

Christian Retirement

Part 71

By [Thomas Reade](#)

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ON TRUE HAPPINESS

There is one important truth which cannot be too deeply engraven on the heart—that TO BE HOLY IS TO BE HAPPY. This truth, being once admitted, accounts for the misery of thousands who are in search of happiness. They mistake its real nature, and the way which leads to it. They thirst, indeed, for the refreshing stream, but find it not; because their minds being unholy, they cannot discern (nor even relish, if they could discern) the true felicity of man.

Where, then, is this sacred treasure to be found? What shall we answer to the thousands who inquire, "Who shall show us any good?" The blessed Gospel reveals the important secret. While worldly minds are toiling through the valley of life to reach the envied spot, the imaginary paradise of affluence, where happiness is supposed to dwell; the humble Christian, living day by day on Christ by faith, enjoys the real blessing in every situation and condition of life.

Riches cannot confer happiness. Grace can, and does. Herein is the goodness of God strikingly manifested, that true happiness is not the result of human wisdom, power or grandeur. The poor may enjoy it, while the most wealthy are destitute of it. The illiterate may discern its excellence, while the wisest philosophers may be blind to its beauty.

We see this continually verified. The rich rejecting the true riches; the wise of this world despising the true wisdom; the men, who are struggling after happiness, refusing that Gospel which alone can make them happy.

And why is this? Because man is naturally blind to the things of God, and his own true interest, until enlightened by the Spirit of God. Truly, man by nature is dead in trespasses and sins. He is alive indeed to evil, and active in the pursuit of earthly good; but towards God he is dead. His heart has no impulsive feeling of love and gratitude. His will has no holy bias in childlike simplicity and obedience to his great Creator. He is averse from God. The carnal mind has not only no desires towards God but is rooted in enmity against him.

This is the true state of man by nature. He is up in arms against his Maker. Hence he is an object of deserved condemnation. His natural conscience testifies indeed against him. But he breaks through all restraints, and sins with awful determination.

The Almighty could, by a single volition of his will, consign the rebel to eternal death. But Oh! how sweetly do grace and mercy shine! yes, how wonderfully does mercy rejoice against judgment! Jesus descends; satisfies the demands of the law; removes the curse, and opens the kingdom to all believers. To believe this mystery of love; to receive Christ into the heart by faith; to live under the abiding influence of this heavenly truth, is to attain the grand secret of happiness. All else is but vanity and vexation of spirit; for there is no peace, says my God, to the wicked. It is evident, then, that true happiness consists in being at peace with God, through Jesus Christ; and in the habitual enjoyment of that peace in the conscience, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This delightful state of reconciliation with God is connected with inward purity, as the blessed fruit of the Savior's death; for holiness is an essential part of Christ's salvation. Thus peace and purity felt and enjoyed, form that happiness which creates a heaven in the soul, and prepares the soul for the enjoyment of heaven.

In proportion to the clearness of our views of Gospel grace, and the strength of our faith in the atonement of Jesus, will be our victory over sin, and the abundance of our peace and joy. All believers are not equally happy, because all are not equally strong in faith, or equally advanced in inward holiness. When, therefore, we are dejected and fearful; when we find an uncomfortable restlessness within, corroding and damping our spiritual enjoyment; or when we feel a dread of the judgment to come; we should look well to ourselves, lest there be some root of bitterness, some secret sin indulged in the heart, which, as it grieves the Holy Spirit, never fails to intercept the smiles of our heavenly Father, to becloud our evidences, and to mar our joy.

Happiness is inseparable from holiness, and cannot exist without it. Some constitutions are prone to melancholy; and if any pious people have such a natural predisposition to sadness, the world immediately ascribes it to religion. But surely this is most unjust, and shows how readily we throw the blame on what we do not love.

How perverted is man in his feelings and affections! He smiles when he should sigh; he laughs when he should mourn; he appears gay and sprightly when he should be of a sorrowful spirit. But Oh! the blessed change which takes place, when the Gospel comes to the heart, not in word only, but in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. He sighs and mourns over his guilt and misery; but his sorrow is turned into joy. Jesus, who is anointed to preach glad tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, and to comfort all that mourn, gives him beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise

for the spirit of heaviness. He can now rejoice in the Lord with joy unspeakable and full of glory; a heavenly light shines into his soul, and he delights himself in the abundance of peace.

Oh happy, blissful state! who would not long to be a genuine disciple of the blessed Jesus, who has assured his obedient people, that he will manifest himself unto them as he does not unto the world; that he will come, and make his abode with them? What heart can be unhappy, in which Jesus deigns to dwell? to which he manifests his grace and love?

Such favored souls are the temples of the Holy Spirit; the habitation of God through the Spirit. They are led by the Spirit into all truth; are preserved from the corruption which is in the world through lust, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness. They ripen daily for the paradise above, where they shall eat of the tree of life, and walk in white with him whom they love above every created being.

Oh my soul, receive with joy the reconciliation. Nothing can make you happy, but a simple laying hold of Christ by faith.

Oh what a blessing is the simplicity of faith! Lord, enable me to look to you as revealed in the Gospel, and to rely with unshaken confidence on your atonement and intercession.

If I believe with the heart unto righteousness, I shall be saved, saved from guilt and condemnation; saved from the power and pollution of sin. If thus saved, I must be happy; happy in the love of God, and happy in the sweet assurance of being with my Savior forever and ever.

Lord! I believe—help my unbelief. I would credit your word. It is unerring truth. Now let its sacred power be felt in my heart. From this moment seal your pardon to my soul, by the indubitable impression of heavenly love.

Who can describe the holy joy,
The calm that reigns within;
When Jesus speaks the pardoning word,
And breaks the power of sin!

Sweet peace, composing all the mind,
Bids angry passions cease;
Graces descending from above,
Like flowing waves increase.

Dear Savior! let your healing beams
In softest radiance shine;
Let humble fear and love abound,

To prove the work divine.

Then will my grateful heart each day
Its Ebenezer raise,
Until angels teach me, near your throne,
Eternal songs of praise.

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