

The Secret of a Happy Life

by J.C. Ryle

True happiness comes from having a relationship with God and meeting the highest wants of a man's nature, including the satisfaction of the soul and conscience.

Duration: 1:13:05

Scripture: Psalm 8:4, Psalm 34:8, Psalm 119:11, Psalm 119:105, Psalm 144:1-2, Psalm 144:15

Topics: "True Happiness", "Godly Living"

Description

The sermon transcript discusses the importance of finding true happiness and the misconceptions surrounding it. It emphasizes that true happiness comes from the grace of God and living a righteous and godly life. The speaker encourages listeners to come to Christ for salvation and to resist the temptation of worldly desires. The transcript also provides hints for Christians to increase their happiness, such as being content with what they have and not envying others. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the need for a relationship with God and living according to His teachings in order to find true happiness.

Transcript

The scripture reading for this morning is from Psalm 144, Psalm 144, a psalm of David. Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight, my goodness and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I trust, who subdueth my people under me. Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him, or the son of man that thou makest account of him? Man is like to vanity, his days are as a shadow that passeth away.

Bow the heavens, O Lord, and come down. Touch the mountains and they shall smoke. Cast forth lightning and scatter them.

Shoot out thine arrows and destroy them. Send thine hand from above. Rid me and deliver me out of great waters from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

I will sing a new song unto thee, O God, upon a psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. It is he that giveth salvation unto kings, who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword. Rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood, that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, that our daughters may be as cornerstones polished after the similitude of a palace, that our garners may be full,

affording all manner of store, that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets, that our oxen may be strong to labor, that there be no breaking in nor going out, that there be no complaining in our streets.

Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Here ends the reading of God's holy word. Let us now turn to the Lord in prayer and seek his blessing.

Lord God in heaven, we bow before thee, the great creator and preserver of all thou hast created, of all the works of thy hands, and we confess, Lord, that we have done a terrible thing, for thou hast made us as the highest part of thy work, wholly set apart to bear thy image, and we have ruined ourselves in sin, in unbelief. When we had to choose between thee and thy word and the devil and his word, we went wrong. We called thee a liar and entrusted ourselves to that which is against thee.

O Lord, have mercy upon us, forgive us, for we have not only sinned in our father Adam and all our fathers before us, but we ourselves have continued in sin. And worse yet, Lord, we have found pleasure and we have sought after our life in things that are apart from thee. In those good things thou hast given for our help, we have sought to make ourselves as thee.

We have made idols of so many things, even lawful things. O Lord, we need thy salvation. We need deliverance from our sin, from our heart of sin, from our love for sin.

We need a complete change, and we have ruined ourselves so utterly, we can find no good and no wisdom in ourselves that we would change ourselves. We pray for help from above, from without. And we have seen in thy word and thy gospel thy salvation.

For the worst one, though we have sinned much, yet it is still the day of grace, and we plead upon thy character and upon thy word, upon thy salvation in Christ, that thou would come down and be with us, and even, for Christ's sake, to bless us, to show us thy favor and thy goodness, especially in the preaching of thy word, that thou would use it to show us the evil, the wickedness of sin, how ruinous and harmful it is to our souls that it is not honoring or pleasing to thee. But there is one that has done all things well, and thou hast sent him as a substitute, and we plead upon the name and the words and the work of the Lord Jesus. Help us, we pray, for his sake, to find a new life in him, a life to live for thee and for thy kingdom, and no longer for sin and self and the devil and his kingdom, which will one day be destroyed.

We pray for our little flock. Lord, thou knowest each one, each need. Give us a heart to look to thee in all of our troubles and miseries, looking to Christ.

Give us faith, Lord, that we may believe that thou art so willing and so good and strong to help us, though we deserve to be cast out. We pray for the families, how hard it may be to have a home full of sinners, but how good it may be where we see thy grace and thy mercy subduing our sins and working love in the hearts. We thank thee, Lord, that thou hast given the gift of love also in thy common grace.

May thy goodness lead us to repentance. We pray that thou would bless thy church wherever she gathers this day. Bless thy servants as they bring thy word.

Lord, we confess we have become so worldly. Also and especially in our denomination, there are even those amongst us whom thou hast called us to be united with in the one true and living church that is going in the way of the world this day, thinking with evil music and worldly lusts that thou can grant thy blessing and thy saving work. Oh, Lord, take away our blindness.

Revive us and grant repentance that our only hope would be in a crucified Savior and only things that would point us and draw us to him would we have in thy holy house, in thy holy worship services. We pray for thy servants sent to the mission field. Bless them and help them.

