

August 13th, 2017

# THE GOSPEL OF THE HAPPY GOD

John 17:13

When Satan approached Eve in the Garden of Eden, he told her three lies to persuade her to disobey God. Remember that God had told Adam and Eve that they were free to enjoy every tree of the garden. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were forbidden. That tree was a sign of God's Lordship over them. Therefore, submitting to His Lordship meant not eating of *that* tree. And that is where Satan aimed his lies. The first lie was in the form of a question: "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"<sup>1</sup> He cast doubt on God's Word. The second lie was an outright contradiction of what God said "You will not surely die."<sup>2</sup> But it was the third like that proved to be the most convincing. He said in **Genesis 3:5** "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" The demonic logic behind Satan's words goes like this.

- P1. With more knowledge comes more happiness.
- P2. God is against you gaining more knowledge
- ∴ God is against your happiness.<sup>3</sup>

'Eve, you have to choose: obedience to God or your happiness. But you can't have both.' This is oldest and greatest lie that Satan ever tells. This is the most persuasive lie. And even in our own day, we as Christians, buy into it. We hear very foolish things like "God isn't concerned about our happiness, only our

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:1

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3:4

<sup>3</sup> "as if he said, For no other reason does God defraud you of the tree of knowledge, than because he fears to have you as companions. Moreover, it is not without some show of reason that he makes the Divine glory, or equality with God, to consist in the perfect knowledge of good and evil; but it is a mere presence, for the purpose of ensnaring the miserable woman. Because the desire of knowledge is naturally inherent in all, happiness is supposed to be placed in it;" John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 151

holiness.”<sup>4</sup> Or “God calls us to joy, not happiness.”<sup>5</sup> What if I offered you a completely different perspective? What if I summarized the entire law in once sentence: “Thou must be happy in God.”<sup>6</sup> Pastor, the law doesn’t say that. Listen to these imperatives. In all these verses God commands our happiness.

**Deuteronomy 26:11** “...*you shall rejoice* in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you”

**Psalm 37:4** “*Delight yourself* in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

**Psalm 100:2** “*Serve* the Lord with *gladness!* Come into his presence with singing!”

**Matthew 5:12** “*Rejoice and be glad,* for your reward is great in heaven”

**Philippians 2:18** “Likewise you also *should be glad and rejoice* with me.”

And so many more verses<sup>7</sup> could be multiplied.<sup>8</sup> Therefore anyone who would say that “God doesn’t care about your happiness, only your obedience”<sup>9</sup> is dead wrong. You can’t obey God if you are not seeking your happiness in Him.

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<sup>4</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.,: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. xi

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/dissatisfied-contentment> accessed August 19, 2017

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/joy-is-not-optional>

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most important verse is on the lips of Jesus Himself when He was asked what the most important commandment is: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (**Mark 12:30**) To paraphrase, we could say that Jesus requires us to find our greatest happiness in Him. And to be sure, the opposite is true: God promises punishment to those who will not. Paul said “If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed” (**1 Cor. 16:22**) It is impossible to love God if you don’t seek your happiness in Him.

<sup>9</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.,: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. 309

Happiness in God is not optional for the Christian. It's a requirement. Not only does God desire us to be happy, but He commands it. "God threatens terrible things if we will not be happy"<sup>10</sup> in Him. But God doesn't *merely* command our happiness, but He provides for it in the gospel of Jesus Christ. [Please turn to **Isaiah 52:7**] Here the gospel is called the *good news* of happiness. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings *good news of happiness*, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

Dear congregation, the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news because He promises an infallible, everlasting, ever-increasing happiness *in union with Him*.<sup>11</sup> In the middle of this prayer, Jesus gives us the reason for everything that He has taught. **v.13** "But now I am coming to you, and *these things I speak in the world* [*these things—His preaching, His teaching, His praying, all of His doctrine*], that they may have *my joy* fulfilled in themselves." The gospel's aim is to fill the people of God with the happiness of Jesus Himself. The only truly happy people are Christians.

