

Happy is the One Who Delights in God

Psalm 1

Introduction

The 17th-century, French mathematician and philosopher, Blaise Pascal, once wrote,

All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.

To restate Pascal, we all desperately long to be happy. It is woven into the fabric of our being. The pursuit of happiness is thus not a bad thing, but a natural thing. What ends up differentiating you from others is typically not that you want to be happy, and they do not want to be happy but rather that different things make different people happy, at least for a season, until something else is needed.

This morning, we are going to consider God's concern for our happiness. God values your happiness and joy in this life. Contrary to what you may have been told, God is not a killjoy. He aims for you to be happy in this life.

Psalm 1

1 Blessed is the one
 who does not walk in step with the wicked
 or stand in the way that sinners take
 or sit in the company of mockers,
2 but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and who meditates on his law day and night.
3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
 and whose leaf does not wither—
 whatever they do prospers.
4 Not so the wicked!
 They are like chaff
 that the wind blows away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Exposition

I. A Hope for Happiness (Vss. 1-3)

When the psalmist writes, “blessed is the one,” we could just as easily read the verse as saying, “truly happy is the one.” The word, which we translate here as “blessed” or “truly happy,” is used in various places throughout the Old Testament. In Psalm 32, the word is used to describe the person “whose transgression has been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered.” In Psalm 33, the term “blessed” or “truly happy” describes the nation whose God is the LORD.

This happiness is “not a superficial, circumstance-based joy,” but rather, it is a happiness that deep and unshakeable because it is founded upon God Himself instead of the things of the world.

The Psalmists describes the difference that is observable in the truly happy life. Unlike the wicked person, the truly happy person does not “walk” in the pattern of life that characterizes wicked people. Nor does the happy person stand in the path of that sinner take. Nor does the truly happy person sit in the company of the mockers. Three groups of people are mentioned in this verse: The Wicked, Sinners, and Mockers. Scholar Gerald Wilson describes these people in the following way:

The “wicked” (*reša'im*) are those who have been judged “guilty” in a court of law or would be if brought to trial.

The second term, *hatta'im* (“sinners”), emphasized the fallibility of individuals who have an inclination to sin. Such persons have not just committed an isolated act of evil but live lives dominated and shaped by their inclinations.

The final term, *lesim* (“mockers”), describes those who have gone beyond a few sinful acts and even a personal life marked by an inclination to wrong-doing. They actively seek through their mockery to express disdain for right living and seek to belittle and undermine those who want to be righteous.

Did you notice the progression from the wicked to the sinner to the mocker? The truly happy person does not live like the wicked, stand with the sinner, or sit with the mocker. In other words, the truly happy person’s life is characterized by something different from all of these other lives. Which is what?

The psalmist tells us that the “truly happy person delights in the law of the LORD.” In other words, they are happy to meditate on God’s Word to us and live in conformity to it. The truly happy person wants to hear God’s voice in His Word, listen to it intently, be nourished by it like a tree that is planted next to streams of water, and bear the fruit of obedience in-season and out-of-season. The truly happy person does not expect to find happiness in the way of the wicked, the path of the sinner, or in the presence of the mocker.

No! The truly happy person, the blessed person, knows that they were not made for a life of rebellion against God, but instead, a life of worship and fellowship with God. This is the truly happy life!

II. A Warning for Wickedness (Vss. 4-6)

Unlike the truly happy person, those who attempt to find happiness in their rebellion against God will only find emptiness and finally judgment if they do not turn away from their sins. These final verses of Psalm 1 issues a warning to those who are living in the ways of the wicked, but it is not the warning that you may think that it is.

Your temptation may be to think that God is being mean to issue a warning about the trajectory of your life, but it is not meanness, it is mercy. God is warning you of the destruction that you are headed into because He is willing to save you from it.

Conclusion

Psalm 1 has taught us that God does truly care about our happiness. He simply knows that we will not know happiness until we turn away from our rebellion against Him and find our delight in Him.

St. Augustine, an early church father, before coming to Christ, lived a life of complete debauchery. You can read all about it in his book, *The Confessions*. But do you know what Augustine found in all his sins and rebellion against God? Emptiness. For Augustine, his pursuit of sin for the sake of finding happiness was like a thirsty man guzzling saltwater in hopes of quenching his thirst. Sin just makes us thirstier, leaving us empty, which is the conclusion that Augustine came to about his life: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

You will search in vain to find true, lasting, abiding happiness in the things of this world. So, this morning, my closing request is that you would stop trying to find your ultimate and true happiness in the things of this world and turn to God.

Where are you trying to find true happiness this morning?

Are you trying to find it in the ways of the wicked, on the paths of the sinners, in the presence of the mockers?

You won't find the happiness that you are looking for in those places. They are empty.

For the Christian here this morning, you and I know better. We know that this world will never satisfy us, it will never bring us true happiness. For us this morning, I would call upon us to repent of our pursuit of other things and return our eyes to Jesus, the author and perfect of our faith. Ask God to forgive and cleanse you this morning of neglecting your first love, and ask Him to revive your affections, that you might delight in Him again. Ask him to renew your happiness in Him. I believe He is faithful to answer these requests as they are in accordance with His revealed will for us.

For those who are not Christians, there is hope for your happiness today. Jesus Christ, through His life, death, burial, and resurrection, brings us near to God and allows us to delight in Him. He transforms the affections of our soul by giving us new life through what is often called the new birth. The truly happy life of delighting in God is offered to you this morning. You don't need money to buy it. Just call upon Jesus and ask Him to have mercy on you.