

J.C. Ryle:

**"Blessed [Happy] are the people whose God is the LORD."
Psalm 144:15**

An atheist was once addressing a crowd of people in the open air. He was trying to persuade them that there was no God and no devil, no heaven, and no hell, no resurrection, no judgment, and no life to come. He advised them to throw away their Bibles, and not to pay attention to what preachers said. He recommended them to think as he did, and to be like him. He talked boldly. The crowd listened eagerly. It was "the blind leading the blind." Both were falling into the pit (Matthew 15:14).

In the middle of his address a poor old woman suddenly pushed her way through the crowd, to the place where he was standing. She stood before him. She looked him full in the face. "Sir," she said, in a loud voice, "Are you happy?" The atheist looked scornfully at her, and gave her no answer. "Sir," she said again, "I ask you to answer my question. Are you happy? You want us to throw away our Bibles. You tell us not to believe what preachers say about Christ. You advise us to think as you do, and be like you. Now before we take your advice we have a right to know what good we will gain by it. Do your fine new ideas give you a lot of comfort? Do you yourself really feel happy?"

The atheist stopped, and attempted to answer the old woman's question. He stammered, and shuffled, and fidgeted, and endeavored to explain his meaning. He tried hard to return to the subject. He said, he "had not come to preach about happiness." But it was of no use. The old woman stuck to her point. She insisted on her question being answered, and the crowd took her side. She pressed him hard with her inquiry, and would take no excuse. And at last the atheist was obliged to leave, and sneak off in the confusion. His conscience would not let him stay: he dared not say that he was happy.

The old woman showed great wisdom in asking the question that she did. The argument she used may seem very simple, but in reality it is one of the most powerful that can be employed. It is a weapon that has more effect on some minds than the most elaborate reasoning by some of our great apologists. Whenever a man begins to speak against and despise old Bible Christianity, thrust home at his conscience the old woman's question. Ask him whether his new views make him feel comfortable within himself. Ask Him whether he can say, with honesty and sincerity, that he is happy. The grand test of a man's faith and religion is, "Does it make him happy?"

Let me now warmly invite every reader to consider the subject of this paper. Let me warn you to remember that the salvation of your soul, and nothing less, is closely bound up with the subject. The heart cannot be right in the sight of God which knows nothing of happiness. That man or woman cannot be in a safe state of soul who feels nothing of peace within.

There are three things which I purpose to do, in order to clear up the subject of happiness. I ask special attention to each one of them. And I pray the Spirit of God will apply it to all the

souls of those who read this paper.

I. Let me point out some things which are absolutely essential to happiness.

II. Let me expose some common mistakes about the way to be happy.

III. Let me show the way to be truly happy.

I. First of all I have to "point out some things which are absolutely essential to true happiness."

Happiness is what all mankind wants to obtain: the desire of it is deeply planted in the human heart. All men naturally dislike pain, sorrow, and discomfort. All men naturally like ease, comfort, and bliss. All men naturally hunger and thirst after happiness. Just as the sick man longs for health, and the prisoner of war for liberty--just as the parched traveler in hot countries longs to see the cooling fountain, or the ice-bound polar voyager the sun rising above the horizon--just in the same way does poor mortal man long to be happy. But how few consider what they really mean when they talk of happiness! How vague and indistinct and undefined the ideas of most men are on the subject! They think some are happy who in reality are miserable: they think some are gloomy and sad who in reality are truly happy. They dream of a happiness which in reality would never satisfy their nature's wants. Let me try this day to throw a little light on the subject.

True happiness "is not perfect freedom from sorrow and discomfort." Let that never be forgotten. If it were so there would be no such thing as happiness in the world. Such happiness is for angels who have never fallen, and not for man. The happiness I am inquiring about is the kind that a poor, dying, sinful creature may hope to attain. Our whole nature is defiled by sin. Evil abounds in the world. Sickness, and death, and change are daily doing their sad work on every side. In such a state of things the highest happiness man can attain to on earth must necessarily be a mixed thing. If we expect to find any literally perfect happiness on this side of the grave, we expect what we will not find.

True happiness "does not consist in laughter and smiles." The face is very often a poor index of the inward man. There are thousands who laugh loud and are merry in the company of others, but are wretched and miserable in private, and almost afraid to be alone. There are hundreds who are solemn and serious in their demeanor, whose hearts are full of solid peace. A poet once wrote that our smiles are not worth very much, he said, "A man may smile and smile and be a villain."

And the eternal Word of God teaches us that "Even in laughter the heart may ache" (Proverbs 14:13). Don't tell me of smiling and laughing faces: I want to hear of something more than that when I ask whether a man is happy. A truly happy man no doubt will often show his happiness in his face; but a man may have a very merry face and yet not be happy at all.

Of all deceptive things on earth nothing is so deceptive as mere fun and cheerfulness. It is a hollow empty show, utterly devoid

of substance and reality. Listen to the brilliant talker in society, and mark the applause which he receives from an company: follow him to his own private room, and you will very likely find him plunged in sad despondency. I know a man who confessed that even when he was thought to be most happy he often wished that he were dead. Look at the smiling beauty at the party, and you might suppose she never knew what it was like to be unhappy; see her the next day at her own home, and you may probably find her angry at herself and everybody else besides. No, worldly fun is not real happiness! There is a certain pleasure about it, I do not deny. There is an animal excitement about it, I make no question. There is a temporary elevation of spirits about it, I freely concede. But don't call it by the sacred name of happiness. The most beautiful cut flowers stuck in the ground do not make a garden. When ordinary glass is called diamond, and tinsel is called gold, then, and not till then can people who can laugh and smile be called happy men. Once there was a man who consulted a physician about his depression. The physician advised him to keep up his spirits by going to hear the great comic actor of the day. "You should go and hear Matthews. He will make you good." "Sorry to say, sir," was the reply, "I am Matthews himself!"