☆ The Source of Our Happiness

☆ The Strength of Our Happiness

### *The Big Idea...*

Every word Jesus spoke was designed to make us happy in Him

<sup>10</sup> Jeremy Taylor quoted in John Piper's article found here <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/dissatisfied-contentment> accessed August 19, 2017

<sup>11</sup> These are the three ingredients that Augustine said were necessary for true happiness: It must be certain, unending, and ever-increasing.

## I. The Source of Our Happiness

### Why use the word happy?

In our small group, we've been going through John Piper's *Desiring God*. The word *happy* has been the source of an ongoing conversation. Is this the right word to connect to a Christian, or should we use the word joy instead? Granted, in our passage this morning, Jesus uses the word joy. "These things I speak in the world, that they may have my *joy*." The Greek word is *χαρά* chara. One Greek-English Lexicon defines it as "a state of joy and gladness—joy, gladness, great happiness."<sup>12</sup> Another says that chara is "literally joy, as a feeling of inner happiness...a state or condition of happiness."<sup>13</sup> Yet another says that it means "joy, happiness, gladness."<sup>14</sup> Do you hear it? Joy is defined as happiness.

The problem is that we have heard for so long that happiness is superficial and joy is substantial. That happiness is a bubbly feeling, but joy is a deep enduring affection.<sup>15</sup> But definitionally, this distinction can't be maintained. Biblically speaking, joy and happiness are largely synonyms

And this has been seen throughout the history of the church.<sup>16</sup>

**George Whitefield:** "Does [Jesus] want your heart only for the same end as the devil does, to make you miserable? No, he only wants you to believe on him,

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<sup>12</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. 241

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, pg. 242

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/is-happiness-different-from-joy> accessed August 19, 2017

<sup>16</sup> Charles Spurgeon: "There is nothing that more tends to strengthen the faith of the young believer than to hear the veteran Christian, covered with scars from the battle, testifying that the service of his Master is a happy service, and that, if he could have served any other master, he would not have done so, for His service is pleasant, and His reward everlasting joy." Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. 27

that you might be saved. This, this, is all the dear Savior desires, to make you *happy*, that you may leave your sins, to sit down eternally with him.”<sup>17</sup>

**Jonathan Edwards:** “The *happiness* that Christ gives to His people is a participation of His own *happiness*.”<sup>18</sup>

**G.K. Chesterton:** “Jesus promised His disciples three things—that they would be completely fearless, *absurdly happy*, and in constant trouble.”<sup>19</sup>

**Thomas Watson:** “He has no design upon us, but to make us *happy*...Who should be cheerful, if not the people of God.”<sup>20</sup>

But in our day we find a sharp divorce between these two words: joy and happy. Joy is seen as entirely spiritual; and happiness as entirely secular. I will grant you that happiness can be superficial and phony, but so can every other virtue.<sup>21</sup>

In Scripture we see true hope, but we also see false worldly hope. **Job 8:13** “Such are the paths of all who forget God; *the hope of the godless* shall perish.”

In Scripture we see true Godly grief over sin, but we also see false worldly grief. **2 Corinthians 7:10** “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas *worldly grief* produces death.”

Likewise we see true Godly joy, but we also see false worldly joy. In **Mark 14:11**, the chief priests responded to Judas betraying Christ. “And when they

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<sup>17</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. 6

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/is-happiness-different-from-joy> accessed August 19, 2017

<sup>19</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. 25

<sup>20</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. xii

<sup>21</sup> Satan doesn't create, he counterfeits.

heard it, they were *glad* (verb form of *chara*<sup>22</sup>—the same word that Jesus uses for joy in John 17:13) and promised to give him money.”

