

True Wisdom the Source of Happiness

by Thomas Reade

True wisdom is the source of true happiness, and it is found in Christ and the blessings of redemption.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:17, Matthew 5:3, Acts 17:11, Romans 8:16, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 2:3, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5, 1 John 5:13

Topics: "True Wisdom", "Christian Happiness"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches on the importance of true wisdom as the source of happiness, emphasizing that earthly pursuits can never satisfy the immortal soul and that true felicity is found in Christ. He highlights the lessons of humility and the sovereignty of God as foundational in the school of Christ, warning against pride and unscriptural theories. Reade stresses the responsibility of man, the state of spiritual death, and the infinite foreknowledge of God, urging humility and submission to divine truths. He concludes by emphasizing the necessity of love, humility, and a pious search for truth in the Christian journey towards true happiness and eternal life.

Transcript

32. TRUE WISDOM THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.... Happy is every one that retains her."
Prov. 3:17, 18

Earthly things can never satisfy the enlarged desires of an immortal soul. This is the reason why worldly people are so restless and changeable. Temporal objects soon cloy and satiate, therefore they fly from flower to flower like vagrant butterflies, until death closes their idle chase after an unreal happiness.

Did they possess true wisdom, they would discover the source of true felicity. Christ and happiness are inseparable. If we find true happiness, it is because we have found Christ; for, if we find Christ, we must be happy. The pardon of sin, peace with God, purity of heart, and the hope of glory, cannot fail to render the believer blessed.

The first lesson which we learn in the school of Christ is HUMILITY. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Many are eager to dive into the deep things of God, before they have well learned the first principles of the gospel of Christ. Hence arises that caution of Paul in his Epistle to Timothy, respecting the ordination of men to the ministry; "Not a novice, (one newly come to the faith) lest being lifted up with pride he fall into

the condemnation of the devil." "Lay hands suddenly on no man."

There is something dangerously pleasing in exercising our ingenuity, and in disputing about the hidden mysteries of our holy religion. But this unhallowed spirit not infrequently leads to unscriptural theories, and even to skepticism itself.

Another lesson which we learn in the school of Christ, after the knowledge of our own nothingness, and the all-sufficiency of the Savior, is the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. "His counsel shall stand, and He will do all his pleasure." Through his word, the Almighty has communicated his will concerning us. We know no further than he has been pleased to make known his ways unto us; therefore, to argue, and draw inferences, and make deductions, and come to conclusions upon those things, around which infinite wisdom has drawn an impenetrable veil, is presumptuous and sinful. True wisdom is ever accompanied with humility.

The Scriptures plainly declare, that man is a responsible creature, possessing an immortal spirit. He is treated as such by all those arguments, warnings, threatenings, promises, encouragements, and entreaties, which are scattered throughout the sacred volume, to alarm and allure him, to rouse and draw him to the fountain of happiness, to his God and Savior, from whom he has revolted, to whom he is invited, and through whose sovereign love alone he can be saved.

The Scriptures plainly declare, that man is in a state of spiritual death; utterly helpless, and unable to repent, believe, and obey, through any natural power or willingness of his own; that if left to himself he must inevitably perish, like a man tied hand and foot and thrown into the sea. We are tied and bound with the chain of our sins, and if not saved by another, must be lost forever.

The Scriptures also declare, that God's foreknowledge is infinite; that he sees the end from the beginning; that nothing can happen without his command or permission. This is proved by prophecies clearly foretold, and minutely accomplished, without forcing the human will; the guilt of the accomplishment resting upon the sinner, who acts freely, while the counsels of heaven are wisely and mysteriously fulfilled. "Him," said Peter to the Jews, "being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

This short view should teach us the impropriety, yes, the impiety, of refusing to admit any truth of Scripture, because it does not exactly square with our preconceived ideas of the Christian system. Hence arises the necessity of continually reverting to our first lesson, HUMILITY. Like the letters of the alphabet, this sweet grace of the Spirit forms the basis of true heavenly knowledge, from the first rudiments to the highest attainments in the school of Christ; yes, the higher we advance in heavenly wisdom, the lower we shall fall in self-abasement. "Children, young men, and fathers," must all be clothed with humility, but more especially the matured Christian. In heaven, the angels veil their faces with their wings. In heaven, the saints cast their crowns before the throne.