To be truly happy "the highest wants of a man's nature must be met and satisfied." The requirements of his curiously wrought constitution must be all met. There must be nothing about him that cries, "Give, give," but cries in vain and gets no answer. Animals are happy as long as they are warm and fed. The little infant looks happy when it is clothed, and fed, and well, and in its mother's arms. And why? Because it is satisfied. And just so it is with man. His highest wants must be met and satisfied before he can be truly happy. All needs must be met. There must be no void, no empty places, no unsupplied cravings. Till then he is never truly happy.

And what are "man's principal wants?" Does he only have a body? No: he has something more! He has a soul. Does he only have the five senses? Can he do nothing but hear, and see, and smell, and taste, and feel? No: he has a thinking mind and a conscience! Does he have any consciousness of any world but that in which he lives and moves? He has. There is still a small voice within him which often makes itself heard: "That this is not all there is to life! There is world unseen: there is a life beyond the grave." Yes! it is true. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. All men know it: all men feel it, if they would only speak the truth. It is utter nonsense to pretend that food and clothing and earthly material wealth alone can make men happy. The soul has needs. There are needs of the conscience. There can be no true happiness until these wants are satisfied.

To be truly happy "a man must have sources of happiness which are not dependent on anything in this world." There is nothing on earth which is not stamped with the mark of instability and uncertainty. All the good things that money can buy are but for a moment: they either leave us or we are obliged to leave them. All the sweetest relationships in life are liable to come to an end: death may come any day and cut them off. The man whose happiness depends entirely on things here below is like him who builds his house on sand.

Don't tell me of your happiness if it daily depends on the

uncertainties of the earth. Your home may be rich in comforts; your wife and children may be all you could desire; your incomes may be amply sufficient to meet all your wants. But oh, remember, if you have nothing more than this to look to, that you are standing on the edge of a cliff! Your joy may be deep and earnest, but it is fearfully short-lived. It has no root. It is not true happiness.

To be really happy "a man must be able to look at every part of his life without uncomfortable feelings." He must be able to look at the past without guilty fears; he must be able to look around him without discontent; he must be able to look forward without anxious dread. He must be able to sit down and think calmly about things past, present, and to come, and feel prepared. The man who has a weak side in his condition--a side that he does not like looking at or considering--that man is not really happy.

Do not talk to me of your happiness, if you are unable to look steadily either before or behind you. Your present position may be easy and pleasant. You may find many sources of joy and gladness in your profession, your dwelling-place, your family, and your friends. Your health may be good, your spirits may be cheerful. But stop and think quietly over your past life. Can you reflect calmly on all the omissions and commissions of by-gone years? How will they bear God's inspection? How will you answer for them at the last judgment? And then look forward and think on the years yet to come. Think of the certain end towards which you are heading; think of death; think of judgment; think of the hour when you will meet God face to face. Are you ready for it? Are you prepared? Can you look forward to these things without alarm? Oh, be very sure if you cannot look comfortably at any time in your life but the present, then your boasted happiness is a poor unreal thing! It is but a fancy and decorated coffin--fair and beautiful on the outside, but nothing but bones and decay within. It is a mere thing of a day, like Jonah's gourd. It is not real happiness.

I ask my readers to fix in their minds the account of things essential to happiness, which I have attempted to give. Dismiss from your thoughts the many mistaken notions on this subject, they are like counterfeit money. To be truly happy, the wants of your soul and conscience must be satisfied; to be truly happy, your joy must be founded on something more than this world can give you; to be truly happy, you must be able to look on every side--above, below, behind, before--and feel that all is right. This is real, genuine happiness: this is the happiness I have in view when I urge your attention to the subject of this paper.

II. In the next place, "let me expose some common mistakes about the way to be happy."

There are several roads which are thought by many to lead to happiness. In each of these roads thousands and tens of thousands of men and women are continually traveling. Each fancies that if he could only attain all he wants he would be happy. Each fancies, if he does not succeed, that the fault is not in his road, but in his own lack of luck and good fortune. And everyone seems ignorant of the fact that they are chasing after shadows. They have started in a wrong direction: they are seeking that which can never be found in the place where they

seek it.

I will mention by name some of the principal delusions about happiness. I do it in love, and kindness, and compassion to men's souls. I believe it to be a public duty to warn people against cheats, quacks, and impostors. Oh how much trouble and sorrow it might save my readers, if they would only believe what I am going to say!

