

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS- OR HOW TO BE BLESSED BY GOD

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Blessed is the man that. . (Ps. 1:1).

The desire for happiness is shared by every person on earth, but unfortunately the coveted treasure is often elusive. When it appears to be within reach, it slips away, leaving the seeker disappointed and frustrated. Athletes desire fame, politicians seek recognition, misers crave money, but all these things are temporal. Sometimes what takes years to acquire disappears in moments. One of Hollywood's famous film producers who was also a multimillionaire said, "There have been occasions when I would have given everything I possess just for a moment of happiness." Whether it be called serenity, joy, satisfaction, or by any other name, it surpasses all else.

When William Carey went as a missionary to India, he had great dreams for the future of his work. Confronted by many problems he ultimately translated the New Testament into the Hindi language and printed 100 copies, one of which was presented to Queen Victoria. As the years passed, problems increased. Fire destroyed his property, friends failed him, and there were times when he became very discouraged. Then one day, an Indian arrived at the mission bringing a copy of Carey's New Testament. He asked if the missionary had written the book and, receiving an affirmative reply, explained he had been sent by the head of his village. He told how the book had reached his community where one man was able to read. The entire population listened day after day, and strange things began to happen. Drunkenness, immorality, fights, and other forms of vice began to disappear, and the life style of the people changed. The chief wanted to thank the writer of the "little book." The Indian explained he had traveled great distances and visited many places before he met someone able to direct him to the mission. Carey's soul was thrilled.

He had achieved something worthwhile, pleased his Lord, and brought happiness to many Indians. Truly, "the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that

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dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shone" (see Isa. 9:2). "Blessed is the man" may be found in many places. There are six Scriptures which, when considered together, provide an exciting sequence of thought.

Blessed Is the Man Who Is Careful

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful (Ps. 1:1).

Life is a highway leading through time toward eternity, and many kinds of travelers can be met thereon. Some may be excellent companions; others are dangerous and should be avoided. It is interesting that in the first psalm David mentions: (1) Walking, (2) Standing, (3) Sitting. Ungodly people are unnecessary companions for pilgrims on their way to the Celestial City. The king knew the results of being influenced by ungodly people. The statement "the counsel of the ungodly" suggests someone expressing his views and offering advice. Then suddenly the listener decides to halt. He appears to say, "Stop! That is interesting. Let's have a conference." The

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travelers were becoming friends. Any person who permits this to happen eventually sits in the seat of the scornful. The man who was a pilgrim going somewhere became motionless go-

ing nowhere. David had made this mistake, and in this psalm urged his readers to avoid the pitfalls into which he had fallen. Blessed is the person who is careful. It is better to walk with God than to fraternize with heathens!

Blessed Is the Man Who Considers

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit (Jer. 17:7-8).

Undoubtedly, Jeremiah knew David had expressed a similar

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truth. The king stressed its negative side, the prophet the positive. Both men made reference to a tree planted by the river. Jeremiah described its phenomenal success amid deplorable conditions. Explaining why the tree produced luxurious fruit, the prophet wrote: "She spreadeth out her roots by the river."

When I was a boy in Wales, grapes were always expensive, for the inclemency of the weather made their cultivation impossible. Sometimes in the south of England a few varieties could be found, but even these had to be grown in greenhouses. Then came the year when everyone became interested in what happened at Hampton Court just outside of London. The royal husbandmen had struggled in vain to grow grapes for the king, but the famous vine never responded. Then, unexpectedly, large bunches of fruit began to form, and the harvest was amazing. When the head man was asked for an explanation, he merely said, "The roots of the vine reached the river Thames." Had Jeremiah been present, he would have smiled and remembered his words, "She spreadeth out her roots by the river.'

Isaiah expressed a similar thought when he predicted the future of the people of Judah. He said: "And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward" (Isa. 37:31). There is a river which proceeds from the throne of God, and spiritual people draw from its infinite resources. Trees with shallow roots are destroyed by hurricanes; they have no foundations upon which to depend. The same fate threatens people whose roots are close to the surface. Blessed is the person who considers these things.

Blessed Is the Man Who Is Chosen

Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts (Ps. 65:4).

