

## THE TRULY HAPPY MAN

*"...his delight is in the law of the Lord;  
and in his law doth he meditate day and night".*

*Psalm 1:2*

**Preached by Rev Matthew F Else**

**Lord's Day morning**

**12th March 1995**

**at Grace Baptist Church, Peel**

**T**he Psalter opens with a beautiful picture of the truly happy man; and he is happy because his life has the right root. In a nutshell, the truly happy man is rooted and grounded in the Word of God. His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in God's law doth he meditate day and night.

Now, when we read about God's law here, we mustn't limit it. David was not just thinking about the Ten Commandments, he was thinking about the Word of God as a whole. Those who are truly happy are those who are grounded in the **whole** counsel of God.

Have you ever come across the expression "Yo-Yo Christians"? It describes the spiritual state of unstable believers who are up and down, up and down — just like a yo-yo. Remember the Grand Old Duke of York who had 10,000 men? He marched them up to the top of the hill, and he marched them down again. When they were up they were UP, but when they were down, they were DOWN! Many of the Lord's people feel very high one minute, and very low the next. This is because they have no stability. Our stability should be found in the Word of God.

The 'in thing' at the moment is to go looking for what is called the 'Toronto Blessing'. However, the testimony of many is that the experience is hollow and insubstantial. They get the 'blessing' but it isn't long before they are back again looking for more of the same! Although they claim to have been on a spiritual high, they are back in the depths. That's no good, the Lord's people need stability, and that stability is only found in the Word of God. The happy man in Psalm No 1 is grounded and settled in the Word of God, and that's *why* he is truly happy.

There are two things I would like us to consider that have special reference to the happy man; namely his *Pleasure* and his *Ponderings*.

## **I. THE PLEASURE OF THE HAPPY MAN**

What is it that makes him happy? Our text provides the answer: "His delight is in the law of the Lord". If you study the book of Psalms you will find that it contains many expressions of appreciation for God's Word. David the inspired penman says, "I love Thy law"; "Thy testimonies are my delight"; "How sweet are Thy words to my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth". He delighted in the Word of God. To him, it wasn't burdensome to read God's truth, because it was a source of great joy. And that's how it is with every truly happy person. He or she gets pleasure from the Bible.

I recently came across a very thought-provoking statement from Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the eminent nineteenth-century Baptist preacher. Speaking about the Christian man and his Bible, he said, "Man must have some delight. He must have some supreme pleasure. His heart was never meant

to be vacuum. If not filled with the best things, it will be filled with the unworthy and disappointing". Just think about those words carefully. If your heart is not filled with good things, the devil will fill it with bad things.

Let's put it another way. If you don't fill your bag with gold and silver and precious stones, the Adversary will fill it with wood, hay and stubble. If you don't get delight from the Word of God, you will find that you are getting your kicks from something that is unprofitable, unhealthy and unwholesome. That's the way it works in life.

A very disturbing letter appeared in one of our local newspapers a while ago. "Sir" the writer said, "I see from reading your Letter Page that the Silly Season has started again. The religious head-bangers are once again writing copious amounts of drivel to your newspaper. I find it amazing that these sad, nondescript individuals have such lonely and unfulfilled existences that all they can do, day in and day out, is to write letters quoting large tracts of the Bible, and ramming their beliefs down other people's throats".

This scathing piece of correspondence appeared in response to material submitted by concerned readers, on moral issues. They based their arguments on the authority of the Bible, and because of this they were labelled as "sad, nondescript individuals" with "lonely and unfulfilled existences". Methinks he doth protest too much. Perhaps this gentleman is himself a sad individual with a lonely and unfulfilled existence. Maybe it is because of his own unhappiness that he attacks others, who appear to have what he lacks.

True fulfilment is born out of an appreciation for the Bible. In short, the Word of God provides fulfilment for the people of God. The Christian, above all men, should be happy — because he has the Word of God as his delight. David said with reference to the godly man: "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night". Now if you think about it, David only had a little Bible, only a fraction of what we have. His volume of inspiration was very small. In his day, there wasn't much more than the five books of Moses. Nevertheless, he could still say,

"Thy law is my delight". Now then, if David was thrilled with the Word of God, we should have even greater joy, because we have so much more of it than he had.