It is an utter mistake to suppose the "position and fame alone" can give happiness. The kings, presidents, and rulers of this world are not necessarily happy men. They have troubles and crosses, which none know but themselves; they see a thousand evils, which they are unable to remedy; they are slaves working in golden chains, and have less real liberty than any in the world; they have burdens and responsibilities laid upon them, which are a daily weight on their hearts. The Roman Emperor Antonine often said, that "the imperial power was an ocean of miseries." Queen Elizabeth, when she heard a milk-maid singing, wished that she had been born to a lot like her's. Never did the poet write a truer word than when he said, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

It is an utter mistake to suppose that "riches alone" can give happiness. They can enable a man to command and possess everything but inward peace. They cannot buy a cheerful spirit and a light heart. There is anxiety in the getting of them, and anxiety in the keeping of them, anxiety in the using of them, and anxiety in the disposing of them, anxiety in the gathering, and anxiety in the scattering of them. He is a wise man who said that "money" was only another name for "trouble."

It is an utter mistake to suppose that "learning and science alone" can give happiness. They may occupy a man's time and attention, but they cannot really make him happy. They that increase knowledge often "increase sorrow:" the more they learn, the more they discover their own ignorance (Ecclesiastes 1:18). The heart wants something as well as the head: the conscience needs food as well as the intellect. All the secular knowledge in the world will not give a man joy and gladness, when he thinks about sickness, and death, and the grave. They that have climbed the highest, have often found themselves solitary, dissatisfied, and empty of peace. The learned Selden, at the close of his life, confessed that all his learning did not give him such comfort as four verses of Titus (2:11-14):

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

It is an utter mistake to suppose that "idleness alone" can give happiness. The laborer who gets up at five in the morning, and goes out to work all day in a cold clay ditch, often thinks, as

he walks past the rich man's house, "What a fine thing it must be to have no work to do." Poor fellow! He doesn't know what he is saying. The most miserable creature on earth is the man who has nothing to do. Work for the hands or work for the mind is absolutely essential to human happiness. Without it the mind feeds upon itself, and the whole inward man becomes diseased. The machinery within "will" work, and without something to work upon, will often wear itself to pieces. There was no idleness in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had to "work it and take care of it." There will be no idleness in heaven: God's "servants will serve Him." Oh, be very sure the idlest man is the man most truly unhappy! (Genesis 2:15; Revelation 22:3)

It is an utter mistake to suppose that "pleasure-seeking and amusement alone" can give happiness. Of all roads that men can take in order to be happy, this is the one that is most completely wrong. Of all weary, flat, dull, and unprofitable ways of spending life, this exceeds them all. To think of a dying creature, with an immortal soul, expecting happiness in feasting and reveling--in dancing and singing--in dressing and visiting--in party-going and gambling--in races and fairs--in hunting and shooting--in crowds, in laughter, in noise, in music, in wine! Surely it is a sight that is enough to make the devil laugh and the angels weep. Even a child will not play with its toys all day long. It must have food. But when grown up men and women think to find happiness in a constant round of amusement they sink far below a child.

I place before every reader of this paper these common mistakes about the way to be happy. I ask you to mark them well. I warn you plainly against these pretended short cuts to happiness, however popular they may be. I tell you that if you believe that any one of them can lead you to true peace you are entirely deceived. Your conscience will never feel satisfied; your immortal soul will never feel easy: your whole inward man will feel uncomfortable and unhealthy. Take any one of these roads, or take all of them, and if you have nothing besides to look to, you will never find happiness. You may travel on and on and on, and the wished for object will seem far away at the end of each stage of life as when you started. You are like one pouring water into a sieve, or putting money into a bag with holes. You might as well try to make an elephant happy by feeding him with a grain of sand a day, as try to satisfy that heart of yours with position, riches, learning, idleness, or pleasures.

Do you doubt the truth of all that I am saying to you? I dare say you do. Then let us turn to the great Book of human experience, and read over a few lines out of its solemn pages. You will have the testimony of a few competent witnesses on the great subject I am calling to your attention.

A king will be our first witness: I mean Solomon, King of Israel. We know that he had power, and wisdom, and wealth, far exceeding that of any ruler of his time. We know from his own confession, that he tried the great experiment of seeing how far the good things of this world can make men happy. We know from the record of his own hand, the result of this curious experiment. He writes it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for the benefit of the whole world, in the book of Ecclesiastes. Never, surely, was the experiment tried under such favorable circumstances: never was any one so likely to succeed as the Jewish King. Yet

what is Solomon's testimony? You have it in his melancholy words: "I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after wind" (Ecclesiastes 1:14).

A famous French lady will be our next witness: I mean Madam De Pompadour. She was the friend and favorite of Louis the Fifteenth. She had unbounded influence at the Court of France. She had everything that money could buy. Yet what does she have to say?

What a situation is that of those who are great! They only live in the future, and are only happy in hope. There is no peace in ambition. I am always gloomy, and so often very unreasonable. The kindness of the King, the respect of the court officials, the devotion of my servants, and the faithfulness of a large number of friends--motives like these, which ought to make me happy, no longer affect me. I no longer have feelings for those things and persons which once pleased me. I have magnificently furnished my house in Paris: well; it pleased me for two days!

My residence in the French countryside is charming; and yet I cannot endure being there alone. Kindhearted people relate to me all the news and adventures of Paris: they think I listen, but when they are done I ask them what they said. In a word, I do not live: I am dead before my time. I have no interest in the world. Everything conspires to make my life bitter. My life is a continual death.

