

Life's Purpose and End

by James Blaine Chapman

The key to true satisfaction is fearing God and keeping His commandments, as it brings a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Scripture: Psalm 19:14, Proverbs 9:10, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Romans 11:36, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17

Topics: "God's Purpose", "Ethics And Theism"

Description

James Blaine Chapman preaches on the ultimate basis of ethics being Theism, emphasizing that our highest good and that of others is intertwined with our proper alignment with God. He highlights that everything, including knowledge, education, and art, finds its true value and goodness in its relationship to God's will and purpose. Chapman stresses that true satisfaction and happiness come from seeking pleasure in God and doing what pleases Him, as the fear of God and obedience to His commandments lead to the fulfillment that science and art cannot provide.

Transcript

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

The ultimate basis of ethics is neither Egoism nor Altruism, but Theism. My own highest good and that of my neighbor is bound up in my proper adjustment to God. Even the well accepted motto "Others" is relative, not absolute. "For me to live is Christ" is the only maxim that requires neither limitation nor explanation.

Origin, duty and destiny are all described in the one word, "By whom are all things, for whom are all things, to whom are all things." From, for and to God, is the whole history of the world's best lives.

Anything--every thing--is bad if it does not help me please God. Every thing has value according to its relation to Him, and nothing can be spoken of as a positive and absolute good until we know where and how it acknowledges and serves Him.

Taken in its details, life is a hopeless complication of conflicting rights,. a mysterious bundle of unfathomable purposes, and leads to an end that is indefinable. If we would straighten out the skein, we must start where all things in heaven and earth had their beginning with God. We must trace His plan through the meanderings of life's course, and must look for the end in "Him who is invisible."

Let us name all of human knowledge "science" and ask, then, is it a good thing or a bad thing? When we go to answer we will be obliged to say that it is both and neither. For its goodness or badness depends upon the use that is made of it, and that factor is not involved in the material given in the premises.

Even goodness and badness, in their broad sense, can not be defined as independent terms; for a good thing may become evil and a thing that was intended for evil, like persecution, or affliction, may turn out to be good. I can not say that sickness, sorrow and poverty are evils; and that health, happiness and riches are good. I must know 'the relation of these things to God and His great purpose before I can tell whether they were good or ill.

What is the highest good of life, anyway? While admitting that this is a difficult question and one that has brought many answers, yet I think when it is all said, that the word pleasure expresses the idea as well as any that we might find. I know this word has been degraded, but I still insist that it is a good word, and that it has only been marred by its associations. I think there is nothing better than that a man should seek satisfaction in this world. I know I say this at some risk, for the word satisfaction has also been degraded by use. Still, I think that man was made with a capacity for God, and that that capacity brought a desire and longing for God. Many have misinterpreted their soul cravings and have gone after pleasure and satisfaction on the lower levels of human possibilities, but they have never found satisfaction there and they never will. The soul's call for pleasure is but the echo of God's invitation for that soul to come to Him.

Going out with our proposition that pleasure is the highest good, and taking our broad definition of "science," then we will find that knowledge, within itself, has never added one iota to the sum total of man's happiness. Our superstitious forebears were tormented by their belief in witches, haunts and jack-o'-lanterns; but they lived in blissful ignorance of microbes and disease germs. They drank out of the common drinking cup, dried on the community towel and died when they "were old and full of years." They enjoyed the cooling breezes of the summer untrammelled by screens; for they did not know that there was anything insufficient about the peach tree branch as a means for keeping the flies away for just the moment when they were eating the food. Their mode of travel was not so fast as ours is today, but they were not feverish to get there, and so they had a better time while they were on the way. Postage was higher then than now, but they did not have to send so many letters. There were no telegraph and telephone, but, having never had them, they did not miss them.

Domestic troubles, suicide, insanity, and other certain evidences of unhappiness have multiplied with the increase of knowledge. Education to be worth anything to the promotion of satisfaction must be "Christian Education." Educating a man without, also, making his heart right and training his moral faculties makes him neither better nor happier. It makes him more efficient in the doing of whatever he chooses to do, but it does not affect his choosing. Discipline in a school where Christ is not exalted is, indeed, a serious undertaking.

Education badly used is a bad thing; education simply employed in the efficient doing of things to which morality does not attach and with no ultra motive is neither good nor bad; education which is from Him as its source, for Him in its purpose and to Him as its end is a wonderfully good thing.

Then let us summarize all we can do as Art, and go out again with our proposition that pleasure is the highest good. We will find that Art has never been the mother of true satisfaction.

Let us go to the fine arts: let us speak of poetry and of literature. How few of the poets were spiritually sufficient and truly happy! And, if you will take the number of those who were moral, strong and contented

and subtract from that number those of them who were Christians and who found in this, and not in their art, the true source of their satisfaction, the remaining list would truly be a short one. I will not specify, but those of you who have made yourselves familiar with the addicts of literature and who were, as we say "devoted" to their art will recall also that the escutcheons of many of the most gifted and brilliant were smutted by scandalous living or marred by personal despondency and unhappiness.

Music, which has been mentioned as the "Queen of Arts" has required the most exacting worship from her devotees, but she has not met their deep needs. Here, too, we would refrain from specifying; but who will champion the depth of character and proclaim the spiritual sufficiency of the masters of the art? Why need the great pianist be an inveterate addict of the cigarette or a weak slave to harmful drugs? What defense can be made of the great singer who is wonderful "when he is not too drunk"? What is the domestic reputation of the "stars" in the opera? Even if it is admitted that musicians are no better and no worse than other people, the point is lost for the sufficiency of the art. Music is a curse when it is debased by the Devil and wicked men and made the handmaiden and associate of wine and the dance. It is neither good nor bad when it is detached from all other factors. It is a high and noble art only when it is made a Christian art. It is useless for us to go on with illustrations. Patriotism, Philanthropy, and every human sentiment and practice will be found to meet the same fate under consideration. They are all insufficient within themselves and take their virtue or their vice from their relation to God's will and kingdom.

But anything and everything is good, if I can make it help me honor and glorify God. The conclusion of the whole matter is reached in fearing God and keeping His commandments. The pleasure that Science could not discover is mine when I please God. The satisfaction that Art was unable to give is a present to me when I "do the things that are pleasing in His sight."

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