

JOY and PEACE has a PRICE II

Last week we stated with a story about the farmer who hired a new farm hand, and the farmer asked about his qualifications and his answer was he sleep through the night.

When the STORMS came, All was **WELL**

It was in that moment that the farmer understood what the hired hand meant: that he could sleep through the storms.

the lesson that was learned is that it's our PREPERATION in times of PEACE

That is the greatest predictor of our BEHAVIOR in times of WAR.

The Struggle to Find Joy

Everyone longs for happiness, but few possess it.

For most people, however, happiness is elusive.

emphasis placed on Jesus as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.

***Isaiah 53:5 says,
But he was pierced for our sins,
crushed for our iniquity.
He bore the punishment that makes us whole,
by his wounds we were healed.***

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Religion likes to quote Isaiah and make His suffering the focus.

Jesus Was Full of Joy and Peace

The same Bible that says Jesus suffered also says

He was anointed with the oil of gladness above everyone else and that the joy of the Lord is our strength:

Hebrews 1:9

***You loved justice and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, anointed you
with the oil of gladness above your
companions”;***

You carry an anointing of Gladness, All that Jesus has you have in fact you have more.

So, is true happiness obtainable?

And if so, how do we get it?

Rejoicing in Every Circumstance

First, let me say there are many scriptures that command us to rejoice and be glad

Psalms. 34:1 (Message) I bless God every chance I get; my lungs expand with his praise.

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Psalms 32:11 (Message) Celebrate God.

Sing together—everyone!

All you honest hearts, raise the roof!

We talked last week about the people of Israel who were punished because they didn't serve the Lord with joyfulness and gladness of heart for the abundance of all the things the Lord had done.

Deuteronomy 28:47-48

47 Since you would not serve the Lord, your God, with heartfelt joy for abundance of every kind,

48 in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and utter want, you will serve the enemies whom the Lord will send against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck, until he destroys you.

So, if joy was a command and people were punished for not rejoicing, then HAPPINESS is something we CAN CONTROL.

Otherwise, the Lord would have been unjust in commanding us to do it.

Today people think happiness is a RESULT, instead of a CHOICE.

LOVE is a choice by the way, I did not just stumble and fall into love with Darlene.

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The battle of the mind is fierce, and the Joy of the Lord is my strength!

Last week I had to run to California to train some new employees, I was very bummed because the Kingsman men's ministry were going to a baseball game and they had an amazing time, BUT GOD had other plans, Gil received salvation.

The people of Israel believed that if they didn't have any problems and if they had an abundance of good things, happiness would be the inevitable result.

The DEVIL has a plan and if you getting all you want on this earth, so He can have you in Hell! He will do it.

Happiness isn't a state of being; it's a state of mind.

Paul is the best example of this

A person can be happy when everyone and everything around them is in turmoil.

They can be content no matter what the financial or physical conditions might be.

True happiness and contentment aren't dependent upon circumstances.

Paul wrote the book of Philippians while he was in prison in Rome.

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He had been in prison for two years in Israel, one year in transit to Rome and an undisclosed amount of time in Rome.

He was facing possible execution.

Yet, his letter to the Philippians is the happiest letter of any he wrote.

He mentioned REJOICING SEVENTEEN TIMES in this short letter.

The book of Philippians gives us the keys Paul used to obtain successful **JOY!**

Philippians 4:11 Paul said,

Not that I say this because of need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I find myself, to be self-sufficient.

Circumstances Cannot Be Your Source of Joy

Notice that CONTENTMENT is something the Paul learned.

It didn't come naturally or without effort.

contentment, which is a major COMPONENT of HAPPINESS, has to be learned.

How do we acquire happiness?

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First, we need to deal with what's on the **INSIDE**.

Most people take a the approach of dealing with the outside.

They pray for their problems to be solved and that only good things and good people will come their way.

Let me give you a clue: That ain't going to happen!

Confronting Self-Centeredness

As long as we are in this world, we will have problems

John 16:33

I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world."

And if we are living for God, we will have persecutions according to 2 Tim. 3:12.

If you never BUMP into the devil, it's because you're going in the SAME direction.

People and circumstance might start working against you.

You can't always control what goes on **OUTSIDE**, but you can totally control what goes on **INSIDE** when faced with that resistance.

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When you understand that, you will have discovered one of the greatest keys to happiness.

In addition, you will be on your way to eliminating grief in your life.

I mentioned Andrew Wommack little book last week called Self-Centeredness: The Source of All Grief.

It shows how selfishness really is at the root of all our grief.

We live in a society that has learned to BLAME circumstances and other people, rather than TAKING personal responsibility.