Blessed Lord! give me the spirit of a little child. Let me never reject your counsel, nor rebel against your sovereignty. Clothe me with humility, fill me with love. Teach me to do your will. What I cannot comprehend, give me grace to believe. It is enough that You have said it. Enable me daily to repose my soul on your promises. I know that all good comes from you; all evil from myself. You are the source of true felicity, the fountain of living waters; in the fullness of your grace you have invited me to come, that I may "take the water of life freely." Lord, I come at your command, and by your power; O save me for your mercy's sake.

Without attempting to explain and make clear the deep, yet holy decrees of the Almighty, or to reconcile by human arguments those truths which, however apparently at variance, are in perfect unison with each other, let us rather study the divine word as a practical book, showing us what we must believe and do, in order to obtain eternal life. The wisdom of God is not confined within the narrow limits of our contracted conceptions, no more than his creation is contained within the circle of our powers of vision. All the sublime revelations of Jehovah throw a glory around his justice, holiness, and love. All his perfections blend and harmonize at the Cross of Christ. The blessings of redemption are promised by the Father, purchased by the Son, and bestowed through the Holy Spirit. All proceed from the unmerited, sovereign grace of the Triune Jehovah. Sinners lying under the curse of a broken law, and bound by the chain of a will at enmity with God, are now redeemed and restored to the image of God, and a child-like obedience to his will.

If our hearts have been humbled, if we have been brought under a consciousness of guilt and misery to the foot of the Cross, if we have been led to renounce our own fancied righteousness, and, if we have been enabled to lay hold upon Christ as our Savior, as our Advocate with the Father, as our only hope of glory; and if, in consequence of this apprehension of Christ by faith, we feel our hearts drawn to him in love, choosing him as our portion, and walking in him as our way, in opposition to all worldly portions and ways, not fearing his reproach, but glorying in the Cross- then we have discovered the source of true happiness, then we possess that inward witness of which John speaks; that testimony of the conscience, and that witnessing of the Spirit with our spirit, of which Paul speaks; and that manifestation of Christ to our hearts, of which He himself speaks to his disciples. Then we may look back to our election in Christ, and forwards to our being with him in glory. Where is boasting? It is excluded. Where is license to sin? It is forever banished from this holy ground, where proud reason must put off her shoes from off her feet.

Here nothing can stand, but what is humble. Here none can walk, but the redeemed of the Lord. Holiness and humility flow from the electing love of God, not from the natural working of the heart. God alone shall be exalted, who alone is to be adored. Woe to that rebellious worm who shall dare to tear the laurels from the Savior's brow, and place them on his own. Man fell through pride. He is saved through humility, for

"Christ will sooner abdicate his own,

Than stoop from heaven to give the proud a throne."

Oh! gracious Savior, may I ever look to you in a spirit of humility, follow you in a spirit of humility, and seek to glorify you by a spirit of humility. Preserve me from the pride of reason, and the pride of works. Empty me of self, and replenish me out of the fullness of your love. Direct me aright through the mazes of this erring world. Allow me not to lose, through sloth or unbelief, the pleasures of heavenly wisdom. Shine upon my soul, and increase my trust in you, while passing through this contentious, sinful region, to your abode of glory.

What can more conduce to the happiness of the soul than to know that we are the Lord's. This knowledge, blessed be God, is not unattainable; it is a knowledge essential to our peace. Some may call it presumptuous, but so did not John, or he would not have said, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God." Again he wrote; "Hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us." Oh! happy experience.