The same thing is true about happiness. There is a false, worldly happiness, but that is the counterfeit. True happiness exists. How do we know? Because God is happy. [Please turn to 1 Timothy 1:11]

### God is a Happy God

1 Timothy 1:11, we read of “...the gospel of the glory of the *blessed* God.” Blessed is *makarios* in the Greek. It means happy or blessed. We could translate this verse *accurately* to say “...the good news of the glory of the happy God.” John Piper says here:

“It is astonishing that only here [1 Timothy 1:11] and in 1 Timothy 6:15 in the entire OT and NT does the word refer to God. Paul has clearly done something unusual, calling God *makarios*, happy<sup>23</sup>...a great part of God’s glory is his happiness. It was inconceivable to the apostle Paul that God could be denied infinite joy and still be all-glorious. To be infinitely glorious was to be infinitely happy.”<sup>24</sup>

God is not glorious if He is not happy. And the gospel is not good news if it doesn’t spread happiness. In fact, the best part of the gospel is that God is happy. His infinite happiness is why the gospel is so good. As Randy Alcorn has said “If God isn’t happy, living with him forever can’t appeal to us.”<sup>25</sup>

### Jesus is a Happy God

As Jesus prays, it is very apparent that He is communicating that He Himself is a Happy God. Look at **John 17:13** again. He prays “But now I am

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<sup>22</sup> χαίρω chairō

<sup>23</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. 126

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, pg. 127

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, pg. 129

coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have *my joy* fulfilled in themselves.” Notice He says “my joy.” He could have just said “joy.” But He specifically adds the personal pronoun “my.” This is the third time Jesus has spoken of *His joy* in this farewell discourse. The first place is in **John 15:11**. Listen again for the personal pronoun. “These things I have spoken to you, that *my joy* may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”<sup>26</sup> Why did Jesus add this personal pronoun in both of these places? Because He wants His disciples, and every believer to know that He is a happy God. Jesus is a joyful, delightful, cheerful, glad-hearted God. Joy and happiness belong to Him. He is the fountain of it. Happiness didn’t originate from creation, or from Satan, or from sin.<sup>27</sup> Happiness exists because Jesus Christ is happy. And we see this happiness of Jesus constantly on display in the parables of the kingdom.

In **Matthew 25:23**, we hear the Master (who represents God) telling the faithful servant “Enter into *the joy of your master*.” Who possesses the joy? God the Master.

In **Matthew 22:2** we hear Jesus telling us what the kingdom of heaven is like. “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,” In other words, Heaven is the place where God throws a massive party to spread the happiness of His Son to all who belong to Him.

In **Luke 15:7** we see the happiness of God on display when sinners come to Jesus Christ. “Just so, I tell you, there will be *more joy in heaven* over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

We see the same thing in the parable of the prodigal son in **Luke 15:32**. The father (representing God) tells the older son: “It was fitting to *celebrate and be glad*, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.”

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<sup>26</sup> The second place is in John 16:20-24

<sup>27</sup> There’s no such thing as generic joy, or generic happiness.

Therefore when Jesus prays to the Father in this prayer and He says “my joy,” He wants us to know unequivocally, without hesitation or reservation that He is infinitely happy. And that happiness exists solely because of Him.<sup>28</sup>

### **Doctrine is for our happiness: “these things I speak”**

Now what we are going to see in the rest of this verse draws a sharp line between superficial, worldly happiness, *and* substantial heavenly happiness. Let’s look how Jesus prays in v.13 “But now I am coming to you, and *these things* I speak in the world, *that* they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” The key words are “these things” and “that.”

What are the *these things* that Jesus speaks in the world? Some would say that the *these things* are the things that Jesus is currently praying—meaning everything in John 17. Others would say that the *these things* refer to Jesus’ entire farewell discourse.<sup>29</sup> But we don’t need to choose between the two, because essentially everything Jesus preached in chapters 14-16, He prays in chapter 17. The *main* thing that we need to hear Jesus saying is that doctrine is for our joy. That’s what He means by *these things*—doctrine, His teachings. Jesus is praying “[Father] I am coming to you, and *these things* [these doctrines] I speak *in the world* [so that my people can hear them<sup>30</sup>] *that* they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” Doctrine is for our happiness. And this idea hits our anti-intellectual culture like a mac truck. Doctrine is for our happiness? That sounds wrong. But that is because we have lost our grip on what doctrine *means*. J. Gresham Machen fought against the anti-intellectualism of his day by pointing back to how the early church viewed doctrine. This is what he said:

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<sup>28</sup> Jesus Christ alone is the fountain of happiness and all who refuse to drink from Him will never be happy. **Proverbs 8:35-36** For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death.”

