the sand after a storm and he would kick up a coin once in a while. Now there are some people that in the same way think they are going to find happiness. They're just kicking along in life and suddenly it's going to pop up and grab you and there you are happy. It does not come that way. Happiness is not discovered like that.

There are other people who think that happiness is just a gift of God that is poured down from heaven like rain. You just say Lord, make me happy and just like rain coming down, the Lord will

One of the keys to happiness might be that of adjustment in which a person clearly is happy because he has learned to adjust to life, because life is like a river--it flows, it moves and how does the individual respond to change---what do we do. Do we say we cannot go on, we cannot handle this. The apostle Paul said: "I had a thorn in the flesh and it grinds upon me and I asked God three times to remove it"--But when God did not do it, Paul said: "I adjusted to it and I found happiness and peace with my thorn in the flesh." He adjusted to the life and we can apply that to our own lives. Something has happened to you and you say I prayed and I prayed and I prayed and God has not done anything about it. Well, what do you do then---You decide that God is not going to do anything about it and that you have to adjust to it. It may be something about your marriage, about your home, about your family and it may not be your fault at all---But I'm going to have faith, I'm going to pray and I'm going to keep on praying and I can adjust to the thorn in the flesh. I cannot change the circumstances, but I have faith to believe that this will be what I need to do; and strength will come, the grace of God will come and there will be an availability of grace to help me as I surrender to God in this matter.

This morning, very briefly, let us look at David who had something to come up into his life and to awaken the joy bells and they are ringing and he is again happy and he is going to promise the Lord that he is going to tell others about his salvation. He is now doing

pour a bucketful of happiness upon your life. Now we know that even rain does not come that way. You do not say Lord, dump some rain on this field and save my crop or my flower garden. He does not do it that way. God works in a set of natural law and a framework where there are certain movements in which there are high pressures and low pressures and moist air and then He brings a rainstorm. God has a method and a way of giving rain. He does not just pitch it down to us every time somebody asks Him for it.

In the same way God has a certain structure and principle that he applies happiness. It's not going to be showered down in this way. There are certain forces that have to start working in your life---there are certain things that have to begin to happen before they understand.

Every man is in the pursuit of happiness itself. He says I'm tired of being miserable; I am going to make myself happy even if it kills me. I am going to be happy. Now you cannot get happiness in a forced way. Why, it would be like a dog chasing its tail---the harder he chases, the more exhausted he gets and he never is able to catch his tail.

Happiness is really not a product that comes from pursuing something or the result of somebody else's doing. There are many keys to happiness. We could discuss several of them with you.

his best to tell what happened to him in this 32nd Psalm. His heart is just leaping up within him, he has the peace of God, his sins have been washed away, he has been pardoned, he has been cleansed, he has been forgiven, he has been restored, he has been given a new heart and his supreme happiness is now found in God alone.

David said (one) of the (keys) to (happiness) is that of holiness. Now you might react to that word---I do not know whether you do or not. Who wants to be a holy person? If someone said to you: "You're such a holy person." Would you resent it? We feel that holiness is something that belongs to the other world, that is unreal in a way, that it's not human or natural.

But holiness is a good word---It is a very useful word today; that is, it should come back into use. The word "holy" is rooted in the Anglo-Saxon word (whole) meaning the whole person. For example, so we have the term in medicine today---"holistic". Holistic medicine---Not looking at just one dimension of human personality, but that means that in medicine the doctor is going to look at the (whole man) the physical and the spiritual parts---he is going to look at the whole person.

And it is a good term for us as in the christian realm---the holistic person---the whole person. Certainly then we would say the happy person is the person who has become whole---the person really who has dealt with life in terms of all the dimensions of his personality. So I want us to think about what happiness is rooted

in and what it is not rooted in. It is not in the external physical circumstances. Even an animal has an appetite that can be satisfied but there is a spiritual side to man and unless we have that other side, the spiritual part developed to its fullest, we cannot be a whole person; we cannot be a happy person.