When a subject like this is under discussion, there is a question that comes to mind. It is not regularly vocalised, but it does need to be addressed. The question is: WHY should we get pleasure from the Word of God?

First of all, we should get pleasure from God's Word *because it is God's Word*. It is the word of God Himself.

I am sure most of you like receiving letters. When the postman brings a letter from somebody you care for, you can't get the envelope opened quickly enough. Why are you so keen? Because the sender is someone you love. What am I leading up to? Namely this: the Word of God is like a letter from heaven. It is "the voice of my Beloved" that speaks to me. The Word should delight our hearts because it is a communication from God Himself.

But there's more. The Word should delight our hearts *because it is reliable and true*. We live in a day when truth is at a premium. There isn't too much of it about, and there are not too many people you can rely on. A tradesman says he will call at a certain time, so you alter your schedule to accommodate him, and he doesn't turn up. What do you say? "You can't trust anybody these days!" People lie and let you down with consistent regularity, but the Word of God is absolutely trustworthy. We can rejoice in the veracity of God's Word. The great promises contained therein can be confidently appropriated by faith because they are true. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" His Word is true, through and through. God says what he means and He means what He says. Christians derive pleasure from God's Word because it is true.

And then again, we delight in God's Word *because it is profitable*. You get pleasure from that which is profitable, don't you? A few years ago I purchased some coins for a pound a piece. According to a

reliable catalogue they are now valued at £25 each. When I gleaned this information, it brought a smile to my face, because I realised that I was in profit! And everyone knows it's pleasant to be in profit. Well now, think about the Word of God, and consider its testimony concerning itself: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness". The Word of God is profitable, and because of this we can delight in it.

Furthermore, the Word of God gives us pleasure *because it provides us with enlightenment and guidance*. Life is very perplexing isn't it? There are many decisions that have to be made, and sometimes we don't know which way to turn. In God's Word there are principles that can be applied to every situation.

One night some time ago, I remember walking to the post-box. Suddenly, because of a power cut, our part of town was plunged into darkness. It was pitch black, because in addition to the lights going out, the moon and stars were covered over by

cloud. How grateful I was to meet up with a man with a torch who was walking his dog. He was going in my direction and was able to light up my path. If you think about it, God's Word is like a kind of torch. Indeed God says: "My Word is a lamp unto your feet, and a light to your path". When you are in the dark, any light which is provided for you is a source of pleasure. No wonder David says "his delight is in the law of the Lord".

There's still one more thing, and perhaps I've saved the best wine until last. The Word of God brings us pleasure, *because it reveals Jesus to us*. Jesus is the source of the Christian's happiness. If it were not for Christ we would be of all men most miserable. The Bible tells us that "Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners". In order to accomplish this objective He went to the place called Calvary where He died as a substitute for others.

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood:  
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!*

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Those who repent of their sin, and trust in Christ's atoning death are everlastingly saved. Understandably, their salvation fills them with unspeakable joy. Can you appreciate what I am saying here? The Word of God reveals the Son of God. And the Son of God brings pleasure to the hearts of every member of the Church of Christ.

And so we have it. The truly happy man derives his pleasure from the Word of God. However, although we may have a mental grasp of this scriptural fact, it is important that we relate to it in a personal way. Permit me therefore, to ask you a question. This is not an academic exercise, but a pertinent, personal question which I want you to answer from your heart.

Do YOU, as an individual, genuinely, honestly, delight in the Word of God? Do you personally get pleasure from reading the Bible? We know that we *should* do. Every true Christian *should* get pleasure from God's Word, but alas, this is not always the case. Have you ever been in a situation where you have been sitting in front of the television, and someone asks if you are enjoying

the programme? It won't satisfy them if you respond by simply saying "Well, I'm watching it aren't I?" An answer of this nature does not do justice to their question. You may watch a programme without enjoying it, and in just the same way you can read the Bible without getting any pleasure from it.