Use them for the preaching of the gospel and the extension of thy kingdom wherever thou hast thy people that must be brought in and will be brought in. We pray for our nation, our president and our leaders. Oh, Lord, give that holy fear, that humble heart to know and to act upon the truth that we are nothing if we do not receive from thee all that we need for our life, for our callings, for our duties, for our offices.

We pray that thou would be with us now. Give us strength and clarity of mind to listen to thy word and by thy grace in Christ may it be mixed with faith that we would praise thy great and holy name for thou art worthy of all honor and glory and praise. We ask it with the pardoning of our many sins.

For Jesus' sake, Amen. Let us now sing together from Psalter 89. I would also, before we sing, read the text for the sermon from Psalm 144, verse 15.

Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Psalter 89, all the stanzas. Children, have you ever felt the help of the Lord in singing the Psalms, the Psalters, where by nature we are careless and our mind wanders? But we just sang, and I hope you may have heard those words.

Ye children, come, give ear to me, and learn Jehovah's fear. He who would long and happy live, let him my counsel hear. Or did you notice the title of the Psalter? Did it draw you to think? The secret of a happy life.

That's the theme for the sermon this morning. The title of the sermon is Happiness. And again, I'll read the text.

Psalm 144, verse 15. Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Children, do you remember the report we heard of that young man that said to his father, Father, you taught me well.

I know what the truth is. And you also taught me that knowing the truth doesn't save my soul. Isn't it true, children, that if you're in a sinking ship, it isn't knowing that the only safe place is in the lifeboat? Knowing that doesn't help you, does it? It's being in the lifeboat.

May God help us to listen to His Word, and to hear that, as you've been taught many times, the Lord Jesus is the lifeboat. Happiness. An atheist, which, children, means a man who believes that there is no such thing as God.

An atheist was once addressing a crowd of people in the open air. He was trying to persuade them that there was no God, no devil, no heaven and no hell, no resurrection, no judgment, and no life to come. He advised them to throw away their Bibles, and not to pay attention to what preachers said.

He recommended them to think as he did, and to be like him. He talked boldly, and the crowd listened eagerly. It was the blind leading the blind.

They were both falling into the pit, as we read from Matthew 15, 14. In the middle of his address, a poor old woman suddenly pushed her way through the crowd to the place where he was standing. She stood

before him.

She looked him full in the face and said, Sir, she said in a loud voice, are you happy? The atheist looked scornfully at her and gave her no answer. Sir, she said again, I ask you to answer my question. Are you happy? You want us to throw away our Bibles.

You tell us not to believe what preachers say about Christ. You advise us to think as you do, and be like you. Now, before we take your advice, we have a right to know what good we will gain by it.

Do your fine ideas give you a lot of comfort? Do you feel really happy? The atheist stopped and attempted to answer the old woman's question. He stammered and shuffled and fidgeted and endeavored to explain his meaning. He tried hard to return to his subject, but he said he had not come to preach about happiness, but it was of no use.

The old woman stuck to her point. She insisted on her question being answered, and the crowd took her side. She pressed him hard with her inquiry and would take no excuse.

And at the last, the atheist was obliged to leave and sneak off in the confusion. His conscience would not let him stay. He dared not say that he was happy.

The old woman showed great wisdom in asking the question that she did. The argument she used may seem simple, but in reality, it is one of the most powerful that can be employed. Whenever a man begins to speak against and despise the old Bible Christianity, ask him whether he can say with honesty and sincerity that he is happy.

The grand test of a man's faith and religion is, does it make him happy? Let me now warmly invite everyone to consider the subject of this sermon. Let me warn you to remember that the salvation of your soul and nothing less is closely bound up with the subject. The heart cannot be right in the sight of God which knows nothing of happiness or feels nothing of peace within.

There are three things which I propose, and I pray the Spirit of God will apply it to the souls. All the souls of those who hear this. The first point, let me point out some things which are absolutely essential to happiness.

The second point, let me expose some common mistakes about the way to be happy. And the third point, let me show the way to be truly happy. First of all, I have to point out some things which are absolutely essential to true happiness.

Happiness is what all mankind wants to obtain. The desire of it is deeply rooted in the human heart. All men naturally dislike pain and sorrow and discomfort.

All men naturally like ease, comfort and bliss. All men naturally hunger and thirst after happiness. Just as the sick man longs for health and the prisoner of war longs for liberty.

Just as the parched traveler in hot countries longs to see a cooling fountain. Just in the same way does poor mortal man long to be happy. But how few consider what they really mean when they talk of happiness.

They think some are happy who in reality are miserable. And they think some are gloomy and sad who are really truly happy. They dream of a happiness which in reality would never satisfy their nature's wants.