<sup>29</sup> See D.A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Eerdmans Publishing Company), pg. 564

<sup>30</sup> He saying these things out loud, not because His Father needs to hear them, but because we do. He’s saying these things out loud because He want us to be happy in Him.

“The primitive Church [*meaning the church in the book of Acts*] was concerned not merely with what Jesus had said, but also, and primarily, with what Jesus had done. The world was to be redeemed through the proclamation of an event. And with the event went *the meaning of the event*...These two elements are always combined in the Christian message. The narration of facts is history; the narration of the facts with the meaning of the facts is doctrine. “Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried”—that is history. “He loved me and gave Himself for me”—that is doctrine. Such was the Christianity of the primitive Church.”<sup>31</sup>

If you separate doctrine from the church, you separate Christ from the church. Facts are stupid things unless they are connected to meaning. Doctrine connects the words of Scripture into a beautiful tapestry of meaning. This has a negative implication: to the degree that you tug on the strings of this tapestry, unraveling the doctrines that you don’t like, is to the degree that your happiness will unravel.<sup>32</sup> “...*these things* I speak in the world, *that* they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”

Here is where we see clearly the difference between false happiness and true happiness. Jesus says that true happiness comes through His Words. Not because the words on the page are magical. But because the words are windows. Windows into the infinite beauty and excellency of Jesus Christ Himself. A.W. Tozer says on this point:

“The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner

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<sup>31</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism: New Edition*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), pg. 25

<sup>32</sup> “The reason why many poor souls have so little heat of joy in their hearts, is that they have so little light of Gospel knowledge in their mind.” William Gurnall quoted in *A Puritan Golden Treasury*, Ed. I.D.E. Thomas, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2007), pg. 158

sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts.”<sup>33</sup>

### **We need to preach Jesus’ words to our hearts to fight for joy**

Jesus gave us doctrine so that we could see Him with the eyes of our heart. Trying to see God without His Words is like trying to quench your thirst without drinking water, or trying to satisfy your hunger without eating food. Martin Lloyd-Jones once said

“Most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself...You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself,”<sup>34</sup>

What Jones meant is that if you want to hold onto joy in this life, you must preach the gospel to yourself. Gospel words provide you with bullet proof armor against the demonic bullets that Satan shoots at you.

Is Satan whispering to you that you are all alone? That you don’t have any true friends? That nobody understands you? Preach to yourself Jesus’ words in **v.3** “This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” ‘Jesus, you are my life. I was made to enjoy you. And even if my father and mother forsake me,<sup>35</sup> I have every relationship I need because I have you.’

Is Satan enticing you to give up? I spoke with a widow yesterday who is going through chemo therapy. She has a double mastectomy scheduled in the coming weeks. How do you face that? Oprah will not be able to pump enough self-esteem into her once her body has been defaced. Netflix doesn’t have enough movies to drown that pain. But Jesus has the remedy in **v.9** “I am praying for

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<sup>33</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.,: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. 305

<sup>34</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.,: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. 311

<sup>35</sup> Psalm 27:10 “For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in.”

them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.” ‘I’m praying for you beloved, from Heaven, at the right hand of the Father. And you will persevere because My Father always answers My prayers.’

The source of our happiness is found in the Christ who is happiness Himself. And we have direct access to Him through His Word.

## II. The Strength of Our Happiness

### **The quality of this happiness**

Jesus makes one more distinction between true and false happiness at the end of v.13, by pointing out the *quality of the joy* that Jesus gives us. It is a full joy. He says “that they may have my joy *fulfilled* in themselves.” Meaning “filled to the top, so that nothing is wanting.”<sup>36</sup> This Greek word is in the perfect tense. When verbs are in the perfect tense, it means that “the action has reached its culmination and the finished results are now in existence.”<sup>37</sup> Let that sink in. Jesus is saying the joy He gives His people is full such that the finished results are now in existence.

