



Vol. 3

Lexington, Kentucky

July 1972

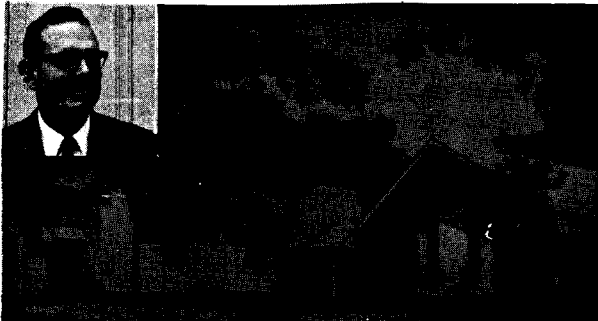
No. 10

HOW TO BE HAPPY

"Rejoice evermore" (I Thess. 5:16).

Our text is a command and the message is to help you obey the command. It is the command to be happy. Happiness may be defined as a feeling of gladness and freedom from fear and distraction of mind. But we must distinguish between a happy feeling and a happy condition. A happy feeling without a happy condition is short-lived and dangerous. One may enjoy a happy feeling and yet be in a miserable condition. One's feelings ought to be a true barometer of his condition. But feelings are often deceptive. Loud laughter is not a mark of a circumcised heart. A smiling face is often the front door to a depraved soul.

If a person's condition is not happy, a happy feeling will be dangerous. A drunk man has a happy feeling; he is loud and boisterous, and boastful--he feels like a



millionaire; but he is not in a happy condition. A gambler may feel happy over winning a pot of money, but he is not in a happy condition. The rum-seller may feel glad over his profits that came from the poor man who robs his family of meat and bread in order to get his rum, but the rum-seller is not in a happy condition. The woe of God is upon him and the day of reckoning is just around the corner.

Location: 3.3 miles out Bryan Station Road. Right on Briar Hill Road.

A lost man--the man who ignores Jesus Christ--may have a gloriously good time and be happy in earthly possessions, but the curse of God rests upon him and his joy ought to be turned into mourning. A man may have a false religion and yet be happy in it. What does a lost man have to make him happy? He

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
 Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
 Evening Service 7:00 p.m.
 Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 p.m.

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may have riches but what are riches in the face of eternal torment? A man may have fame and friends, but what are these when an eternity of misery is staring him in the face? A God-fearing minister was describing the condition of the lost when a frivolous woman remarked, "What is it all about? I feel as happy as a bird." But her feeling was dangerous.

Now, on the other hand, a man may be in a happy condition and not be happy in feeling. Christians ought to be happy--they have just cause for happiness. Our text is for Christians; not for unbelievers. Saints ought to be happy. As heirs of God, rich in eternal things, they ought not live as if they were penniless.

I once heard of an Indian who was living on starvation fare and very unhappy, although he had a government paper in his pocket that made him rich. He did not know its value. He was in a happy condition and yet unhappy. It is true that saints have occasions of sorrow, but these need not destroy their happiness. As sorrowful yet always rejoicing, it is the true norm of Christian life.

People as a rule want the preacher to make them feel good. They want him to salve their conscience. They want him to speak smooth things; things that will make them laugh and drive away their sin-stricken conscience. They want him to cry "peace, peace," when there is no peace. Every man wants a peaceful conscience. And this is not wrong, but he must be careful how he gets peace of conscience.

I want to make people happy, but I want to use God-given means in doing so. I know that in an experience of grace, conviction for sin precedes the joy of salvation. Those whom God saves, he first makes them feel their need of salvation. So in my preaching, I first try to make sinners feel sad. If there is nothing in sin to make one feel bad, there is nothing in salvation to make them feel glad. If there is no danger in sin, there is no safety in Christ.

I preach the law to make men realize their need of salvation, and then the gospel to show this need is supplied in Christ. I preach the law to kill self-righteousness in men; I preach the gospel to show the righteousness of God in Christ. I preach the law to show men their disobedience; I preach the gospel to show Christ's obedience even unto death. I must not deceive people and make them feel happy when they have nothing to make them happy.

A man may have a worthless bond and you make him happy by making him believe it is of great value, but such joy would be short-lived only to be followed by keen disappointment. You may make a sinner feel good by flattering him. You may make him think his record is good enough to stand before God on, but such joy is dangerous.

I. To be happy and at the same time be safe, we must make our calling and election sure. We must make sure we are saved. "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

1. The saved man has a person in whom he can rejoice. A mother and

child stood near the tracks watching a train go by. "That train goes so fast," said the child. "Yes," said the mother, "It is the lightning express." "Does that train go to heaven too?" asked the child. Life is like the lightning express. Is the train of your life on the way to heaven? It will soon reach its destination. Make sure your destination is heaven.

2. The saved man has a hope in which to rejoice. "Rejoice in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12).

Let us look at some things the saved man hopes for. There is the blessed hope of the Lord's return to receive His blood-bought people. The hope of a glorious body that will never be sick or tired or afraid. The hope of an eternal residence in the city of God.

Some of the sweetest joys we have are by way of anticipation. They are sometimes sweeter than realization. Some anticipate happiness in marriage only to find it disappointing. Seldom anything in this life gives us the joy we think it will. But heaven will be sweeter than we can possibly anticipate.

II. Another way to be happy is to make others happy. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Paul said, "do good to all men especially the household of faith." One of the best ways to get over the blues is to do something for somebody else. "Bear ye one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ." The burden you take off another's back will not be heavy for your own. Some seem to think the way to be happy is to make others unhappy, but he who travels this road will find it has a dead end. If you have an enemy, do not try to get even with him, for revenge is never as sweet as you think it will be.

III. Still another way to be happy is to put God first in your life. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). This means to run your business in the interest of God's cause. It means to be a share-cropper for God. He furnishes everything essential to success. The Christian who looks after Christ's interests on earth will find that Christ is looking after his interests both on earth and in heaven.

The Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to lay up treasures in heaven. It is an awful thing to have more property on earth than you have in heaven. What we have in heaven is permanent, but what we have on earth is transient. The Lord has for sometime been giving a demonstration that earthly possessions are insecure. John Newton once wrote that he had a dream. He thought he was on a ship, holding the jewel of his salvation in his hand and he carelessly dropped it into the ocean. The Lord Jesus stood beside him, looked at him reproachfully, then plunged into the ocean and after a terrible struggle came up with the jewel in his hand. Newton reached for his jewel, but Jesus said, "Oh, no, you lost it once, but you shall never lose it again, for I will keep it for you." Adam lost his original blessings and ours too, when he tossed them into the ocean of sin; but thank God, the salvation that Jesus brings to us,

He keeps for us Himself, and we can never be lost again.

The happy man is the one who has his transgression forgiven, and his sin covered. To him the Lord will not impute iniquity. Non-imputation of sin is one of the grandest truths ever written. The happy man has sins experimentally, but he has no sins in a judicial and legal sense. They are forgiven, they are covered, they are not charged. In Micah 7:19, it is said that God casts our sins into the depths of the sea. He does not cast them as a cork that keeps bobbing up, but as lead which sinks to the bottom.

Dear reader, trust Christ as your personal Saviour, and you too can have the joy and happiness and peace that passeth all understanding. The happiness that only Jesus Christ alone can give!

— By the late C. D. Cole