Let me try this day to throw a little light on the subject. True happiness is not a perfect freedom from sorrow and discomfort. Let that never be forgotten.

If that were so, there would be no such thing as happiness in this world. Such happiness is for angels who have never fallen, but not for man. The happiness I am inquiring about is the kind that a poor, sinful, dying creature may hope to attain.

Our whole nature is defiled by sin. Evil abounds in the world. Sickness and death and change are doing their daily sad work on every side.

In such a state of things, the highest happiness man can attain to on earth must necessarily be a mixed thing. If we expect to find any literally perfect happiness on this side of the grave, we expect what we will not find. True happiness does not consist in laughter and smiles.

The face is very often a poor index of the inward man. There are thousands who laugh loud and are merry in the company of others, but are wretched and miserable in private, almost afraid to be alone. There are hundreds who are solemn and serious in their demeanor, but whose hearts are full of solid peace.

A poet once wrote that our smiles are not worth very much. He said, a man may smile and smile and be a villain. And the eternal word of God teaches us that even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.

Don't tell me of smiling and laughing faces. I want to hear of something more of that when I ask whether a man is happy. A truly happy man no doubt will often show his happiness in his face, but a man may have a very merry face and not be happy at all.

Of all deceptive things on earth, nothing is so deceptive as mere fun. It is a hollow, empty show, utterly devoid of substance and reality. Listen to the brilliant talker in society and mark the applause which he receives from a company.

Follow him to his own private room, and you will very likely find him plunged in sad despondency. I know a man who confessed that even when he was thought to be the most happy, he often wished that he was dead. Look at the smiling beauty at the party, and you might suppose she never knew what it was like to be unhappy.

See her the next day at her own home, and you may probably find her angry at herself and everybody else besides. No worldly fun is not real happiness. There is a certain pleasure about it, I do not deny.

There is an animal excitement about it, I make no question. There is a temporary elevation of spirits, I freely concede. But don't call it by the sacred name of happiness.

The most beautiful cut flowers stuck in the ground do not make a garden. When ordinary glass is called a diamond, and tinsel is called gold, then and not until then can people who can laugh and smile be called happy men. Once there was a man who consulted a physician about his depression.

The physician advised him to keep up his spirits by going to hear the great comic of the day. You should go and hear Matthews. He will make you happy, said the doctor.

I'm sorry to say, sir, was the reply. I am Matthews himself. To be truly happy, the highest wants of a man's nature must be met and satisfied.

The requirements of his curiously wrought constitution must all be met. Animals are happy as long as they are warm and fed. The little infant looks happy when he is clothed and fed and well and in his mother's arms.

And why? Because it is satisfied. And just so it is with man. His highest wants must be met and satisfied before he can be truly happy.

All needs must be met. There must be no void, no empty places, no unsupplied cravings. Till then, he is never truly happy.

And what our man's principle wants? Does he only have a body? No, he has something more. He has a soul. Does he only have the five senses? Can he do nothing but hear and see and smell and taste and feel? No, he has a thinking mind and a conscience.

Does he have any consciousness of any world but that in which he lives and moves? He has. There is that still, small voice within him which makes itself heard. That this is not all there is to life.

There is a world unseen. There is life beyond the grave. Yes, it is true.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made. All men know it. All men feel it.

If they would only speak the truth. It is utter nonsense to pretend that food and clothing and earthly material wealth alone can make a man happy. The soul has needs.

The conscience has needs. There can be no true happiness until these wants are satisfied. To be a truly happy man, a man must have sources of happiness which are not dependent upon anything in this world.

There is nothing on earth which is not stamped with the mark of instability and uncertainty. All the good things that money can buy are but for a moment. They either leave us or we are obliged to leave them.

All the sweetest relationships in this life are liable to come to an end. Death may come any day and cut them off. The man whose happiness depends entirely on things here below is like him who builds his house on sand.

To be truly happy, a man must be able to look at the past without guilty fears. He must be able to look around him without discontent. And he must be able to look forward without anxious dread.

Do not talk to me of your happiness if you are unable to look steadily either before or behind you. Your present position may be easy and pleasant. You may find sources of joy and gladness in your profession, your dwelling place, your family and your friends.

Your health may be good. Your spirits may be cheerful. But stop and think quietly over your past life.

Can you reflect calmly on all the omissions and commissions of bygone years? How will they bear God's inspection? How will you answer for them in the last judgment? And then look forward and think of the years yet to come. Think of the certain end towards which you are heading. Think of death, of judgment.