When we think from the Bible the example of Paul, as I have mentioned, about the thorn in the flesh as an example of happiness--- Paul (seemed) to miss everything in life physically and materially Paul was poor, he was shipwrecked, he was beaten, he suffered, he had afflictions; he certainly did not have wealth or prominence or comfort or luxury or high office---none of these things for which men strive and seek---but the negative circumstances of life were not the things that controlled Paul. Paul was supremely happy. ✓

Now as we take the illustration of David today, here is a man who had everything, just the opposite of Paul. He had all that life could give, everything that every human being struggles for. He had prominence, he had risen to the top of the ladder, but he had started at the very bottom. Remember, he was a rural shepherd boy from Palestine. From that humble beginning he went up the way to the top through the military conquests, military leadership and finally to the highest position in the world of that day. David was king of a nation. ✓

Now kings lived in palaces, they had conveniences, they had

servants, they had physical pleasures, they had physical comforts, they had clothes. He had the love, the admiration and respect of his people. His was a reign of peace and prosperity, free from problems, invasions and conflicts. He had a family and children. He lived in a day when men married more than one wife and he had several wives.

Then he went through that syndrome of an older man; now he is wealthy, he is successful but David wants a young wife. He sees a beautiful woman bathing and his heart leaps within him at her beauty, her youth and her loveliness. The old nature takes over and he longs for her and he lusts after her and he commits adultery with her. He wants her for his wife so he actually works out a scheme killing her husband that she might be free to marry him---And she marries him and everything that the man David seemingly wanted, he had. He had everything but happiness.

Why did David write about his utter misery. He was absolutely in the dark. Read this story. Do you see anything in it that's contemporary? Do you see anything in it that sounds like situations today? David describes his former condition. He takes pains to tell us about the dark memory before he is able to sing the song of joy and happiness. He mentions at least three things that caused him misery and just killed all the happiness that he had in his life.

V3  
I. My bones seemed to rot within me, he says.

I just felt old before my time. This just weighted down upon me.

I do not know what it is; I just could not function physically; I became ill and it just tore me up all the time. Now, that's most contemporary isn't it? A lot of people express their feelings in the same way.

Most pastors are familiar with that phrase in Lady MacBeth in the sickness, the queen in one of Shakespeare's stories. She had taken part in a murder and it had so stained her soul that her hands looked bloody all the time. She washes and washes and cries "Out, out" but she cannot wash it away and she becomes physically sick because of an inner sickness of the guilt of sin and blood from the murder she has committed.

David said I felt like I was rotting; my bones were rotting - groaning inside me.

V.H.A.  
✓

II. David said: "The hand was heavy upon me." /

I felt the guilt pressing down upon me. The heaviness of spirit was upon me and he says, (depression) is what we call it really today, I am just down, I cannot get up. A person says I take a little medicine to get me up, but as soon as the medicine wears off---you've heard that expression---wears off, then I crash down again. I am down again. So here is a man, deep down inside there is something working on him. Physically, the man was satisfied; he ought to have been happy, but he was spiritually sick



inside. That was the problem with David.

V.4 B ✓  
III. "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer" v. 4.

In other words, a great drought came (inside him)---everything dried up in me. Did you ever feel that life is dried up on you? Your vision is dried up, your dreams, your goals have dried up. You do not have any motivation, you do not have any drive, you do not have any purpose in life because it has all dried up inside you.

That happens to churches; it happens to individuals. Now that reads something like a psychologist who's writing about something. No, that is the ageless wisdom of the word of God. Here is a man named David over 2700 years ago with this marvelous insight into what has and was happening to him.

What was wrong with him? He was not happy. He did not know it and sometimes we do not know it, but he was suffering from the guilt of sin---secret sin, hidden sin, unconfessed sin, unacknowledged sin. He was not even convicted of his sin.

He did not even feel that he had done anything really wrong when he stole another man's wife and had the husband killed. It was a pattern and part of that day.

Anybody in power as a king had the authority over anybody's

life. He could command that people be killed. He could take anybody he wanted as wife. He was really not quite conscious that he had gone against the laws of God and against his conscience. He had not come to grips with this sin.

But it was inside, eating on him, working on him all the time. It affected him physically, it affected him socially, it affected everything he did every day.

Now I don't know if you have ever been through the country or looked into some of the yards around town---people have these snowballs planted, you know, this shrubby and you see that this is a showy shrub with great big white blossoms. Now every once in a while you'll notice that there will be purple snowballs---the same variety of shrub, but people say you take chemicals like iron oxide or put a brick down in the ground, scratch around the roots, and the chemical will go into the soil and the roots will pick it up and it will come up the plant and color the flowers. It changes them and makes them purple.