For example, Proverbs 13:10 makes it very clear that the way others treat us is not the root of contentions; it's our pride:

Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

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Overcoming Self-Love

If we weren't so in love with ourselves, so prideful and self-centered, we wouldn't be so sensitive to all the things that rub self the wrong way.

It really comes down to our love of self.

One of the most liberating things in the world is to love someone else more than yourself.

And when the one you love more is God, you will rejoice when He is glorified, even if that happens through your suffering.

That's what Paul did. In Philippians, chapter 1, Paul was trying to comfort the Philippians.

In Philippians 4:15-16, Paul said the Philippians were the only church that ever gave to him after he left their area.

They did this not only once, but they did it twice and would have partnered with him more if they had known where he was. AMEN!

Finding Joy Despite Trials

Paul wanted to assure them that everything was all right with him.

He told them that all his suffering had FURTHERED the kingdom of God.

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*In Philippians 1:12-18 Paul says,
12 I want you to know, brothers, that my
situation has turned out rather to advance the
gospel,
13 so that my imprisonment has become well
known in Christ throughout the whole
praetorium and to all the rest,
14 and so that the majority of the brothers,
having taken encouragement in the Lord from
my imprisonment, dare more than ever to
proclaim the word fearlessly.
15 Of course, some preach Christ from envy and
rivalry, others from good will.
16 The latter act out of love, aware that I am
here for the defense of the gospel;
17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish
ambition, not from pure motives, thinking that
they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment.
18 What difference does it make, as long as in
every way, whether in pretense or in truth,
Christ is being proclaimed? And in that I rejoice.*

That says volumes! **Paul loved God and the advancement. of His kingdom** more than he loved himself.

If the kingdom of God was better off because of Paul's imprisonment, THEN IT WAS WORTH IT.

WHAT IF WE ALL ADOPTED THAT ATTITUDE!
Putting God and Others First

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When God and others are more important to you than yourself, then you are well on your way to HAPPINESS.

But if you are all wrapped up in yourself, you make a very small package.

And therein lies the number one obstacle to contentment and happiness.

Most people are ADDICTED to SELF like addicts are to drugs.

They are never satisfied.

And this self-centered dissatisfaction is SATAN'S greatest OPEN DOOR for temptation.

He used self-interest to tempt Adam and Eve, even though they lived in a perfect world without a single problem.

Genesis 3:3-5

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Self Cannot Be Satisfied

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Even Jesus' disciples weren't satisfied with Him.

Despite all they had seen Him do, they still
WANTED more outward proof of who He was.

John 14:8

Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us."

We can never truly SATISFY self. We just have to DENY it.

We have to die to self and place God and others ahead of self.

That's easier said than done, but once we die to ourselves, happiness is just around the corner.

Second, we need to deal with what's outside, our circumstances.

Paul gave great insight into how to do that in

2 Corinthians 4:17-18, which says,

17 For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

18 as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.

Paul said his affliction was only light.

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He didn't say that because he didn't have problems.

You can read a list of his "light afflictions" in 2 Corinthians 11:23-30.

The list includes beatings with whips and rods, prison, shipwreck, hunger and thirst because of his mission work, and many more.

So, how can we speak about our heavy load when Paul called all his problems, which were much worse than anything we have suffered, just light afflictions? AMEN!

Focus on the Eternal

You see, it's not YOUR problems that are the problem;

it's the way you SEE your problems and the VALUE you place on them that makes them a problem.

Paul said all his afflictions were but for a moment.

That was saying they were short-lived compared to eternity.

Paul put everything into the PERSPECTIVE of ETERNITY.

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Regardless of how bad things are in this life, we have such a wonderful eternity promised to each of us that all our troubles pale in comparison.

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***Romans 8:18 says,
I consider that the sufferings of this present
time are as nothing compared with the glory to
be revealed for us.***

AMEN!

Anchoring Joy in Jesus

Our FUTURE is so bright, we have to SQUINT to look at it.

All the sufferings of this life are short and insignificant compared to eternity and all the PLEASURES GOD has in store for us.

Keeping this in mind will SHRINK our problems down to a manageable size.

Paul also said in 2 Corinthians 4:18 that he didn't look at the TEMPORARY things of earth but that he was focused on the ETERNAL things of heaven.

If we are only looking for happiness in this life, then we are going to be miserable (1 Cor. 15:19).

Our true happiness lies in Jesus and our future with Him.

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If we are in faith, we can have joy unspeakable and full of glory now, in this life (1 Pet. 1:8).

It's our anchor in eternity that keeps our hearts from being troubled (John 14:1-3).

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