Now can Jesus say this? Does He not know the horrible and painful deaths that are awaiting the disciples? Ten out of eleven of them are going to be murdered for bringing this message. Yet Jesus is saying that they they have the finished results of joy within them. How can this be? There is a unbelievable tension here, and I would suggest that you will not feel it unless you have gone through deep and abiding suffering. “Jesus how can you say that your joy is finished in me when all hell is breaking loose in my life?” How do we resolve

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?page=2&strongs=G4137&t=KJV#lexResults> accessed on August 19, 2017

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.ntgreek.org/learn\\_nt\\_greek/verbs1.htm#TENSE](http://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm#TENSE) accessed August 19, 2017

this very blatant tension?<sup>38</sup> How can we have a finished joy when as Jesus promised “In this world you will have tribulation”? (**John 16:33**)

We can have a finished joy by remembering the hardest truth. Everyone is going to die. You are going to die. Your spouse is going to die. Your children are going to die. Everyone you have ever known, ever loved, ever laughed with is going to die. And some of those deaths, perhaps your own death, will be excruciatingly painful. And this death that you will most certainly face is what enslaves the whole world in lifelong fear. Because after death comes the judgment. And this judgment will be so fierce, so unrelenting, so horrifying that we are told in Revelation that the wicked will hide “themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?” (**Revelation 6:15-17**)

But if you are among those who Jesus prays for in v.13, you will not need to hide. You will be able to say to the Father “I have an advocate, His name is Jesus Christ. He paid for all my sins. He has given me all His righteousness. I stand because of Him.”

Beloved that is why you can have a finished joy now, even if you are going through the worst trials. Nobody will ever be able to condemn you—Jesus was already condemned for you. You will never be forsaken of God—Jesus was already forsaken for you. No sin can or will ever be unearthed that could decimate your life.

Christians truly have a finished joy. When we were out evangelizing on Wednesday night, I spoke to this Muslim teenager. He said to me “So you Christians can just sin however you want, and Jesus will accept you.” I responded by asking him if he still sinned. He said yes. I said “me too.” “But” I continued “the difference between us is that your sins have not been paid for. But all my sins have been punished on Christ. And that precious truth drives me

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<sup>38</sup> Paul certainly felt the tension. That’s why he said in **2 Corinthians 6:10** that he was “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.”

to want to live for Him. “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (**Galatians 2:20**)

Only Christians possess true happiness. *If you are not a Christian, you don't yet know what happiness is.* Dear unbeliever, I would plead with you, lay down your rebellion. Your guilty conscience will not go away because you are guilty. When you stand before the righteous God on the day of judgment you will be ruined. What a terrifying thing that will be. But today is the day of salvation. God sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners. All who put their trust in Him will be delivered from the wrath to come. There is no happiness outside of Jesus Christ. But in Him is everlasting joy and peace. Jesus said “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...for I am gentle and lowly in heart...and you will find rest for your souls.” (**Matthew 11:28-29**)

## Application (no duty in our passage today)

Our Doctrine:

1. The gospel is the good news of happiness

Our call to worship this morning was from **Isaiah 52:7** and it said How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of *happiness*,<sup>39</sup> I've used the word *happy* this morning profusely and purposefully. My object has been to convince you that if you separate happiness from Christianity, you will undermine the gospel. During the Reformation, Sir Thomas More, a Roman Catholic argued against Protestantism saying “Protestantism was not too grim, but too glad to be true.”<sup>40</sup> May those who reject our gospel accuse of of that!

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<sup>39</sup> Paul pointed to God's desire to spread happiness as a witness to the truthfulness of the gospel—Acts 14:17.

<sup>40</sup> CS Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1954), p. 34.