Now, we know that this happens; we know that it is so.

We also know that it is so that those things buried in our lives, in our subconscious, the uncleanness, the sin that has long been forgotten, the things that we have tried out of our lives---

hatred, bitterness, resentment, acts of immorality, sins of selfishness--- these are buried. They were buried there long ago. But the guilt feeds up into the stream of life and affects the flowering of life every day and discolors life every day---So we have coming a purple snowball, not a white one and we have coming in our lives that guilt.

Now David was saying this centuries ago. Now suddenly in this century in which we live, we have people Dr. Dobson <sup>Snowball</sup> and these other noted men, trying to tell us what is the matter. It is that awful guilt feeling. They say come on in and let us talk about your past, let us dig it out, let us get these secret things out of your subconscious. Let us pull it out and find whether it was hatred you had toward your mother, whether it was resentment you had toward a brother, or what it is in your background that scars you that leaves that mark inside of you. You do not even know what it is. But let us get it out and let us talk about it. Because that is what is making you sick. That is what is making you miserable - that is why you are not happy. That is what the psychologists are telling us today.

Now that was David's problem - but he says, that is the way I used to be. And he said a wonderful thing has happened to me and made me happy.

And he starts this Psalm off with the word "Blessed". I am blessed of God. That word can be translated "happy"... and that is what it means. He is blessed of God, he is so happy. And it is not just the happiness of bubbling over, and out-going personality. But it is a real happiness that comes from a person being in prison for life, and suddenly they are

let loose and freed. It is a happiness that a person has - he has been suffering from a terrible disease, a fatal disease - it has been a shadow over him. And now suddenly, the cure to make him whole has come. And David says, this kind of blessedness, this kind of happiness, has come to me because at least three things have happened in my life.

Now we have talked about the things that brought his misery, and the things that destroyed his happiness. Now let us look and see at two or three things that caused him to say I am happy again.

V.L.  
1-  
✓ First, my transgression is forgiven. Transgression is a translation of the Hebrew word meaning to cross over. Transgression even in the Anglo-Saxon means cross over - go over. David is saying, I discovered that I had gone over the boundaries, over the fences, that God had put in his moral universe. He has put a fence out here that says "No Trespassing". But I had gone over that fence to the other side. Transgressing the law and the fences of God.

My conscience rebuked me. Consciously or unconsciously - God rebuked me consciously or unconsciously. I was in contradiction with the very structure of the universe. I crossed over. I had gone out of bounds.

But he said, my transgressions have been forgiven or lifted off literally.

In "Pilgrim's Progress" - John Bunyan talks about the Christian with his burden - when he is forgiven, he says, the burden is taken off and he stands up straight.

David said that is the first thing that happened to me - how changed I am since my transgressions are forgiven. Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven - V. 1. Oh how happy we can be. You can stand up straight - no longer is the burden upon you. No longer is there a conflict with God about morality.

V. 2 / 2  
Second blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.

Now iniquity is another Hebrew word which means in our language - crooked, distorted, or twisted.

Literally, I could take a piece of paper this morning and twist it. This is what life does to us. Born into the world of sin, we have sinful nature in us. It starts out as soon as we know right from wrong. We get twisted, we get distorted toward wrong and right, until at last the life that God made is all messed up.

A good translation of the Hebrew - on the word iniquity is being messed up or twisted. Distorted from what God made you to be and wants you to be.

You say to me - how do we get into this kind of mess.

There is only one answer - that is, what sin does.

And God did not impute to me means that God did not hold me to blame for this mess. Instead, he marked the bill - "Paid In Full". God said, I will take this twisted, sinful life, and give it to Jesus Christ. And I will take from Jesus Christ a perfect whole life, and so your iniquity is not imputed to you. It is given to Jesus. And Jesus' wholeness is given back to you.

That is what David said happened to him. God had taken this messed up life and made it whole.

V.I.I  
3 ✓  
Third, my sin is covered.

Now in the original language - sin is missing the mark. That is the picture of an archer standing in front of a target. He takes his bow, pulls back the arrow, aims at the bull's eye and lets go.

Now someone is standing by his side. Perhaps it might be you - and you are watching. And what is your comment. You missed! He tries again. And you say - you missed. And then you say, let me try. So you aim, but you are still missing.