Think of the hour when you will meet God face to face. Are you ready for it? Are you prepared? Can you look forward to these things without alarm? Oh, be very sure that if you cannot look comfortably at any time in your life but to the present, then your boasted happiness is a poor, unreal thing. It is but as a fancy

and decorated coffin, fair and beautiful on the outside, but nothing but bones and decay within.

It is a mere thing of a day, like Jonas Gord. It is not real happiness. I ask you to fix your minds on the things essential to be happy.

To be truly happy, the wants of your soul and conscience must be satisfied. To be truly happy, your joy must be founded on something more than this world can give. In the next place, for our second point, let me expose some common mistakes about the way to be happy.

It is an utter mistake to suppose that position and fame alone can give happiness. The kings, presidents, and rulers of this world are not necessarily happy men. They have troubles and crosses which none know but themselves.

They see a thousand evils which they are unable to remedy. They have burdens and responsibilities laid on them which are a daily weight on their hearts. The Roman emperor Antonine often said that the imperial power was an ocean of miseries.

Queen Elizabeth, when she heard a milkmaid singing, wished that she had been born to a lot like hers. Never did the poet write a truer word than when he said, Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown. It is an utter mistake to suppose that riches alone can give happiness.

They can enable a man to command and possess everything but inward peace. They cannot buy a cheerful spirit and a light heart. There is anxiety in the getting of riches.

Anxiety in the keeping of them. Anxiety in the using of them. Anxiety in the disposing of them.

Anxiety in the gathering. Anxiety in the scattering of them. He is a wise man who said that money was only another name for trouble.

It is an utter mistake to suppose that learning and science alone can give happiness. They may occupy a man's time and attention, but they cannot really make him happy. They that increase knowledge often increase sorrow.

The more they learn, the more they discover their own ignorance, from Ecclesiastes 118. The heart wants something as well as the head. The conscience needs food as well as the intellect.

All the secular knowledge in the world will not give a man joy and gladness when he thinks about sickness and death and the grave. They that have climbed the highest often have found themselves solitary, dissatisfied and empty of peace. The learned Selden, at the close of his life, confessed that all his learning did not give him as much comfort as the four verses found in Titus 2, 11-14.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. It is an utter mistake to suppose that idleness alone can give happiness. The laborer who gets up at five in the morning and goes out to work all day in a cold clay ditch often thinks as he walks past the rich man's house, Oh, what a fine thing it must be to have no work to do.

Poor fellow, he does not know what he is saying. The most miserable creature on earth is the man who has nothing to do. Work for the hands or work for the mind is absolutely essential to human happiness.

Without it, the mind feeds upon itself and the whole inward man becomes diseased. There was no idleness in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had to dress it and to keep it.

There will be no idleness in heaven, for God's servants shall serve Him. As we read in Revelation 22.3, Oh, be very sure that the idlest man is the man most truly unhappy. It is also an utter mistake to suppose that pleasure seeking and amusement alone can give happiness.

Of all roads that men take in order to be happy, this is the one that is most completely wrong. Of all the weary, flat, dull and unprofitable ways of spending life, this exceeds them all. To think of a dying creature with an immortal soul expecting happiness in feasting and merrymaking, in dancing and singing, in dressing, in visiting, in party going or gambling, in races or fairs, in hunting and shooting, in crowds, in laughter, in noise, in music, in wine.

Surely it is a sight that is enough to make the devil laugh and the angels weep. Even a child will not play with his toys all day long. It must have food.

But when a grown-up man or woman think to find happiness in a constant round of amusement, they sink far below a child. I place before everyone these common mistakes about the way to be happy. I tell you that if you believe that any one of them can lead you to true peace, you are entirely deceived.

You are like the one pouring water into a sieve or putting money into a bag with holes. You might as well try to make an elephant happy by feeding him with a grain of sand as to try to satisfy that heart of yours with position, riches, learning, idleness, or pleasures. Do you doubt the truth of all that I am saying to you? I dare say you do.

Let us then turn to the great book of human experience and read over a few lines of its solemn pages. A king will be our witness. I mean Solomon, king of Israel.

We know that he had power, wisdom, and wealth far exceeding that of any ruler of his time. We know from his own confession that he tried the great experiment of seeing how far the good things of this world can make men happy. Yet, what is Solomon's testimony? You have it in his melancholy words from Ecclesiastes 1.14. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

I want no greater proof than the corruption of human nature, than the determination with which we seek happiness where happiness cannot be found. I'll read that sentence again. I want no greater proof of the corruption of human nature than the determination with which we seek happiness where happiness cannot be found.

Century after century, the children of men will declare that they know the way to happiness perfectly well and need no teaching. They cast to the winds our warnings. They rush everyone on his own favorite path and wake up when it is too late to find that their whole life has been a great mistake.