Insisting on using the word happiness alongside of the word joy is not an issue of semantics to me. To give up on using the word happy (rightly defined) is tantamount to give up the word propitiation. This is our word. Not the devils. To say that Satan and his followers are happy, but Christians have to settle for something else undermines the gospel.<sup>41</sup>

The gospel is attacked on two fronts. It is attacked when we undermine the holiness of God (which we will see God-willing in v.17) and it is attacked when we undermine the happiness of God. Listen to what Randy Alcorn says on this second point:

“To declare joy sacred and happiness secular closes the door to dialogue with unbelievers. If someone is told that joy is the opposite of happiness, any thoughtful person would say, “In that case, I don’t want joy!” If we say the gospel won’t bring happiness, any perceptive listener should respond, “Then how is that good news?”...Our message shouldn’t be “Don’t seek happiness,” but “You’ll find in Jesus the happiness you’ve always longed for.”<sup>42</sup>

Dear congregation, don’t you see that God has always labored to make His own people happy in Him. In fact, as one author put it “happiness is a measure of our obedience.”<sup>43</sup> Consider all the holy feasts and festivals that God commanded the Israelites to observe in the OT. What are feasts and festivals? Parties. During the feast of booths, God told Israel in **Leviticus 23:41-43** “On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of

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<sup>41</sup> I believe this is why Kenny Chesney’s song “Everybody Wants To Go To Heaven” is more dangerous to the Christian worldview than AC/DC’s “Highway to Hell.” AC/DC’s is explicitly dark. Chesney’s is light and bubbly, and therefore in my opinion, more reflective of mainstream thought, and in fact serves to reinforce mainstream thought. But at the core of both of these songs is the same message: Happiness is anywhere God is not. See <http://www.metrolyrics.com/everybody-wants-to-go-to-heaven-lyrics-kenny-chesney.html> accessed August 19, 2017

<sup>42</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. 311 —“When believers demonstrate genuine happiness, it draws people to God and the gospel.” *ibid*, pg. 155

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*, pg. 226

the land, you shall *celebrate* the feast of the Lord seven days... [40] And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall *rejoice* before the Lord your God seven days...[41] You shall *celebrate* it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall *celebrate* it in the seventh month.” 7 days of celebration. And this was just one of the appointed feasts. There were three of them annually (**Exodus 23:14**) God was so serious about Israel celebrating, He told them to spend time away from home and money to do so. And He told them that He would personally protect their private property when they traveled to do so (**Exodus 34:24**). God was so serious about His people being happy that He wrote celebrations into the law, and then said ‘when you celebrate, I will protect all your stuff.’

What did these celebrations point to? Redemption. The gospel. Jesus Christ. God not only wanted holiness to be a indelible mark of His people, but He also wanted happiness to be a indelible mark of His people. As A.W. Tozer has said

“The people of God ought to be the happiest people in all the wide world! People should be coming to us constantly and asking the source of our joy and delight.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. iv  
 “The Gospel is like wine which makes us glad. Let a man truly know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he will be a happy man! And the deeper he drinks of the spirit of Christ, the more happy will he become! That religion which teaches misery to be a duty is false upon the very face of it...The child of God is, from necessity a joyful man. His sins are forgiven, his soul is justified, his person is adopted, his trials are blessings, his conflicts are victories, his death is immortality, his future is a heaven of inconceivable, unthought-of, untold, and endless blessedness—with such a God, such a Savior, and such a hope, is he not, ought he not, to be a joyful man?” Charles Spurgeon & Octavious Winslow quoted in Randy Alcorn's, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. 119 & 23 respectively

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“I desire the dejected Christian to consider, that by his heavy and uncomfortable life, he seems to the world to accuse God and His service, as if he openly called Him a rigorous, hard, unacceptable Master, and His work a sad unpleasant thing...If you see a servant always sad, that was wont to be merry while he served another master, will you not think that he hath a master that displeaseth him? You were born and new born for God's honor; and will you dishonor Him before the world?” Richard Baxter quoted in *A Puritan Golden Treasury*, Ed. I.D.E. Thomas, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2007), pg. 158

## 2. Happiness in Christ is Deeper Than the Health-and-Wealth Gospel<sup>45</sup>

The health-and-wealth gospel or the prosperity gospel is a different gospel. It is heresy. The health-and-wealth gospel uses Bible words like Jesus and cross and gospel, but the aim of the health-and-wealth gospel is summed up in Joel Olsteen's book title "Your Best Life Now." God becomes a genie in a bottle that you rub through faithful attendance and giving, and positive confession, and then He rewards you by giving you health and wealth. God becomes a means to that end.

