

## The Pursuit of Happiness - Psalm 1:1-3

**Introduction:** There is an old song that says to put on a happy face. It refers to someone who is sad, cheering themselves up. But the song implies that in order to do that, you've got to plaster a smile on your face, spread sunshine all over the place, and have a cheery outlook on the human race.

Well, that might make for good lyrics, but in practicality, it only lasts for a little while. You can only hold a fake smile, or pretend that everything is bright and cheery for so long. Ask Miss America. Now I'm not saying that doing those things is not helpful. I believe we ought to display a positive attitude as much as possible, because nobody likes to be around a negative person. However, putting on a happy face and being truly happy are two entirely opposite things.

Psalm 1 paints a picture of a truly happy person. In vs. 1, the tense of the verb renders it literally, "*How exceedingly happy is the man...*" who does these things.

Are you someone who really wants to be happy? Being unhappy is a miserable feeling, and I don't know many people who really enjoy being unhappy.

Jesus said in John 10:10, "*I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.*" So, if God wants us to be happy, and Jesus came that we might be happy and fulfilled, we as Christians better learn how to truly be happy, or else, we're **NOT** where God wants us to be. Let's see how we can really be the happy people God wants us to be, shall we?

### 1. The Conduct of the Happy Person (1)

The Psalmist begins with the conduct of the happy person. He says, "*How blessed is the Man...*" Man refers to both the male and female, so we'll say, "*the person.*"

He says that the happy person will not walk with the wicked, stand with the sinners, or sit with the scoffers. In other words, the happy person understands something about the negative things in his life; that they will always be hanging around. They're like the pesky housefly or the drop-in friends who wear out their welcome; they seem to always be there. But more than just knowing that there will always be the negative things, the Psalmist says that the happy person will understand the importance of not hanging around them. You've heard the song that says to "*accentuate the positive?*" Well, this is "*accentuating the negative.*" It's realizing the significance of not doing certain things. The first of the three things he says to "*not do*" is to not "*walk in the counsel of the wicked.*"

"Wicked" or "*ungodly*" is the Hebrew word *rasha* (raw-shaw) which means a condemned, morally wrong

person. This person has no regard for God in their lives. They might be searching for peace, but have not found it.

The truly happy person will not walk or hang around too long with this kind of person. If they do, they will be pulled them down with them. I wonder how many Christians allow the wicked, ungodly, unhappy person to try to tell them how to be happy? If this describes you, you had better seek some better advice. A genuinely happy person does not want to spend time with people who have left God out of their lives. You had better start looking for answers in another place, because all you'll get from Godless people is a bad tip.

Secondly, the happy person does not "*stand in the path of sinners.*" "*Stand*" means "*to fellowship with.*" If I stand around and talk or engage in an activity with you, I am fellowshiping with you. "*Sinners*" is *chatta* (khat-taw) - and refers to a guilty criminal by way of a lifestyle. It's his nature and habit to sin. This is a further downward digression from the *rasha* - the ungodly - the one who has left God out. The *chatta* - the "*sinner*" by choice, is habitually rebelling against God, and has no chance of receiving God at all. The happy person doesn't continue in fellowship with a guilty criminal.

The further digression is seen in the next activity. First, a person is just walking. Next we see that person has stopped walking and started standing. But last, we find the person sitting. When you sit with someone, you intend to stay awhile. In a way, it's a sign of identification. You've joined with them.

The picture is clear. The person who starts out just casually walking along, listening to off-color jokes, or engaging in some questionable behavior, probably has no intention of going any further than that. But then he finds himself stopping and enjoying the company of those who are known rebels. But the last action shows the danger of even dabbling with the first two. If you walk and talk and stand around with the ungodly and the sinful, you'll eventually join them in their attitude toward God. Soon, you'll push God out and leave no room for Him in your own life. Eventually, you'll develop sinful habits that you refuse to acknowledge or give up. Finally, you join with those who are denouncing, ridiculing, and laughing at God and His children.

