

THE SOUTHWESTERNER



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THE HAPPINESS OF AN OBEDIENT LIFE

PSALM 119:1-8

CODY WESTBROOK

The pursuit of happiness is, for many, unending. For century's theologians, philosophers, psychologists, and many others have looked for ways to capture and package it in a simple, easy to follow way. There is even a branch of psychology called positive psychology that is completely dedicated to finding ways for people to be happy. The sad irony, of course, is that while so many people give so much to try and find happiness, many never find it and most become unhappy in the process. Eric Hoffer said, "The search for happiness is one of the chief sources of unhappiness." People cannot find happiness because they misunderstand it and look for it in all the wrong places. Psalm 119:1-8 teaches us that happiness is found in conforming to the word of God.

The psalm begins with a magnificent pronouncement: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." Remember Psalm 1? Psalm 119 may be the Bible's best commentary on what it means to be a blessed man who delights in God's Word and meditates on it day and night. The term "blessed" refers to a state of great joy and happiness. The "undefiled" are those who are blameless, or, without blemish. They walk in the law of God, meaning they live a life that is completely conformed and dedicated to the word of God.

What does it mean to conform to God's word? What does it look like? Note the four things the psalmist mentions (Ps. 119:1-3). First, it means keeping His testimonies (v. 2). To keep them is to hold them close and abide by them. Second, it means seeking Him with the whole heart (v.2)—dedicating oneself entirely

to knowing God through His word. Third, it means avoiding sin, and fourth, it means walking in His ways (v. 3). Not that one is perfectly sinless, but that he does not live habitually in it. Instead his life is characterized and directed by the Word of God (cf. 1 John 1:7).

If true happiness is found in a life conformed to His will, our desire to know and obey His word should be great (Ps. 119:4-6). God's desire for all is that they obey Him (v. 4). He has commanded us to do so (cf. Deut. 4:1; John 14:15; Phil. 4:9; etc.) and if obedience is our chief desire (v. 5) then we will not have to be ashamed. God's Word is a mirror (2 Cor. 3:18; Jas. 1:23) that shows us who we truly are. What do we want to see when we look at the reflection? One who is living in sin? Surely not! Such would cause shame and embarrassment on our part. Rather, we all should desire to see the reflection of one who has been transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Only conforming to the will of God makes that kind of transformation possible.

This section of psalm 119 concludes with a refrain of praise and determination (Ps. 119:7-8). True happiness comes by obedience to the God's Word (vss. 1-3) and therefore obedience should be our desire (vss. 4-6). When we understand the great blessings of a godly life we should give God glory for making it possible (v. 7) and determine to stop at nothing to make sure our lives measure up with His standard (v. 8). If happiness is truly our goal, then obedience will be our determination.

CONSEQUENCES

Randy Reagan

When the children of Israel were sent in by God to conquer the land of promise, they were given very distinct instructions on what they were to do concerning the people who occupied the land. They were to “utterly destroy” everyone and everything in the land (Deut. 7:2-5; 12:2; Num. 33:52). God had warned them what would happen if they did not do as He had commanded them (Num. 33:55). Sadly, the Israelites did NOT obey God (Josh. 9; 15:63; 17:11-13). There were consequences.

Because Moses did not “honor” God when he struck the rock (Num. 20:10-12), he and Aaron were not allowed to enter the land of promise. The serpent (Gen. 3:14), Eve (Gen. 3:16), and Adam (Gen. 3:17) were all cursed with consequences for their part in eating the forbidden fruit. When King Saul disobeyed God, the kingdom was taken from him (1 Sam. 13:14:15:23). Over and over throughout the Bible we see consequences bourn by different people because of their actions or decisions. In every instance, if God said there would be certain consequences as a result of words or actions, those things came true just as God had said with no variation.

This is important to us as Christians because in many areas of our world, people do not believe in consequences for what we say or do. Some consequences cannot be avoided. If I drink alcohol, use tobacco, abuse narcotics, or do not control my eating, they very well may cause harm to my body which could result in death. My actions may even cause harm to others who are completely innocent.

In too many other areas, consequences are avoided or ignored. Respect for our laws diminishes because even if consequences are stated, the will to enforce them seems to have vanished. We see this every day in what is being practiced with respect to our children and grandchildren. We see it displayed in our judicial system. We can easily see it in society and in the workplace. People simply do not have the desire or will to hold people responsible for their actions or enforcing consequences.

It is this idea that somehow we are immune to bearing the consequences of our actions that, applied to Spiritual matters, will ultimately condemn our souls. God holds people accountable. When He says there will be consequences, there ARE consequences. For those who are Christians but do not remain faithful in their service to God, there are consequences (2 Pet. 2:20-22;

Heb. 6:4-6). For those who are not Christians, the consequences of not believing (John 8:24), of not repenting of our sins (Luke 13:3), of not confessing our faith (Matt. 10:33), or not having our sins washed away (John 3:5) are eternal consequences.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. (Gal. 6:7-8)

Consequences.

Beltline Road Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, December 17, 2018.

SW



MOSES STRIKES THE ROCK

John Haffner '10

The Lord used Moses to rebuke Pharaoh, to liberate the Israelite nation, and to lead them on their journey to the Promised Land. In our Bibles we find Moses among some of God's most faithful (Hebrews 11:23-30). However, Moses was not without sin. Perhaps the most well-known occasion comes from Numbers 20. The Israelites arrived at Kadesh without water and they were thirsty. The people complained about their condition. The congregation reached such a level of distress that in their cry to Moses and Aaron they claimed to prefer death over continuing in the wilderness (Numbers 20:2-5). Moses and Aaron turned to God in prayer for a solution.