Are you a young person? I implore you to accept the tender warning of a minister of the Gospel and not to seek happiness where happiness cannot be found. Don't seek it in riches. Don't seek it in power and position.

Don't seek it in pleasure. Don't seek it in learning. All these are bright and splendid fountains.

Their waters taste sweet, but, oh, remember what God has written. From John 4.13. Remember this and you will be wise. Are you poor? Are you tempted to daydream that if you had the rich man's place, you would be quite happy? Resist the temptation and cast it behind you.

Do not envy your wealthy neighbors. Be content with what things you have. Happiness does not depend on houses or land.

Silk or fine clothes cannot shut out sorrow from the heart. Mansions and villas cannot prevent anxiety and care from coming in through their doors. There is much misery riding and driving about in cars as there is walking about on foot.

There is as much unhappiness in elegant houses as there is in humble cottages. Oh, remember the mistakes which are common about happiness and be wise. Let me now, for our third point, point out the way to be really happy.

There is a sure path which leads to happiness if men will only take it. There never lived a person who traveled in that path and missed the object that he sought to attain. It is a path open to all.

It needs neither wealth nor position nor learning in order to walk in it. It is for the servant as well as for the master. It is for the poor as well as for the rich.

None are excluded but those who exclude themselves. Where is that path? Where is this road? Listen and you will hear. The way to be happy is to be a real Christian.

Scripture declares it and experience proves it. The converted man, the believer in Christ, the Child of God, He and He alone is the happy man. It sounds too simple to be true.

It seems at first sight so simple a statement that it is not believed. But the greatest truths are often the simplest. The secret which many of the wisest on earth have utterly failed to discover is revealed to the humblest believer in Christ.

I repeat it deliberately and defy the world to disprove it. The true Christian is the only happy man. What do I mean when I speak of a true Christian? Do I mean everyone who goes to church? Do I mean everybody who professes an orthodox creed and bows his head at the belief? Do I mean everybody who professes to love the Gospel? No, indeed, I mean something very different.

Not all are Christians who call themselves Christians. The man I have in view is the Christian in heart and in life. He who has been taught by the Holy Spirit really to feel his sins.

He who then really rests all his hopes on the Lord Jesus Christ and His payment for man's sins on the cross. He who has been born again and really lives a spiritual, holy life. He whose religion is not merely a Sunday show, but a mighty, constraining principle governing every day of his life.

He is the man I mean when I speak of a true Christian. What do I mean when I say the true Christian is happy? Has he no doubts and no fears? Has he no anxieties and no troubles? Has he no sorrows and no cares? Does he never feel pain and shed no tears? Far be it from me to say anything of the kind. He has a body weak and frail like other men.

He has affections and passions like everyone born of a woman. He lives in a changing world. But, deep down in his heart, he has a mind of solid peace and substantial joy which is never exhausted.

This is true happiness. Do I say that all true Christians are equally happy at all times? No, not for a moment. All have their ebbs and flows of peace, like the sea.

Their bodily health is not always the same. Their earthly circumstances are not always the same. The souls of those they love fill them at times with special anxiety.

They themselves are sometimes overtaken by a fault and walk in darkness. They sometimes give way to inconsistencies and besetting sins and lose their sense of forgiveness. But, as a general rule, the true Christian has a deep pool of peace within him which, even at the lowest, is never entirely dry.

I use the words, as a general rule, advisedly. When a believer falls into such a horrible sin as that of David, adultery and murder, it would be monstrous to talk of his feeling inward peace. If a man professing to be a true Christian talked to me of being happy in such a state before giving any evidence of the deepest, most heart-abasing repentance, I should feel great doubts whether he ever had any grace at all.

The true Christian is the only happy man because his conscience is at peace. That mysterious witness for God which is so mercifully placed within us is fully satisfied and at rest. It sees the blood of Christ, a complete cleansing away of all its guilt.

It sees in the priesthood and mediation of Christ a complete answer to all its fears. It sees through the sacrifice and death of Christ God can now be just and yet be the justifier of the ungodly. The Lord Jesus Christ has amply met all requirements.

Conscience is no longer the enemy of the true Christian. But his friend and advisor. Therefore, he is happy.

The true Christian is the only happy man because he can sit down quietly and think about his soul. He can look behind him and ahead of him. He can look within him and around him and feel all is well.

He can think calmly on his past, however many and great his sins, and take comfort in the thought that they are all forgiven. The righteousness of Christ covers all as Noah's flood covered the highest mountains. He can think calmly about things to come and yet not be afraid.

Sickness is painful. Death is solemn. The judgment day is an awful thing.