To such testimony I do not need to add a single word. (Sinclair's Anecdotes and Aphorisms, p. 33)

A famous German writer will be our next witness: I mean Goethe. It is well known that he was almost idolized by many during his life. His works were read and admired by thousands. His name was known and honored, wherever German was read, all over the world. And yet the praise of man, of which he reaped such an abundant harvest, was utterly unable to make Goethe happy. "He confessed, when about eighty years old, that he could not remember being in a really happy state of mind even for a few weeks together; and that when he wished to feel happy, he had to veil his self-consciousness." (Sinclair's Anecdotes and Aphorisms, p. 280)

An English poet will be our next witness: I mean Lord Byron, if ever there was one who ought to have been happy according to the standard of the world, Lord Byron was the man. He began life with all the advantages of English rank and position. He had splendid abilities and powers of mind, which the world soon discovered and was ready to honor. He had a sufficiency of means to gratify every lawful wish. Humanly speaking, there seemed nothing to prevent him from enjoying life and being happy. Yet it is a notorious fact that Byron was a miserable man. Misery stands out in his poems: misery creeps out in his letters. Weariness, boredom, disgust, and discontent appear in all of his ways. He is an awful warning that rank, and title, and literary fame, alone, are not sufficient to make a man happy.

A man of science will be our next witness: I mean Sir Humphrey Davy. He was a man eminently successful in the line of life which he chose, and deservedly so. A distinguished philosopher--the inventor of the famous safety-lamp which bears his name, and has preserved many a poor miner from death by fiery explosion. A member of the ruling class in England and President of the Royal Society--his whole life seemed a continual career of prosperity. If education alone were the road to happiness, this man at least ought to have been happy. Yet what was the true record of Davy's feelings? We have it in his own sad journal at the latter part of his life. He describes himself in two painful words: "Very miserable!"

A man of humor and pleasure will be our next witness: I mean Lord Chesterfield. He will speak for himself: his own words in a letter will be his testimony.

I have seen the silly cycle of business and pleasure, and have no use for any of it. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which in truth is very low; whereas those who lack experience always overrate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare; but I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machine, and I have seen and smelt the burning lard candles which illuminate the whole decoration, to the astonishment and admiration of the ignorant audience. When I reflect on what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I cannot persuade myself that all that frivolous hurried movement and pleasure of the world had any reality. I look on all that is past as one of those romantic dreams which the drug opium can bring about, and I do by no means wish to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the evading dream.

These sentences speak for themselves. I need not add to them one single word.

The Statesmen and Politicians who have swayed the destinies of the world, ought by good right to be our last witnesses. But I refrain, in Christian love, to bring them forward. It makes my heart ache when I run my eye over the list of names famous in history, and think how many have worn out their lives in a breathless struggle after office and distinction. How many of our greatest men have died of broken hearts--disappointed, disgusted, and tried with constant failure! How many have left on record some humbling confession that in the plenitude of their power they were grieving for rest, as the caged eagle for liberty! How many whom the world is applauding as "masters of the situation," are in reality little better than galley-slaves, chained to the oar and unable to get free! Yes, there are many sad proofs, both among the living and the dead, that to be great and powerful is not necessarily to be happy.

I think it very likely that men do not believe what I am saying. I know something of the deceitfulness of the heart on the subject of happiness. There are few things which man is slow to believe as the truths I am now putting forth about the way to be happy.

Bear with me then while I say something more.

Come and stand with me some afternoon in the heart of the city of London. Let us watch the faces of most of the wealthy men whom we will see leaving their places of business at the close of the day. Some of them are worth hundred of thousands: some of them are worth millions. But what is written in the faces of these grave men whom we see swarming out from the Bank of England and the Stock Exchange? What is the meaning of those deep lines which wrinkle so many a cheek and so many a brow? What is the meaning of that air of anxious thoughtfulness which is worn by five out of every six we meet? Yes, these things tell a serious tale. They tell us that it needs something more than gold and bank notes to make men happy.

Come next and stand with me near the Houses of Parliament, in the middle of a busy session. Let us scan the faces of the politicians, whose names are familiar and well-known all over the civilized world. There you may see on some fine evening the mightiest Statesmen in England hurrying to a debate, like eagles to the carcass. Each has the power of good or evil in his tongue which it is fearful to contemplate. Each may say things before tomorrow's sun dawns, which may affect the peace and prosperity of nations, and convulse the world. There you may see the men who hold the reins of power and government already; there you may see the men who are daily watching for an opportunity of snatching those reins out of their hands, and governing in their stead. But what do their faces tell us as they rush to their posts? What may be read in many of their wrinkled foreheads--so absent-looking and sunk in thought? They teach us a solemn lesson. They teach us that it needs something more than political greatness to make men happy.

Come next and stand with me in the most fashionable part of London, in the height of the season. Let us visit Regent Street or Pall Mall, Hyde Park or May Fair. How many beautiful faces and splendid clothes we will see! How many we will count in an hour's time who seem to possess the choicest gifts of this world--beauty, wealth, position, fashion, and a throng of friends. But how few we will see who appear happy! In how many faces we will read weariness, dissatisfaction, discontent, sorrow, or unhappiness, as clearly as if it was written with a pen! Yes: it is a humbling lesson to learn, but a very wholesome one. It needs something more than position, and fashion, and beauty, to make people happy.