Sin is missing the mark in life. The feeling that I was made for something other than the way I am, and the way I am living. There is something in life that I am missing out on. I am missing the mark.

Now I know there are some people who say, if I could get another job I would be happy. I get another job, but I am not happy.

If I could just get another lover, and have another affair with another person, to associate with. And so that happens, and we have missed again and are still not happy.

If I could get a new house - if we could just get our house built and paid for. We would be happy. Missed again.

In the moral realm, we say, I am going to be a better person. I am going to quit this business of wrecking my life. And I missed again. Aiming and missing. But God can cover my sin.

Suppose I take a blackboard and write on it the sins people commit. And I begin to name them off - 1, 2, 3, 4. And write them all over this board. And then you say - these are the sins that people commit. And they are the sins that I have committed too. Now watch me, I will take an eraser on this board, and I will erase them. And I ask you - where have the sins gone. They are gone, you say,

V.7 - covered - My Hiding Place -

but where? They are gone forever. Will they come back on the board. No, they are gone forever. Yes, it is clean. That is what God does for sin. He covers it, he erases it, he removes it - as far as the East is from the West. And they can never meet us. And he forgives us of our sins through his grace and his love. Jesus did this on the cross - and our sins are sent in that direction. And we have gone in that direction. And we will never see them again.

So blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven - to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. Whose sins are covered. Now it takes effort - and it takes initiative on our part. To discover this kind of happiness.

Dr. Norman Vincent Peele one day was in Florida some years ago. He met a man who had been driven down from the North with a private shoffer. And three nurses to be with him around the clock. He talked to the man's Doctor, who said there is nothing wrong with that man. I do not have any medicine that will help him. He is (self-centered) - he is (full of sin) And he is worried about himself - and he makes himself sick. And so Dr. Peele was sitting on the porch one day at the resort. And there was an older woman trying to get a chair up the steps. She had one of the runners hooked under the banister. And could not get it loose. She was having a hard time.

Dr. Peele said to that man, go over there and help that woman. He said, I can't, I'm sick. Oh, he said, go on - you can do it. The man said why don't you do it - you are (much younger than I am). Finally the man hobbled over there, groaned and grunted. And then he held the chair for her as she sat down. And just thanked him, and thanked him.



He came back and he sat down. He said how do you feel, well, I don't feel as bad as I thought I did. See there, help people. I told you, do something in the name of God. Oh that is silly. Dr. Peele said, well the Bible says, he that would save his life, would lose it. And he that loseth his life shall find it. And that is what you have just done. The man says, well, I have heard that all of my life. But I never knew what it meant. I do feel better.

And he concluded his story - but he was back down at that resort a couple of years later. And he saw an old man coming down the hall - just strolling along. He grabbed him by the arm and he said, "Hello, Dr. Peele." And he said I looked at him - it can't be - it is you! where are your nurses. I don't need my nurses. I am all well now. I am as sound as a dollar. I feel great. I have been doing what Jesus said to do. And it is just that simple - my friends - to discover happiness is to do what Jesus says for us to do.

V. 5 - He made things right with God!

The key to happiness - if I would give anything in the world to be happy, I must try to give my life to Jesus. And to his work, and I will be happy. And today, how did this wonderful thing happen to David. He tells us, I felt this great conviction. I felt my great distress, I felt my depression - it was on me day and night. And he said, I will confess it all to the Lord. I will come and confess it all to the Lord. I will talk to God about it. I will tell him how I feel. I will tell him what I have done. And I will ask him to forgive me. And, thou forgavest. God reached down and forgave me of my sins. My iniquities. And gave me a song, and gave me peace.

V. 11  
V. 11 David can say, I say to you there is no happiness until we are right with God. We can have everything. The satisfaction of the physical man. We can have three nurses around the clock, taking care of us. But until we come to a confession and a repentance of faith, we will never find supreme happiness.

Would you this morning come and say I give myself to Jesus Christ as Lord. I give myself to this church, I move my letter, I come for baptism, I come for rededication.

Whatever your cry is - ask him to forgive you. Tell him like it is in your heart. He will hear you, love you, and understand and forgive you. If you are already a Christian, this is the day for you to come and take your stand in the church. And join with the Lord's work. Whatever your decision, you ought to make it - and will you make it today?