But having Christ for him, he has nothing to fear. He can think calmly about the Holy God whose eyes are on all his ways and feel and know He is my Father, my reconciled Father in Jesus Christ. I am weak.

I am unprofitable. Yet in Christ, He regards me as His dear child and is well pleased. Oh, what a blessed privilege it is to be able to think and not be afraid.

The true Christian is the only happy man because he has sources of happiness entirely independent of this world. He has something which cannot be affected by sickness and deaths and private losses and public calamities. He has the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

He has a hope laid up for Him in Heaven. He has a treasure which moth and rust cannot corrupt. He has a house which can never be torn down.

His loving wife may die and his heart may feel torn in two. His darling children may be taken from him. He may be left alone in this world.

His earthly plans may be crossed. His health may fail. But all this time, He has a part of him which can never be hurt.

He has a friend who never dies. He has possessions beyond the grave of which nothing can deprive him. His springs of water on this earth may dry up, but His springs of living water never run dry.

This is real happiness. The true Christian is happy because he is in his right position. All the powers of his being are directed to the right ends.

His affections are not set on things on earth, but on things in Heaven. His will is not bent on self-indulgence, but is submissive to the will of God. His mind is not absorbed in wretched, perishable, insignificant things.

He enjoys doing good. The heart of an unconverted man is like a house that is a mess. But grace puts everything in that heart in its right position.

The things of the soul come first. The things of the world come second. He sits at the feet of Jesus and is in his right mind.

He loves God and loves man, and so he is happy. In Heaven, all are happy because all do God's will perfectly. The plain truth is that without Christ, there is no happiness in the world.

He alone can give the Comforter who abides forever. He is the sun. Without Him, men never feel warm.

He is the light. Without Him, men are always in the dark. He is the bread.

Without Him, men are always starving. He is the living water. Without Him, men are always thirsty.

Give them what you like. Place them where you will. Surround them with all the comforts you can imagine.

It makes no difference. Separate from Christ, the Prince of Peace, a man cannot be happy. Give a man a sensible interest in Christ and he will be happy in spite of poverty.

He will tell you that he wants nothing that is really good. He is provided for. He has riches in possession and riches in restoration.

He has meat to eat that the world does not know of. He has friends who never leave him nor forsake him. The Father and the Son come to him and make their home with him.

The Lord Jesus Christ has supper with him and he with Christ. From Revelation 3.20 Give a man a sensible interest in Christ and he will be happy in spite of sickness. His flesh may groan.

His body may be worn out with pain. But his heart will rest and be at peace. One of the happiest people I ever saw was a young woman who had been hopelessly ill for many years with disease of the spine.

She lay in an attic without the warmth of a fire. The roof was less than two feet above her face. She did not have the slightest hope of recovery.

But, she was always rejoicing in the Lord Jesus. The Spirit triumphed mightily over the flesh. She was happy because Christ was with her.

Give a man a sensible interest in Christ and he will be happy in spite of abounding public calamities. I know well that Satan hates the doctrine which I am endeavoring to press upon you. I have no doubt he is filling your mind with objections and reasonings and persuading you that I am wrong.

I am not afraid to meet these objections face to face. Let us bring them forward and see what they are. You may tell me, you know many very religious people who are not happy at all.

You see them diligent in attending public worship. You know that they are never missing at the Lord's Supper. But, you see in them no marks of the peace which I have been describing.

But, are you sure that these people you speak of are true believers in Christ? Are you sure that with all their appearance of religion, they are born again and converted to God? It is very likely that they have nothing but the name of Christianity without the reality. A form of godliness without the power of it. Yes, you have yet to learn that many people may do many religious acts and yet possess no saving religion.

It is not a mere formal, ceremonial Christianity that will ever make people happy. You may tell me, we want something more than going to church and going to the Lord's table to give us peace. There must be a real, vital union with Christ.

It is not the formal Christian, but the true Christian that is the happy man. You may tell me that you know really spiritually minded and converted people who do not seem happy. You have heard them frequently complaining of their own hearts and groaning over their own weaknesses.

They seem to you all doubts and anxieties and fears. And you want to know where is the happiness in these people of which I have been saying so much. I do not deny that there are many saints of God such as these whom you describe.

And I am sorry for it. I allow that there are many believers who live far below their privileges and seem to know nothing of the joy and peace in believing. But, did you ever ask any of these people whether they would give up their Christianity and go back to the world? Did you ever ask them after all their groanings and doubtings and fearings whether they would be happier if they ceased to follow after Christ? Did you ever ask these questions? I am certain if you did that the weakest and lowest believers would all give you one answer.

