

11. Optimism: Happiness and Healing (2Q 2010—Health and Healing)

Biblical material: 1 Kings 19:2–18; Psalm 27; Psalm 42; Luke 8:14; 10:38–42; Rom. 8:35–39; 2 Cor. 12:9, 10; 1 Thess. 5:16, 17, Lam. 3:21–23.

Quotes

- The greatest of follies is to sacrifice health for any other kind of happiness. *Arthur Schopenhauer*
- Doing good to others is not a duty. It is a joy, for it increases your own health and happiness. *Zoroaster*
- If you have health, you probably will be happy, and if you have health and happiness, you have all the wealth you need, even if it is not all you want. *Elbert Hubbard*
- The most important thing in illness is never to lose heart. *Nikolai Lenin*
- He who has health has hope; and he who has hope has everything. *Arabic Proverb*
- Health and cheerfulness naturally beget each other. *Joseph Addison*
- Confidence and hope do more good than physic. *Galen*
- To avoid sickness eat less; to prolong life worry less. *Chu Hui Weng*

Questions

Should “the pursuit of happiness” be our goal? What if we don’t *feel* happy? Are we meant to be optimistic or pessimistic regarding this world? How does happiness and healing go together? Can we simply *choose* to be happy? What is the source of true joy, and how does this apply to us? What do we have to smile about?

Bible discussion

Despite the amazing demonstration of God’s power on Mt. Carmel, Elijah gets fearful and depressed at Jezebel’s threats (1 Kings 19:2–18). Psalms 27 and 42 reveal how we can turn to God for confidence and reassurance. The cares of this world are illustrated in the parable of the sower (Luke 8:14) and Martha’s response (Luke 10:38–42). We need to remember that nothing can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:35–39). Paul reminds us that God’s strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9, 10), and tells us to “be joyful always; pray continually” (1 Thess. 5:16, 17 NIV). We have hope by remembering God and his faithfulness (Lam. 3:21–23).

Comment

As Christians there is no point running after others who suggest their own ways of finding lasting happiness and meaning to life. There is only one way. God’s way. And this is shown in the coming of Jesus. When the angels sang over Bethlehem, they announced good tidings of great joy—this was Jesus. Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” Jn. 10:10

When Jesus spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth, he quoted from Is. 61, which he applied to himself and which also contains the words that the Lord would through Jesus provide “the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.” (Is. 61:3)

This is where we find the answer to our need for real joy and happiness. We are like the pearl merchant who was so happy to find the one of great price that he was glad to sell all the others so that he might possess it, or the man who found the treasure hidden in the field who “in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field” (Mt. 13:44) This is true happiness, found in Jesus. So we should abandon all the other ways of trying to make ourselves happy and taking Jesus as our joy. For this is what God has promised to us:

- You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence. Ps. 16:11.
- The joy of the Lord is your strength. Neh. 8:10.
- With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Is. 12:3.
- The ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. Is. 35:10.

For in the happiness that God offers is not only the feeling but the sure and certain knowledge that he is saving us—for a joy-filled eternity. And that God-sent joy begins now as we trust in him. We accept the joy that God offers, take Jesus as our saviour, trust in him and find the happiness that has always eluded us.

Ellen White Comments

In the surroundings of the holy pair was a lesson for all time-- that true happiness is found, not in the indulgence of pride and luxury, but in communion with God through His created works. If men would . . . cultivate greater simplicity, they would come far nearer to answering the purpose of God in their creation. . . . What are the possessions of even the most wealthy, in comparison with the heritage given to the lordly Adam? {FLB 250}

The Bible presents to our view the unsearchable riches and immortal treasures of heaven. Man’s strongest impulse urges him to seek his own happiness, and the Bible recognizes this desire and shows us that all heaven will unite with man in his efforts to gain true happiness. It reveals the condition upon which the peace of Christ is given to men. It describes a home of everlasting happiness and sunshine, where no tears nor want shall ever be known. {AG 363}

How can children receive a more correct knowledge of God, and their minds be better impressed, than in spending a portion of their time out-of-doors, not in play, but in company with their parents? Let their young minds be associated with God in the beautiful scenery of nature; let their attention be called to the tokens of His love to man in His created works, and they will be attracted and interested. They will not be in danger of associating the character of God with everything that is stern and severe; but as they view the beautiful things which He has created for the happiness of man, they will be led to regard Him as a tender, loving Father. They will see that His prohibitions and injunctions are not made merely to show His power and authority, but that He has the happiness of His children in view. As the character of God puts on the aspect of love, benevolence, beauty, and attraction, they are drawn to love Him. {CG 534-5}

Kind, cheerful, and encouraging words will prove more effective than the most healing medicines. {AH 217}