Come next and walk with me through some quiet country village in merry England. Let us visit some secluded corner, far away from the great cities, and fashionable indulgence and political strife. There are many such villages to be found in the land. There are even rural places where there is neither street, nor shop, nor bar--where there is work for all the laborers, and a church for all the population, and a school for all the children, and a minister of the gospel to look after the people. Surely, you will say, we will find happiness here! Surely such places must be the very abodes of peace and joy! Go into these quiet-looking cottages, one by one, and you will soon be shocked. Learn the inner history of each family, and you will soon alter your mind. You will soon discover that backbiting, and lying, and slandering, and envy, and jealousy, and pride, and laziness, and drinking, and extravagance, and lust, and petty quarrels, can

murder happiness in the country quite as much as in the town. No doubt a rural village sounds pretty in poetry, and looks beautiful in pictures; but in sober reality human nature is the same evil thing everywhere. Yes, it needs something more than a residence in a quiet country village to make any child of Adam a happy man!

I know these are ancient things. They have been said a thousand times before without effect, and I suppose they will be said without effect again. I want no greater proof of the corruption of human nature than the determination with which we seek happiness where happiness cannot be found. Century after century wise men have left on record their experience about the way to be happy. Century after century the children of men will declare that they know the way to happiness perfectly well, and need no teaching. They cast to the winds our warnings; they rush, every one, on his own favorite path; they walk in a worthless shadow, and trouble themselves in vain, and wake up when it is too late to find that their whole life has been a great mistake. Their eyes are blinded: they will not see that their visions are as baseless and disappointing as the mirage of the African desert. Like the tired traveler in those deserts, they think they are approaching a lake of cooling waters; like the same traveler, they find to their dismay that this imaginary lake was a splendid optical delusion, and that they are still helpless in the midst of burning sands.

Are you a young person? I implore you to accept the tender warning of a minister of the Gospel, and not to seek happiness where happiness cannot be found. Don't seek it in riches; don't seek it in power and position; don't seek it in pleasure; don't seek it in learning. All these are bright and splendid fountains: their waters taste sweet. A crowd is standing around them, which will not leave the, but oh, remember that God has written over each of these fountains, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again" (John 4:13). Remember this and you will be wise.

Are you poor? Are you tempted to daydream that if you had the rich man's place you would be quite happy? Resist the temptation, and cast it behind you. Do not envy your wealthy neighbors: be content with such things as you have. Happiness does not depend on houses or land; silk and fine clothes cannot shut out sorrow from the heart; mansions and villas cannot prevent anxiety and care coming in through their doors. There is as much misery riding and driving about in cars as there is walking about on foot: there is as much unhappiness in elegant houses as in humble cottages. Oh, remember the mistakes which are common about happiness and be wise!

III. Let me now, in the last place, "point out the way to be really happy."

There is a sure path which leads to happiness, if men will only take it. There never lived a person who traveled in that path, and missed the object that he sought to attain.

It is a path open to all. It needs neither wealth, nor position, nor learning in order to walk in it. It is for the servant as well as for the master: it is for the poor as well as for the rich. None are excluded but those who exclude themselves.

Where is this path? Where is this road? Listen, and you will hear.

The way to be happy is "to be a real, thorough-going true-hearted Christian." Scripture declares it; experience proves it. The converted man, the believer in Christ, the child of God--he, and he alone, is the happy man.

It sounds too simple to be true: it seems at first sight so simple a statement that it is not believed. But the greatest truths are often the simplest. The secret which many of the wisest on earth have utterly failed to discover, is revealed to the humblest believer in Christ. I repeat it deliberately, and defy the world to disprove it: the true Christian is the only happy man.

What do I mean when I speak of a true Christian? Do I mean everybody who goes to a church? Do I mean everybody who professes an orthodox creed, and bows his head at the belief? Do I mean everybody who professes to love the Gospel? No: indeed! I mean something very different. All are not Christians who are called Christians. The man I have in view is "the Christian in heart and life." He who has been taught by the Spirit really to feel his sins--he who really rests all his hopes on the Lord Jesus Christ, and His payment for man's sins on the Cross--he who has been born again and really lives a spiritual, holy life--he whose religion is not merely a Sunday show, but a mighty constraining principle governing every day of his life--he is the man I mean, when I speak of a true Christian.

What do I mean when I say the true Christian is happy? Has he no doubts and no fears? Has he no anxieties and no troubles? Has he no sorrows and no cares? Does he never feel pain, and shed no tears? Far be it from me to say anything of the kind. He has a body weak and frail like other men; he has affections and passions like every one born of a woman: he lives in a changing world. But deep down in his heart he has a mine of solid peace and substantial joy which is never exhausted. This is true happiness.

Do I say that all true Christians are equally happy at all times? No: not for a moment! All have their ebbs and flows of peace, like the sea. Their bodily health is not always the same; their earthly circumstances are not always the same; the souls of those they love fill them at times with special anxiety: they themselves are sometimes overtaken by a fault, and walk in darkness. They sometimes give way to inconsistencies and besetting sins, and lose their sense of forgiveness. But, as a general rule the true Christian has a deep pool of peace within him, which even at the lowest is never entirely dry.

I use the words, "as a general rule," advisedly. When a believer falls into such a horrible sin as that of David [adultery and murder], it would be monstrous to talk of his feeling inward peace. If a man professing to be a true Christian talked to me of being happy in such a case--before giving any evidence of the deepest, most heart-abasing repentance--I should feel great doubts whether he ever had any grace at all.