I am certain they would tell you that they would rather cling to the little scrap of hope in Christ than possess the whole world. I am sure that they would all answer, our faith is weak if we have any. Our grace is small if we have any.

Our joy in Christ is next to nothing at all. But we cannot give up what we've got. Though the Lord slay us, we must cling to Him.

The root of happiness lies deep in many a poor, weak believer's heart where neither leaves nor blossoms are to be seen. But you will tell me in the last place that you cannot believe most believers are happy because they are so solemn and serious. Did you think that they do not really possess this happiness I have been describing because their faces do not show it? You doubt the reality of their joy because it is seen so little? Wait until you are a converted man yourself before you pass judgment on the seriousness

of converted people.

See them in companies where all are of one heart and all love Christ. And so far as my own experience goes, you will find no people so truly happy as true Christians. I am now going to close by a few words of application.

In the first place, let me entreat everyone to apply to his own heart the solemn question, Are you happy? High position or low position? Rich or poor? Master or servant? Farmer or laborer? Young or old? Here is the question that deserves an answer. Are you really happy? Man of this world who cares about nothing but the things of this world, neglecting the Bible, making a god of business or money, providing for everything but the day of judgment, scheming and planning about everything but eternity? Are you happy? You know that you are not. Foolish woman who is throwing life away in flippancy and fickleness, spending hours after hours on that poor, frail body which must soon be fed to the worms, making an idol of dress and fashion and excitement and human praise as if this world was all there is? Are you happy? You know that you are not.

Young man who is bent on pleasure and self-indulgence, fluttering from one idle pastime to another like the moth about the light, fancying yourself clever and knowing and being too wise to be led by preachers and ignorant that the devil is leading you captive like an animal that is led to the slaughter. Are you happy? You know that you are not. Yes, each and all of you are not happy.

And in your own consciences, you know it well. You may not admit it, but it is sadly true. There is a great empty place in each of your hearts and nothing will fill it.

Pour into it money, learning, position and pleasure and it will still be empty. There is a sore place in each of your consciences and nothing will heal it. Immortality can't.

Free thinking can't. They are all quack remedies. Nothing can heal it but that which at present you have not used, the simple Gospel of Christ.

Yes, you are indeed a miserable people. Take warning this day that you will never be happy until you are converted. You might as well expect to feel the sun shine on your face when your back is turned to it as to feel happy when you turn your back on God and on Christ.

In the second place, let me warn all who are not true Christians of the folly of living a life which cannot make them happy. You are hewing out for yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns which can hold no water. You are spending your time and your strength and your affections and your labors on that which will give you no return.

Spending your money on that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy from Isaiah 55-2. You are building up babbles of your own contriving and ignorant that God will pour contempt on your schemes for procuring happiness because you attempt to be happy without Him. Awake from your dreams, I beg you, and show yourselves men.

Think of the uselessness of living a life which you will be ashamed of when you die and having a religion only in name which will fail you when it is most wanted. Open your eyes and look around the world. Tell me who was ever really happy without God and Christ and the Holy Spirit.

I warn you plainly that if you are not a true Christian, you will miss happiness in the world that is now as well as in the world that is to come. Oh, believe me, the way of happiness and the way of salvation are one and the same. He that will have his own way and refuses to have Christ will never be really happy.

But he that serves Christ has the promises of both lives. He is happy on earth and will be happier still in heaven. If you are neither happy in this world nor the next, it will be your own fault.

Oh, think of this. Do not be guilty of such enormous folly. Who does not mourn over the folly of the drunkard, the drug addict, and the person who commits suicide? But there is no folly like that of the unrepentant child of the world.

In the third place, let me entreat all who are not yet happy to seek happiness where it alone can be found. The keys of the way to happiness are in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is sealed and appointed by the Father to give the bread of life to them that hunger and to give the water of life to them that thirst.

Oh, if you want to be happy, come to Christ. Come to Him confessing that you are weary of your own ways and want rest, that you find no power and might to make yourself holy or happy or fit for heaven and have no hope but in Him. Tell Him this unreservedly.

This is coming to Christ. Come to Him imploring Him to show you His mercy, to grant you His salvation, to wash you in His own blood and take away your sins, to speak peace to your conscience and heal your troubled soul. Tell Him this.

Tell Him all this unreservedly. This is coming to Christ. You have everything to encourage you.

The Lord Jesus Himself invites you. He proclaims to you as well as to others, Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. From Matthew 11, 28-30 Wait for nothing. You may feel unworthy.

You may feel as you did not repent enough. But wait no longer. Come to Christ.

You have everything to encourage you. Thousands have walked in the way you are invited to enter and have found it a good way. Once, like yourself, they served the world and plunged deeply into folly and sin.