Watch out teenager in the schoolyard! Watch out adult in the workplace! Get careless with whom you hang around, and you'll find yourself walking where you shouldn't walk, saying things you shouldn't say, and doing things you shouldn't do.

The quickest way to unhappiness and loss of real joy is by associating with those who have no joy. Have you lost your joy? If so, then realize that there are limits to what you can do and still be happy. Recognize that there are those negative influences out there that want to drag you down with them. But determine right now

that you will not allow yourself to walk, stand, or sit with them long enough to let them influence your walk with Christ.

## **2. The Communion of the Happy Person (2).**

Next we'll examine the communion the happy person has with God. Vs. 2 says, "*But his delight is in the law of the Lord...*" "*The law of the Lord,*" refers to more than just the 10 Commandments. It refers to the totality of God's Word. So we could say, "*The happy person delights in the Word of God.*"

God's Word is described as alive and active and powerful. It is positive and able to make one alive in Spirit. So, the happy person, while he will not engage in certain things, will also realize that there are things he must do in order to be happy.

To some, the Bible is nothing but a set of rules and regulations that are restrictive and burdensome. To some, God is sitting up in heaven thinking up things designed to squeeze the fun right out of life.

But the truly happy person does not see God or His Word in that way. Instead of dreading it, he delights in it! Instead of viewing it as restrictive, he sees it as liberating. Instead of dull and boring, it is fresh and exciting everyday.

One of the hang-ups of the Scribes and Pharisees in Jesus' day was that they had made God's Word into a burden to bear. But Jesus told the people who were searching for truth and meaning in life, "*My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.*" In other words, "*You don't have to live under the harsh master who cracks a whip every time you step out of line. You can live in the freedom of knowing that your sins have been forgiven and you're on your way to heaven. You can have real joy, real happiness, real peace, and real blessing. Come unto Me!*"

But not only does the happy person delight in God's Word, he also meditates on it. He takes it in and chews on it awhile until his heart and mind is filled with it and it's a part of his character.

I'm amazed at how many Christians don't know the very Word of God they claim to love and follow. I won't ask for a show of hands, but how many of you know the books of the Bible? The 12 apostles? The 10 Commandments? Can find the book of Obediah? Zephaniah? Hezekiah? (there's not a book of Hezekiah). Even more important, how many could take your Bible and lead a person to Christ if they came up to you and ask you how to be saved?

The Psalmist is saying that the happy person is not just one who delights in God's Word, but also hides it in their hearts, and can proclaim it at a moment's notice. The happy person has a deep communion with God and

His wonderful Word.

### **3. The Condition of the Happy Person (3).**

Vs. 3 contains the result of the happy person's conduct and communion with God. *"and he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and whatever he does, he prospers."* This makes two statements about the condition of the happy person. First, he is like a tree which is firmly rooted and grounded - stable and strong. When the wind blows and the rain falls, and the storm rages, he will not move. When the sun scorches, and the water dries up and the insects try to spread disease, because of his strong roots, he does not wither, but rather continues to bear fruit.

The happy person's roots go deep when they are planted by the river of living water. The winds of change cannot sway him. The floods of sickness and death cannot submerge him. The heat of battle cannot dry up his fruitfulness, because underneath the surface is a deep and abiding love for God's Word. Behind the growth lies a lifetime of obedience and trust in God's promises.

Jeremiah had the same insight when he wrote in **Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NIV)** <sup>7</sup> *"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. <sup>8</sup> He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."*

**Conclusion:** Is that how you'd like to be? Would you like to be able to withstand the heat because you are strong and stable? Would you like to become more fruitful for the Kingdom of God? Then avoid walking and talking and standing and sitting with the ungodly sinners and scoffers. Delight yourself in God's precious word. Meditate on it and make it part of your life. When you do, you'll find the strength to prevail. You'll find the stability to stand, and you'll find the courage to step out in faith.