The true Christian is the only happy man, because "his conscience

is at peace." That mysterious witness for God, which is so mercifully placed within us, is fully satisfied and at rest. It sees in the blood of Christ a complete cleansing away of all its guilt. It sees in the priesthood and mediation of Christ a complete answer to all its fears. It sees that through the sacrifice and death of Christ, God can now be just, and yet be the justifier of the ungodly. It no longer bites and stings, and makes its possessor afraid of himself. The Lord Jesus Christ has amply met all its requirements. Conscience is no longer the enemy of the true Christian, but his friend and adviser. Therefore he is happy.

The true Christian is the only happy man, because he can "sit down quietly and think about his soul." He can look behind him and ahead of him, he can look within him and around him, and feel, "All is well." He can think calmly on his past life, and however many and great his sins, take comfort in the thought that they are all forgiven. The righteousness of Christ covers all, as Noah's flood covered the highest mountain. He can think calmly about things to come, and yet not be afraid. Sickness is painful; death is solemn; the judgment day is an awful thing: but having Christ for him, he has nothing to fear. He can think calmly about the Holy God, whose eyes are on all his ways, and feel, "He is my Father, my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. I am weak; I am unprofitable: yet in Christ He regards me as His dear child, and is well-pleased." Oh, what a blessed privilege it is to be able to "think," and not be afraid! I can well understand the mournful complaint of the prisoner in solitary confinement. He had warmth, and food, and clothing, and work, but he was not happy. And why? He said, "He was obliged to think."

The true Christian is the only happy man, because "he has sources of happiness entirely independent of this world." He has something which cannot be affected by sickness and by deaths, by private losses and public calamities--he has the "peace of God, which transcends all understanding." He has a hope laid up for him in Heaven; he has a treasure which moth and rust cannot corrupt; he has a house which can never be torn down. His loving wife may die, and his heart feel torn in two; his darling children may be taken from him, and he may be left alone in this cold world; his earthly plans may be crossed; his health may fail; but all this time he has a part of him which can never be hurt. He has a Friend who never dies; he has possessions beyond the grave, of which nothing can deprive him: his springs of water on this earth may dry up, but his springs of living water never run dry. This is real happiness.

The true Christian is happy, because he is "in his right position." All the powers of his being are directed to right ends. His affections are not set on things here on earth, but on things in heaven; his will is not bent on self-indulgence, but is submissive to the will of God; his mind is not absorbed in wretched perishable insignificant things. He desires useful employment: he enjoys the luxury of doing good. Who does not know the misery of disorder? The heart of an unconverted man is like a house that is a mess. Grace puts everything in that heart in its right position. The things of the soul come first, and the things of the world come second. Anarchy and confusion cease: unruly passions no longer do what seems right in their own eyes. Christ reigns over the whole man, and each part of him

does his proper work. The new heart is the only real happy heart, for it is the only heart that is in order. The true Christian has found out his place. He has laid aside his pride and self-will; he sits at the feet of Jesus, and is in his right mind: he loves God and loves man, and so he is happy. In heaven all are happy because all do God's will perfectly. The nearer a man gets to this standard the happier he will be.

The plain truth is that without Christ there is no happiness in the world. He alone can give the Comforter who abides forever. He is the sun; without Him men never feel warm. He is the light; without Him men are always in the dark. He is the bread; without Him men are always starving. He is the living water; without Him men are always thirsty. Give them what you like--place them where you please--surround them with all the comforts you can imagine--it makes no difference. Separate from Christ, the Prince of Peace, a man cannot be happy.

Give a man a sensible interest in Christ, and he will be happy "in spite of poverty." He will tell you that he wants nothing that is really good. He is provided for: he has riches in possession, and riches in restoration; he has meat to eat that the world does not know of; he has friends who never leave him or forsake him. The Father and the Son come to him, and make their home with him: the Lord Jesus Christ has supper with him, and he with Christ (Revelation 3:20).

Give a man a sensible interest in Christ, and he will be happy "in spite of sickness." His flesh may groan, and his body be worn out with pain, but his heart will rest and be at peace. One of the happiest people I ever saw was a young woman who had been hopelessly ill for many years with disease of the spine. She lay in a attic without the warmth of a fire; the roof was less than two feet above her face. She did not have the slightest hope of recovery. But she was always rejoicing in the Lord Jesus. The spirit triumphed mightily over the flesh. She was happy, because Christ was with her.

Give a man a sensible interest in Christ, and he will be happy "in spite of abounding public calamities." The government of his country may be thrown into confusion, rebellion and disorder may turn everything upside down, laws may be trampled underfoot; justice and equity may be outraged; liberty may be cast down to the ground; might may prevail over right: but still his heart will not fail. He will remember that the kingdom of Christ will one day be set up. He will say, like the old minister who lived throughout the turmoil of the French revolution: "It is all right: it will be well with the righteous."

I know well that Satan hates the doctrine which I am endeavoring to press upon you. I have no doubt he is filling your mind with objections and reasonings, and persuading you that I am wrong. I am not afraid to meet these objections face to face. Let us bring them forward and see what they are.

You may tell me that "you know many very religious people who are not happy at all." You see them diligent in attending public worship. You know that they are never missing at the Lord's Supper. But you see in them no marks of the peace which I have been describing.

But are you sure that these people you speak of are true believers in Christ? Are you sure that, with all their appearance of religion, they are born again and converted to God? Isn't very likely that they have nothing but the name of Christianity, without the reality; and a form of godliness, without the power? Yes! you have yet to learn that people may do many religious acts, and yet possess no saving religion! It is not a mere formal, ceremonial Christianity that will ever make people happy. We want something more than going to Church, and going to the Lord's Table, to give us peace. There must be a real, vital union with Christ. It is not the formal Christian, but the true Christian, that is the happy man.