Once, like yourself, they became weary of their wickedness and longed for deliverance and for rest. They heard of Christ and His willingness to help and save. They came to Him by faith and prayer after many a doubt and hesitation.

They found Him a thousand times more gracious than they had expected. They rested on Him and they were happy. They carried His cross and tasted peace.

Oh, walk in their steps. I implore you by the mercies of God to come to Christ. If you ever hope to be happy, I entreat you to come to Christ.

Do not delay. Awake from your sleep. Arise and be free.

This day in the fourth place, let me offer a few hints to all true Christians for the increase and promotion of their happiness. I offer these hints with reluctance. I desire to apply them to my own conscience and as well to yours.

You have found Christ's service happy. I have no doubt you feel such sweetness in Christ's peace that you would desire to know more of it. I am sure that these hints deserve attention.

Believers, if you would have an increase in happiness in Christ's service, labor every year to grow in grace. Beware of standing still. Let your aim be to know more, to feel more, to see more of the fullness of Christ.

Do not rest on old grace. Do not be content with the degree of Christianity to which you have been given. Search the Scriptures more earnestly.

Pray more fervently. Hate sin more. Mortify self-will more.

Become more humble the nearer you draw to your end. Seek more direct personal communion with the Lord Jesus. Strive to be more like Enoch, daily walking with God.

Keep your conscience clear of little sins. Grieve not the Spirit. Avoid arguments and disputes about the lesser matters of religion.

Lay more firm hold upon those great truths without which no man can be saved. Remember and practice these things and you will be more happy. Believers, if you would have an increase of happiness in Christ's service, labor every year to do more good.

Look around the circle in which you live your life and determine to be useful. Alas, there is far too much selfishness among believers in the present day. There is far too much lazy sitting by the fire, nursing our own spiritual diseases and croaking over the state of our own souls.

Up and be useful in your day and generation. Is there no one in the world that you can read the Bible to? Is there no one that you can speak to about Christ? Is there no one that you can write to about Christ? Is there literally nothing that you can do for the glory of God and the benefit of your fellow man? Oh, I cannot think it. I cannot think it.

There is much that you might do if you only had the will for your own happiness' sake arise and do it without delay. Believers, if you would have an increase of happiness in Christ's service, labor every year to be more thankful. Pray that you may know more and know more and more what it is to rejoice in the Lord.

From Philippians 3.1 Learn to have a deeper sense of your own wretched sinfulness and corruption and to be more deeply grateful that by the grace of God, you are what you are. Yes, there is too much complaining and too little thanksgiving among the people of God. There is too much murmuring and pouring over the things that we do not have.

There is too little praising and blessing for the many undeserved mercies that we have. Oh, that God would pour out upon us a great spirit of thankfulness and praise. Finally, I desire to end with our verse.

Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Amen. This sermon was written by J.C. Ryle.

And in closing, just a reminder as we heard in our last point for the people of God that we were called to do many things. Let us not return to the law and the works of the law and the strength and the ways of the flesh and the seeking of our own glory to do those things we have been exhorted to do. But let us seek Christ and God for grace that we may do them out of love, out of a fulfilled law, out of a completely paid debt.

It's not that we have a different creditor when Christ paid our debt. We have no debt now. And what is in your heart? Is it that you would pay back a little something to show thankfulness? As much as you possibly could.

And then do you find that you have nothing of self even to pay back a penny of that priceless gift that was given? But, did you hear that word? Gift. It's given freely. There's no debt anymore.

And when you just want to show thanks and you don't find thanks within you, there's thanks in Christ. God has given Him to be our all in all. And we may give Him back to the Father for He's been given and He's in us.

And then we may give Him as a perfect thankfulness, well-pleasing to the Father. May God give us grace to bear fruit from His Word. Amen.

Let's pray. O Lord, it is Thy Word and we are Thy people. Thou knowest our resistance, our deadness, our stubbornness, and how our conscience is also accusing us and the law is accusing us.

May it be different now that Thy law would be as a schoolmaster to bring us again to Christ. Or may it be, Lord, by Thy wondrous working with Thy Word and Spirit, that one would be brought to Christ for the first time. That we together may be amazed that Thy grace is so great.

Let us not shrink from examining ourselves. That we may trust that though our sins be greater than we thought, that we may confess them and find Thy forgiving love in Christ is greater than we thought. And being received in Him that His righteousness was more perfect than we thought.

O Lord, work, we pray, in our midst for Thy glory and honor that we may not be only hearers of Thy Word, but through Christ that we may keep it. Help us, we pray, forgive our sins in speaking and listening and hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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