It was never easy to enter the presence of royalty. Few people are afforded that honor. Heads of state and other important officials are frequently given that privilege, but

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unless some significant deed has been performed, ordinary

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citizens only see celebrities from a distance. There were some exceptions to the rule. Mephibosheth was permitted to sit at the king's table (2 Sam. 9:11), and the elderly statesman, Barzillai, was offered the same honor. The old man declined the invitation, preferring to remain in his own village (2 Sam. 19:33-35). It is interesting to know the king who gave this honor desired the same for himself in a greater court. He said: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lo}w all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple" (Ps. 27:4). It is difficult to separate the reward from the worthiness preceding it. To be chosen by the Lord to sit at His table is a reward of incalculable worth. What people are to be there, will reflect what they were here. "THOU ART WORTHY" is a verdict all would like to hear, but "Many are called, few are chosen." The blessed man tries to emulate his Lord, of whom it was written: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles" (Matt. 12:18).

Blessed Is the Man Who Is Chastised

Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law (Ps. 94:12).

David and the writer to the Hebrews would have had much in common. Had they lived together on earth they might have talked forever! The king of Israel was said to be a man after God's heart, but he was always in trouble. During the final part of his life his dominant nature asserted itself, and he did things which afterward were regretted. Yet the Lord never forsook His erring child, and ultimately, the contrite monarch was able to write: "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest. O Lord." Many years later a letter was sent to the Hebrews who were undergoing great suffering. They were reminded that problems are usually followed by peace and praise. The writer said, "Nevertheless afterward it [the difficulties] yieldest

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the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11). People with poor eyesight cannot see long distances, and therefore are not interested in the word afterward. They want immediate action, and that is not always possible.

The prophet was told to visit the potter's house and learn from what he saw. Enthralled, he watched as a marred and useless vessel was transformed into a thing of beauty. The procedure might have been summarized under four headings (see Jer. 18:1-6):

1. Condemned... The vessel was marred.
2. Crushed... It was broken so that hindrances could be removed.
3. Controlled... The potter made it again.
4. Converted... Its uselessness was turned to magnificence.

Wise people are not dismayed by a tempest; they look beyond to the afterward and plan what may be done when the sun shines again.

Blessed Is the Man Who Continues

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is

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tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath
promised to them that love him (James 1:12).

This text and the promise it contains complement the verses
already quoted. A tree that draws nourishment from the river
of life does not wither in a drought. The continuous supply of
water guarantees its leaves will not wither, nor its fruit be
undeveloped. The apostle James lived in an age when many
Christians were becoming discouraged. Beset with problems
and threatened by death, some were having second thoughts
about the advisability of following the Savior. James was a
practical man who emphasized that unless faith were supported
by deeds, something was wrong with the believer. He wrote
about surviving, overcoming, and enduring, and urged his
readers to be victorious over their problems. Furthermore, he
stated that sufferings experienced in this world were not worthy

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to be compared with the glory to be known in the kingdom of
the Savior. It was significant that when the Lord sent special
messages to the churches in Asia, He spoke about rewards to
be won through overcoming.

People who accomplished this would experience a closer
fellowship with the Lord and in the presence of the angels
receive special awards for valor.

Blessed Is the Man That Contemplates

Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my
gates, waiting at the posts of my doors (Prov. 8:34).

Solomon's word picture depicts a man patiently awaiting
the arrival of his monarch. Perhaps he was a beggar who had
been the recipient of earlier generosity or a friend waiting to
greet his lord. He was willing, waiting, and watching. He had
heard the king was approaching and, with great determina-
tion, found vantage point near the palace doors and began his
vigil. The royal smile of approval would more than compen-
sate for the time spent waiting. Perhaps the Savior desired to
teach a similar truth when He spoke about the maidens who
went to meet the bridegroom. At first there were ten, but five
were absent when the festivities commenced. The writer to
the Hebrews said to his readers: "So Christ was once offered
to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall

he appear the second time without sin unto salvation"
(Heb. 9:28).

Inactivity is not an attribute of the Christian faith. A be-
liever can be exceedingly busy doing the Lord's work and at
the same time be awaiting a special sunrise. God said: "But
unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness
arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2). A rising sun her-
alds the approach of a new day. Blessed is the man who
believes the King is coming soon.

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