The Spirit's witness does not consist in mere rapturous feelings, ecstasies, and impulses, which are often the offspring of a heated imagination, strong passions, and enthusiastic emotions; but it consists in those filial dispositions of love, and fear, and reverence, which are accompanied with joy and peace in believing, and cause the happy believer to abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh! that this may be my blessed experience! Paul, who enjoyed this precious witness, declares, that "experience works hope; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto us." We cannot, therefore, have a well-grounded hope of glory, through the righteousness of Christ, if we have not the inward experience of the love of God in our souls, which is the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry, "Abba Father," and to draw near unto God in Christ, as the Father of mercies, yes, as our Father, and the God of all consolation. In this way, the Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God, by filling us with love to God, and transforming us into the image of God; that, being made his children by adoption and grace, we may bear a resemblance to our heavenly Father in righteousness and true holiness.

The religion of Jesus is a religion of love, from its promulgation to its consummation. God is love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. The work of Christ is love. Oh! that I may live under the constraining influence of love,

"This is the grace which lives and sings,

When faith and hope shall cease,

'Tis this shall strike our joyful strings,

In the sweet realms of bliss."

The more we possess of this grace, the more we shall resemble God the Father, Son, and Spirit; the more we shall enjoy of heaven in our own souls; the more we shall create a little heaven around us; and the more we shall be fitted for that pure world, where love reigns eternal in every redeemed, in every angel's breast.

Oh! happy state! the work of sovereign grace. Compared with this blessedness, how beclouded are the prospects, how unsatisfying the pleasures and pursuits of a fallen world. True wisdom is the only source of true felicity. To cultivate these views and feelings, these principles and affections, is far better than to spend our time in vain researches after those things which the human mind can never fathom; or to spend our breath in disputations which can yield no profit.

A pious and humble search after truth, a holy contemplation and discourse upon the sublimities of Christian doctrine; a reverential meditation on the deep things of God, into which even angels desire to look, is not forbidden. But a disputatious spirit, a love of controversy, a war of words, a desire of victory, a pertinacity in maintaining our own opinions, a readiness to judge those who differ from us as unbelievers, betrays an unhumbled, an unsanctified heart. Such a spirit engenders strife, sows discord, divides the church of Christ, fosters vain-glory, and, like a nipping frost, checks the growth of the heavenly plant, and destroys those brotherly affections which characterize the children of God.

To contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, is a Christian duty, but we must contend in a spirit of love. The revelation of the divine will was not made to promote our natural love of curiosity, but to show us our state and our duty, and to bring us, through the operation of the Spirit, to a child-like conformity to this revealed will. Our blessed Lord evidently proves this, when he says; "I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and

have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in your sight." The worldly-wise are allowed to remain in the darkness of their boasted wisdom, while humble, docile minds are enlightened from above. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

Under the darkest cloud, and in the deepest waters, may these gracious promises support and comfort me- "Do not fear; for I am with you." "When you pass through the rivers, they shall not overflow." "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "All things work together for good to those who love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." "What I do, you do not know now; but you shall know hereafter."

Blessed Lord, be pleased to impart the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that I may know You as my covenant God and Father, and Jesus Christ as my friend and Savior; that I may receive the truth in love, not daring to dive into your decrees, those secret things which you have wisely concealed from man. Teach me what I ought to do; show me the path of life, and enable me to walk therein. Give me an increase of faith and love, of peace and joy, until my soul, made happy in your love, shall take its flight beyond the shadows of this world, to where the glories of redemption will be unfolded to the Church triumphant, amid songs of never-ending praise!

Would you be happy here below?

Let not your heart on earth remain;

Can fleeting pleasures, mixed with woe,

A solid happiness contain?

Would you be happy here below?

Beware of pleasure's gilded snare,

Its painted vanities forego,

Which end in tears and dark despair.

Would you be happy here below?

Seek not the wealth which worldlings prize,

A nobler treasure seek to know,

Eternal in the blissful skies.

Would you be happy here below?

Avoid false honor's empty name-

A glare, a momentary show,

Which leads to everlasting shame.
Would you be happy here below?
To heaven direct your warm desire,
There, let your constant footsteps go;
There, let your wishes all aspire.
Would you be happy here below?
Oh! love the Savior-Prince of Peace;
Then anguish you shall never know,
Your joy in Him will never cease.

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