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HOW TO BE HAPPY

By: C. D. Cole

"Rejoice evermore," I Thessalonians 5:16.

INTRODUCTION: 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 come 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.

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 may have riches but what are riches in the face of eternal tor-

ment? 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 to 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, is the true norm of Christian life.

People as a rule want preachers 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 joy of salvation. Those whom God saves He first makes them feel their need of sal-

vation. 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 law to make men realize their need of salvation and gospel to show this need is supplied in Christ. I preach law to kill self-righteousness in man; I preach gospel to show righteousness of God in Christ. I preach law to show men their disobedience; I preach 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. Luke 10:20, *Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*"

A. The saved man has a person in whom he can rejoice. When asked what was his greatest discovery, James Y. Simpson said, "It is that I have a Savior." 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." 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.

B. The saved man has a hope in which to rejoice. Romans 12:12, *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.* 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. There is the hope of a glorious body that will never be sick or tired or afraid. There is 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 the 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. *"Bear ye one another's burden and so fulfil 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. Matthew 6:33, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* It means to run your business in the interest of God's cause. It means to be a sharecropper for God. He furnishes everything essential to success. The Christian who look after Christ's interests on earth will find that Christ is looking after his interest both on earth as well as in heaven.

WHAT IS THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD?

BY: C. D. Cole

INTRODUCTION: I have a text that answers this question, but I will wait till the end of the message to give it. What would your answer be to this question? Solomon thought wisdom was the greatest thing. Judging from actions, which speak louder than words, most think money is the greatest. What a mad scramble there is for money! Our Lord intimated that money is the god of many, when he said, *"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."*

But let us dismiss material possessions and consider human qualities--gifts and talents--the ability to do things. What is the greatest quality or virtue of a human soul? What is the greatest and most sublime thing possible for a human being? What is the greatest gift or talent one can possess? Some would say eloquence is the greatest gift and would point to the power of the orator to sway the crowds and get followers for himself. Some would say knowledge or an education is the greatest, and would illustrate in many ways the value of an education. But Paul says knowledge, of itself puffeth up--makes a man proud. And some would say faith is the greatest thing and would refer to words of Christ when he spoke about faith removing mountains. And others would say that charity or benevolence is the greatest thing, and would talk about the gifts of men like Rockefeller, Carnegie, et al. And still others would say that liberty or freedom of spirit is the greatest thing and would speak dramatically of slavery and poverty in the conquered countries of Europe.

I do not minimize the value of the things I have mentioned, but I must declare that none of them or all of them combined is the greatest thing in the world.

THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD IS LOVE.

But we must distinguish among the objects of love. All love is not proper and good. We are not to love the world neither the things of the world. The greatest grace or gift is the ability to love God. God is the supreme good and to love Him is to love the greatest and purest and best. The Ten Commandments define our duties to God and man; the word love is not in them but the doctrine of love is. Christ, in interpreting the Ten Commandments, says, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God will all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."* Love is the greatest thing because, as Paul says, *"Love is the fulfilling of the law,"* Romans 13:10. If a man loves God he will have no other gods before Him, and he will not take the name of God in vain. If a man loves his neighbor, he will not take his life or his property or his good name. The measure in which we keep the commandments of God is the measure of our love, to him and our fellow man.

THE CAUSE OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD.

Some men love God; others do not. All saints love Him. *"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."* Why do men love God? Whence cometh this love for God, the things of God and the people of God?

1. **It is not natural.** Romans 8:7, *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."* Jeremiah 17:9, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* All men ought to love God, but it is a patent fact that none in his natural state does love God.

2. The efficient cause of love for God is the regenerating Spirit. I John 4:7, *"Beloved let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."* Every lover of God has the Holy Spirit to thank for a heart that loves God.

3. The instrumental cause is the Gospel through which we learn of His love for us. There can be no love for God apart from the Gospel, because apart from the Gospel we cannot know of His love for sinners. We love Him because He first loved us. The Holy Spirit sheds His love abroad in our hearts by opening our eyes to see and appropriate His love for us. He pours His love into our hearts by causing us to meditate upon His love for us.

MARKS OF OUR LOVE TO GOD.

How can we know whether we love God or not? This is a momentous question, for if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ he will be accursed when the Lord comes. I Corinthians 16:22, *"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."*

1. Love to God will be evidenced to the believer in thoughts about God. If you do not like to think of God, you may well doubt that you love Him. Does the husband love his wife whose mind is continually on other women with scarcely a thought for her? We have two kinds of thoughts: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary thoughts are produced by certain occasions or circumstances. When you go to church the sermon will cause you to have some thought of God. But what are your thoughts when alone involuntary thoughts which spring up of themselves? These involuntary thoughts come from an inward fountain and

reveal the condition of the heart towards God. If you love God you will think upon Him with a sort of intuition. It is the most natural thing for us to think about those we love.

2. Love to God will manifest itself in a desire to know more about Him and His word. Opportunities for an increased knowledge of God will not be habitually neglected. Psalm 42:1, *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*" Psalm 27:4, *"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple."* A neglected Bible is a bad sign. And those who cannot read well should all the more avail themselves of an oral and public ministry where the word is taught.

3. Love to God will reveal itself in love to the people of God. There will be a desire for fellowship with those of like precious faith. John said, *"He that loveth Him that begat, loveth him that is begotten."* *"We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."*

4. Love to God will show itself in obedience to his commands. *"For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments,"* I John 5:3. *"If ye love me keep my commandments."* He who ignores or treats lightly our Lord's commands certainly lacks an essential mark of love to God. We must distinguish between moral and positive commands.

5. Love to God will be manifested in giving to support His cause in the world. Love is expensive. Great love means sacrificial giving. Great love exhausts its resources on its object. When a boy falls in love with a girl, he begins to spend money on her. If he is poor he makes sacrifices--he does without things that he may buy for her. If he is stingy and never spends any money on her, he will never convince her of his love by mere talk. II Corinthians 8:8, *"I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love."*

Conclusion: Every pastor should have a large vision for his church, but without love this vision will remain but a dream. He should not resort to worldly methods and carnal measures to realize it. Nobody should be teased or begged into

giving what he does not want to give. He should not strive to have what the world calls a striking personality. The pastor has not magic wand that he can wave and make good people out of you, or great givers. His program should be one of preaching, and praying, and living. The pastor should not make demands for himself, but he should make appeals for the cause of Christ.