The prosperity gospel is not wrong because it is seeking after happiness. I agree with C.S. Lewis who said "It is a Christian duty...for everyone to be as happy as he can."<sup>46</sup> No the prosperity gospel isn't wrong because it seeks after happiness, it's wrong because it seeks it in other things rather than in God.

And the main problem is, it doesn't work. What happens when relational, or health, or money problems come? Condemnation. You're not rubbing the genie right. Not to mention the blaring problem with the prosperity gospel, all their advocates eventually die. There are no 120 year old faith healers, as one author pointed out.<sup>47</sup>

But more fundamental problem with the prosperity gospel is that even if you were to achieve all the health and wealth that it promises, it can never make you happy. The key word in Jesus' prayer this morning is the the word "my." Jesus prays: "But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have *my* joy fulfilled in themselves." That little word "my" undermines any other gospel that puts it's happiness in other things. Randy Alcorn in his book *Happiness* tells of psychiatrist Paul D. Meier's experience with those who have everything:

"I have had millionaire businessmen come to my office and tell me they have big houses, yachts, condominiums..., nice children, a beautiful

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<sup>45</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Happiness*, (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), pg. 315

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*, pg. 17

<sup>47</sup> *ibid*, pg. 317

mistress, an unsuspecting wife, secure corporate positions—and suicidal tendencies. They have everything this world has to offer except one thing—inner peace and joy. They come to my office as a last resort, begging me to help them conquer the urge to kill themselves.”<sup>48</sup>

Prosperity theology doesn't work, because your soul was not made for things, it was made for Jesus Christ. When I say that we ought to pursue happiness, I mean it. But I also want you to hear that happiness can only found *in Jesus Christ*.

Our Delight: Suffering doesn't destroy happiness, it strengthens it

I imagine that all this talk on happiness can make it sound like I'm trivializing suffering. How do happiness and suffering go together? Well first of all, Jesus was very aware of what the disciples were going to go through. He told them the world would hate them (**John 15:19**) and that the world would put them to death (**John 16:2**). Yet He promised them happiness through their suffering.

How can this be? **Because suffering doesn't destroy happiness, it strengthens happiness.** How? Because suffering unlike any other device forces you to see past all the superficialities of this life. When you are pressed, and purged, and forsaken, and betrayed, and forgotten, and in so much pain that you cannot go on, you learn something infinitely valuable. Namely, you learn a little bit of what Jesus Christ went through on your behalf. As I was speaking with that precious cancer-stricken widow yesterday, she said “The pain is so fierce at times that I feel like giving up. But then I think about Jesus. No one comforted Him. He was abandoned.” Do you see beloved? Suffering strengthened her admiration of Christ, in whom is her happiness. As she suffered, she was able to identify more with what Christ had done for her. Christ suffered intensely, violently, dreadfully. Not just in His body, but in His spirit. He was forsaken by God. Damned on the cross. And those words are hard words to absorb unless you have traveled through the valley of suffering. Christ's sufferings mean more

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid*, pg. 14

to those who suffer. Which means, believers who suffer, know Jesus' more deeply. And knowing Jesus more deeply strengthens ultimate happiness. If you are suffering, God has not overlooked you. The same Christ who wept over Lazarus feels your suffering. He has shared in it. Jesus drank more deeply of suffering than you will ever in a billion ages be able to comprehend. Jesus Christ suffered on the cross in order to purchase your everlasting happiness.

If God has ordained suffering for you, know that He has planned this so that you would grow in your admiration of Jesus Christ. As Paul said "that I might share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...in order that I may gain Christ." (**Phil. 3:10, 8**)

Everything thing that God has ordained, including suffering is to strengthen our happiness in Him. This is the gospel of the Happy God.