The Lord's instructions were to take the rod, gather the people, and speak to the rock (Numbers 20:8). Moses would have no doubt in God's ability to grant the water. Not only had he seen God display His power over the elements in Egypt, but he had seen the Lord solve this very same problem on their journey. When the people reached Rephidim and had no water God instructed Moses to take the rod, go with the elders, and smite the rock (Exodus 17:5-6). Moses did as the Lord commanded in Rephidim, but Moses did not do as the Lord commanded in Kadesh. He took his rod, gathered the people together, and then spoke to the people instead of speaking to the rock. “He said unto them, Hear now,

ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” (Numbers 20:10). Moses then took his rod and hit the rock twice. The Lord was gracious and allowed water for the people and their animals to drink, but it was clear that Moses and Aaron were disobedient. (Notice it is “must WE fetch you water” not GOD) These two great leaders were told that they would not enter the land of promise because they did not believe, to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the children of Israel (Numbers 20:12).

Today we might experience annoyance because of rebellious sin we see committed amongst God’s people. Before our exasperation pushes us to sin, we should remember our own faults and the example of Jesus. The sinless Son of God saw much wickedness among mankind, and yet remained focused on God. He concerned himself with making God known and glorifying Him (John 17:3-4). This focus could have prevented Moses from disobeying the Lord’s command. Our God requires that we all be obedient to His will and not our own. May we always do as He commands, glorify Him, and help others to do the same!

From Faith to Faith, Granbury Road Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, February 17, 2019.

SW



“PRAYING WITH EYES WIDE OPEN”

Andy Baker '06

When teaching children to pray, customarily we teach bowing heads and closing eyes, usually accompanied with the admonition to stop fidgeting. Part of this is to help them to consider the seriousness and reverence of going before God and talking to Him. Growing older, what was a good help to remember humility in prayer can sometimes be a hindrance to truly bringing our prayers before Almighty God. Whether being led in a public setting, or in our personal devotion, while our eyes are open, consider a few principles to help have a great prayer life with the God of heaven:

Above all, the heart has to be right for a prayer to be heard. Paul would command that Christian men everywhere pray “lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting” (I Tim. 2:8). The emphasis is

sanctification. Men cannot live unholy lives and expect to lift holy hands! Doublemindedness will affect our prayers (Jas. 1:7-8). Sinful thoughts, attitudes, and treatment of brethren can seriously affect our prayers (I Pet. 3:7; Jas. 4:8-10). With eyes wide open, think: “Have I offended any or do I feel offended by any person now?” “Have I honored God by my Christian walk before I approach Him in prayer?” “What might keep Him from hearing my prayers?”

There is no mandated prayer posture in scripture. Sometimes when David prayed, he laid prostrate on the ground (II Sam. 12). Some stood, some knelt, while others sat (Dan. 6:10; I Kings 19:4; Acts 20:6; Neh. 8:4-6). Jesus often looked up towards heaven (Mark 6:41). It is important to realize that with our prayers, it may not always be helpful to bow the head and close the eyes in order to keep the heart focused on petitioning the God of heaven. With eyes wide open, think: “Does my mind wander or do I have difficulty focusing on talking to the Lord in certain prayer settings?” “Have I asked God for help in keeping my mind centered on Him?”

“Amen” can be an effective help. “Let it be so” is an effective punctuation that can take a public prayer and make it personal. If a person’s mind wanders often when being led in a public prayer, after each sentence spoken, a simple quiet “amen” in agreement can help the person being led to keep their mind focused. This puts a person’s own stamp of approval on the prayer itself and keeps the mind centered on petitioning the God of heaven (Ps. 106:48). With eyes wide open, think: “Do I pray along with someone leading a public prayer agreeing with his words?” “Do his words become my words when appealing to God in prayer?”

A prayer does not need to be long to be effective. Nehemiah effectively weaved simple, terse prayers into his daily life and writing (Neh. 5:19; 6:9; 6:14). Jesus warned against filling prayers with “many words” in hopes that it will make our prayers more effective (Matt. 6:7). The publican with just seven simple words went down to his house justified while the Pharisee only talked to himself with many words (Luke 18:11-14). With eyes wide open, “God, help me deal with this person in a way that glorifies You.” “God, help me to keep my mind focused on Your will in my prayers.” “Thank You, Father, for loving me.” “Thank You, God, for prayer.”

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Record for the Week of March 31, 2019

Bible Class	142
Morning Assembly.....	231
Evening Assembly	145
Iglesia de Cristo	
Morning Assembly.....	N/A
Contribution	\$N/A

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PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:

Charlene Johnson had surgery after breaking both her hip and her tibia.

Everette Clare, father of **Elaine Hopkins**, has been hospitalized for the last week and will go to rehab today.

Harrell Moffett is grieving the loss of his brother **Hollis Ray Moffett** who passed away last week.

Health Concerns: Lois Ewald, Diana Rodriguez, Bud Wade, Clarence Whetstone, Angela Young.

Shut-ins: Jeannette Hansen, Rosemary Garrett, Jon Little, Bobby Johnson, Elvira Martinez, Ginny Oswald, Jan Smith.

Others: Sonny & Lee Barr, Bill Ellison, Bonnie Gomer, CK Holt, Nell McCown, Bill & Nancy Ponds, Cheri Sarten, Kay Westbrook, Gib Young.

GO PAPERLESS

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