You may tell me that "you know really spiritually-minded and converted people who do not seem happy." You have heard them frequently complaining of their own hearts, and groaning over their own weaknesses. They seem to you all doubts, and anxieties, and fears; and you want to know where is the happiness in these people of which I have been saying so much.

I do not deny that there are many saints of God such as these whom you describe, and I am sorry for it. I allow that there are many believers who live far below their privileges, and seem to know nothing of the joy and peace in believing. But did you ever ask any of these people whether they would give up their Christianity, and go back to the world? Did you ever ask them, after all their groanings, and doubtings, and fearings, whether they think they would be happier if they ceased to follow after Christ? "Did you ever ask those questions?" I am certain if you did, that the weakest and lowest believers would all give you one answer. I am certain they would tell you that they would rather cling to their little scrap of Hope in Christ, than possess the world. I am sure they would all answer, "Our faith is weak, if we have any; our grace is small, if we have any; our joy in Christ is next to nothing at all: but we cannot give up what we have got. Though the Lord slay us, we must cling to Him." The root of happiness lies deep in many a poor weak believer's heart, when neither leaves nor blossoms are to be seen!

But you will tell me, in the last place, that "you cannot believe most believers are happy, because they are so solemn and serious." You think that they do not really possess this happiness I have been describing, because their faces do not show it. You doubt the reality of their joy, because it is so little seen.

I might easily repeat what I told you at the beginning of this paper--that a merry face is no sure proof of a happy heart. But I will not do so. I will rather ask you whether you yourself may not be the cause why believers look grave and serious when you meet them? If you are not converted yourself, you surely cannot expect them to look at you without sorrow. They see you on the broad road to Hell, and that alone is enough to give them pain: they see thousands like you, hurrying on to weeping and wailing and endless torment. Now, is it possible that such a daily sight should not give them grief? Your company, very likely, is one cause why they are solemn. Wait till you are a converted man yourself, before you pass judgment on the seriousness of converted people. See them in companies where all are of one heart, and all love Christ, and so far as my own experience goes, you will find no people so truly happy as true

Christians.

I repeat my assertion in this part of my subject. I repeat it boldly, confidently, deliberately. I say that there is no happiness among men that will at all compare with that of the true Christian. All other happiness compared to this is moonlight compared to sunshine, and brass by the side of gold. Boast, if you will, of the laughter and merriment of irreligious men; sneer, if you will, at the concern and seriousness, which appear in the demeanor of many Christians. I have looked the whole subject in the face, and am not moved. I say that the true Christian alone is the truly happy man, and the way to be happy is to be a true Christian.

And now I am going to close this paper by a few words of plain application. I have endeavored to expose the fallacy of many views which prevail upon the subject. I have endeavored to point out, in plain and unmistakable words, where true happiness alone can be found. Permit me to close by an affectionate appeal to the consciences of all who may read this paper.

(1) In the first place, "let me entreat every reader of this paper to apply to his own heart the solemn question--Are you happy?"

High position or low position, rich or poor, master or servant, farmer or laborer, young or old, here is a question that deserves an answer--"Are you really happy?"

Man of this world, who cares about nothing but the things of this world, neglecting the Bible, making a god of business or money, providing for everything but the day of judgment, scheming and planning about everything but eternity: are you happy? "You know that you are not."

Foolish woman, who is throwing life away in flippancy and fickleness, spending hours after hours on that poor frail body which must soon be fed to the worms, making an idol of dress and fashion, and excitement, and human praise, as if this world was all there was: are you happy? "You know that you are not."

Young man, who is bent on pleasure and self-indulgence, fluttering from one idle pastime to another, like the moth about the candle--fancying yourself clever and knowing, and too wise to be led by preachers, and ignorant that the devil is leading you captive, like the animal that is led to the slaughter: are you happy? "You know that you are not."

Yes: each and all of you, you are not happy! And in your own consciences you know it well. You may not admit it, but it is sadly true. There is a great empty place in each of your hearts, and nothing will fill it. Pour into it money, learning, position, and pleasure, and it will still be empty. There is a sore place in each of your consciences, and nothing will heal it. Immorality can't; freethinking can't; Roman Catholicism can't; they are all quack medicines. Nothing can heal it, but that which at present you have not used--the simple Gospel of Christ. Yes: you are indeed a miserable people!

Take warning this day, that you will never be happy till you are converted. You might as well expect to feel the sun shine on

your face when you turn your back to it, as to feel happy when you turn your back on God and on Christ.

(2) In the second place, "let me warn all who are not true Christians of the folly of living a life which cannot make them happy."

I pity you from the bottom of my heart, and eagerly persuade you to open your eyes and be wise. I stand as a watchman on the tower of the everlasting Gospel. I see you sowing misery for yourselves, and I call upon you to stop and think, before it is too late. Oh, that God may show you your folly!

You are hewing out for yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water. You are spending your time, and strength, and affections on that which will give you no return for your labor--"spending your money on that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy" (Isaiah 55:2). You are building up Babels of your own contriving, and ignorant that God will pour contempt on your schemes for procuring happiness, because you attempt to be happy without Him.