I think it is true to say that we all need to pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to understand, appreciate and enjoy the Word of God more. We can't pump up this enjoyment, but it should be there. This is one of the marks of a truly happy man: he delights in the law of the Lord. I'm not talking about something academic here, but something real and personal. The truly happy man gets pleasure from the Bible.

This brings me to my second point. As we consider it together, I believe it will give us a clue as to why we are sometimes not as thrilled with the Bible as we ought to be. The nub of the matter is that we simply don't spend enough time grappling with the Scriptures and pondering over them.

We have thought about the *pleasure* of the truly happy man, now let us think about his *ponderings*.

## **II. THE PONDERINGS OF THE HAPPY MAN**

Look again at Psalm 1 verse 2. "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law *doth he meditate* day and night". Now the man who meditates, ponders. He muses over the Word of God. Meditation is the exercise of the mind in contemplation of a subject; and as Christians we should spend time contemplating the Word of God. We should consider the great truths of the Bible not fleetingly, but ponderously.

Listen again to Mr Spurgeon. Referring to the Christian reading his Bible he says, "He reads it by day, and he thinks upon it by night. He takes a text and carries it with him all day long. And in the night watches, when sleep forsakes his eyelids, he muses upon the Word of God". In all honesty it is not sufficient to just regularly read a short passage from the Bible. Many of the Lord's people are very faithful in this area, and on a daily basis they religiously read their set portion. Far be it from me

to decry this exercise, but if we want to be truly happy, sometimes this is simply not enough.

Remember what happened when Elijah prayed for rain? He sent his servant to the top of the mountain to see if there was any evidence of it. When the servant returned, reporting that there wasn't even a cloud in sight, Elijah said, "Go again, seven times". I think this is something that we have to do as far as the Word of God is concerned. We must go to it again, and again, and again. But it is of utmost importance that we read it properly, and that involves pondering over it.

Think about the cow. She doesn't just *bite* the grass, she chews the cud. And meditating could be likened to chewing the cud, or perhaps digesting our food. Not only must the Scriptures be read and learned, they must also be inwardly digested. The importance of this cannot be over-emphasised, because there are some folk who read the Bible the wrong way, in that they rush through it. I remember having a conversation with a man who informed me that he read the Bible from cover to cover at least six times every year. When people talk like

this, you feel like asking them the question "Understandest thou what thou readest?" You can't race through Romans, neither can you gallop through Galatians. You need to spend time thinking carefully about what you read.

Some people eat too quickly. Many youngsters for instance, get up so late in the morning that they have to bolt their breakfast in order to get to school on time. I think of one lad in particular whose name will remain undisclosed for reasons of expediency! His mother told him that if he bolted his food it wouldn't do him any good, and he would only end up with stomach troubles in later life.

Some people bolt their food, and some Christians bolt the Scriptures! The Word of God is food for the soul, and it is important that we don't receive it too quickly, as it were. We need to think about it, pray about it and inwardly digest it. It is the purposeful pondering over the Word of God that will make your soul both rich and happy. David makes it clear that the happy man meditates upon God's law day and night. A quick glance at a few

verses of Scripture is inadequate. We need to think them through in order to get to grips with them.

In closing I think it would be appropriate to meditate upon that great Gospel verse which I quoted earlier. It is to be found in Paul's first letter to Timothy, chapter one, verse fifteen: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." A superficial reading of such a profound statement is most inappropriate. We need to ponder over the exact nature of Christ's saving work.

When the Lord Jesus broke forth into time, it was with a view to infallibly securing the salvation of sinners. This necessitated His dying for them. In other words, the Saviour actually *came* to die, and at the appropriate time He died of His own volition. Speaking of His own life He said, "*No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself*".

What would have happened to mankind if God had not demonstrated His love for the world by sending His Son to die? The bottom line is that every member of the human race would have had to face

the consequences of their sin for all eternity. However, although "the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord". Those who cast themselves upon God's mercy and who trust in Christ and His work, are delivered from death. What is more, they have the promise of eternal life.

I trust that this glorious theme may encourage you not just to read the Word, but to meditate upon it as well. This, after all, is the secret of true Christian happiness. May God bless these thoughts to all our hearts for Jesus' sake. Amen.