Awake from your dreams, I beg you, and show yourselves men. Think of the uselessness of living a life which you will be ashamed of when you die, and of having a religion, in name only, which will just fail you when it is most wanted.

Open your eyes and look around the world. Tell me who was ever really happy without God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. Look at the road in which you are traveling. Mark the footsteps of those who have gone before you: see how many have turned away from it, and confessed that they were wrong. I warn you plainly, that if you are not a true Christian you will miss happiness in the world that now is, as well as in the world to come. Oh, believe me, the way of happiness, and the way of salvation are one and the same! He that will have his own way, and refuses to serve Christ, will never be really happy. But he that serves Christ has the promise of both lives. He is happy on earth, and will be happier still in heaven.

If you are neither happy in this world nor the next, it will be all your own fault. Oh, think of this! Do not be guilty of such enormous folly. Who does not mourn over the folly of the drunkard, the drug addict, and the person who commits suicide? But there is no folly like that of the unrepentant child of the world.

(3) In the next place, "let me entreat all readers of this book, who are not yet happy, to seek happiness where alone it can be found."

The keys of the way to happiness are in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is sealed and appointed by God the Father, to give the bread of life to them that hunger, and to give the water of life to them that thirst. The door which riches and position and learning have so often tried to open, and tried in vain, is now ready to open to every humble, praying believer. Oh, if you want to be happy, come to Christ!

Come to Him, confessing that you are weary of your own ways, and want rest--that you find you have no power and might to make

yourself holy or happy or fit for heaven, and have no hope but in Him. [Believe and Trust in Christ, Repent of your sins, and Submit to His Lordship] Tell Him this unreservedly. This is coming to Christ.

Come to Him, imploring Him to show you His mercy, and grant you His salvation--to wash you in His own blood, and take your sins away--to speak peace to your conscience, and heal your troubled soul. Tell Him all this unreservedly. This is coming to Christ.

You have everything to encourage you. The Lord Jesus Himself invites you. He proclaims to you as well as to others, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). Wait for nothing. You may feel unworthy. You may feel as if you did not repent enough. But wait no longer. Come to Christ.

You have everything to encourage you. Thousands have walked in the way you are invited to enter, and have found it good. Once, like yourself, they served the world, and plunged deeply into folly and sin. Once, like yourself, they became weary of their wickedness, and longed for deliverance and rest. They heard of Christ, and His willingness to help and save: they came to Him by faith and prayer, after many a doubt and hesitation; they found Him a thousand times more gracious than they had expected. They rested on Him and were happy: they carried His cross and tasted peace. Oh, walk in their steps!

I implore you, by the mercies of God, to come to Christ. If you ever hope to be happy, I entreat you to come to Christ. Do not delay. Awake from your sleep: arise and be free! This day come to Christ.

(4) In the last place, "let me offer a few hints to all true Christians for the increase and promotion of their happiness."

I offer these hints with reluctance. I desire to apply them to my own conscience as well as to yours. You have found Christ's service happy. I have no doubt that you feel such sweetness in Christ's peace that you would desire to know more of it. I am sure that these hints deserve attention.

Believers, if you would have an increase of happiness in Christ's service, "labor every year to grow in grace." Beware of standing still. The holiest men are always the happiest. Let your aim be every year to be more holy--to know more, to feel more, to see more of the fullness of Christ. Do not rest on old grace: do not be content with the degree of Christianity which you have attained. Search the Scriptures more earnestly; pray more fervently; hate sin more; mortify self-will more; become more humble the nearer you draw to your end; seek more direct personal communion with the Lord Jesus; strive to be more like Enoch--daily walking with God; keep your conscience clear of little sins; grieve not the Spirit; avoid arguments and disputes about the lesser matters of religion: lay more firm hold upon those great truths, without which no man can be saved. Remember and practice these things, and you will be more happy.

Believers, if you would have an increase of happiness in Christ's

service, "labor every year to be more thankful." Pray that you may know more and more what it is to "rejoice in the Lord" (Philippians 3:1). Learn to have a deeper sense of your own wretched sinfulness and corruption, and to be more deeply grateful, that by the grace of God you are what you are. Yes, there is too much complaining and too little thanksgiving among the people of God! There is too much murmuring and poring over the things that we don't have. There is too little praising and blessing for the many undeserved mercies that we have. Oh that God would pour out upon us a great spirit of thankfulness and praise!

Believers, if you would have an increase of happiness in Christ's service, "labor every year to do more good." Look around the circle in which you live your life, and determine to be useful. Strive to be of the same character with God: He is not only good, but "does good" (Psalm 119:68). Alas there is far too much selfishness among believers in the present day! There is far too much lazy sitting by the fire nursing our own spiritual diseases, and growling over the state of our own hearts. Get up; and be useful in your day and generation! Is there no one in all the world that you can read the Bible to? Is there no one that you can speak to about Christ? Is there no one that you can write to about Christ? Is there literally nothing that you can do for the glory of God, and the benefit of your fellow-men? Oh I cannot think it! I cannot think it. There is much that you might do, if you had only the will. For your own happiness' sake, arise and do it, without delay. The bold, outspoken, working Christians are always the happiest. The more you do for God, the more God will do for you.

The compromising lingering Christian must never expect to taste perfect peace. **THE MOST ENERGETIC CHRISTIAN WILL ALWAYS BE THE HAPPIEST MAN.**