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How to be Happy in a World Gone Mad

"But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled"
(1Peter 3:14).

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Preface

American missionaries, Martin and Gracia Burnham, will complete a year in captivity in the Philippines at the hands of their Islamic terrorist captors on May 27th 2002. [See our editorial, "[Pray for the Release of the Burnhams](#)" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Edit_Pray.for.the.Burnhams.html --, for background on this tragedy.] The rubble of the World Trade Center is still fresh on our minds as "9-11" has become a common expression to refer to the events of that infamous day. The cleanup of the 16 acre WTC site is effectively at an end with only 1,058 remains identified of the 2,823 victims, as will be commemorated in a May 31st 2002 WTC site ceremony-- as reported in the May 27th 2002 TIME.com article, "The Battle For Ground Zero." [To see the role of faith in this world of terror, see our article, "[Christian Response to Terrorism](#)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Response.to.Terrorism.html> --.] Violence in Israel seems stretched to the point that a war of annihilation of the Palestinians or Israelis is inevitable. The second-richest man in the world, Warren Buffett, whose Berkshire Hathaway insurance companies took a \$2.4 billion underwriting loss on the September 11th terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., announced at a May 5th 2002 Berkshire shareholders' meeting, "We're going to have something in the way of a major nuclear event in this country... It will happen. Whether it will happen in 10 years or 10 minutes, or 50 years ... it's virtually a certainty" (excerpted from a CNN.com article, "Buffet: Nuclear attack 'virtually a certainty,'" of May 6th 2002.) Buffett added that it will probably be against New York and Washington because terrorists want to traumatize and kill as many people as possible, and that chemical or biological attacks are similarly high risks. Also, Vice President Dick Cheney asserted that another terrorist attack against the United States is "very real." He said, "In my opinion, prospects of a future attack against the United States is almost certain... We don't know if it's going to be tomorrow or next week or next year," and that it was "not a matter of if, but when" (excerpted from another CNN.com article, "Cheney: Future attack on U.S. 'almost certain,'" of May 19th 2002.) "This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness [moral insanity] is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead" (Ecclesiastes 9:3).

Happiness Regardless of Circumstances

Why speak of such terrible events, if we are supposed to be considering how to be happy? *True Christian happiness must take place regardless of external circumstances.* "11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My

sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12). The very idea of happiness was the theme of the Saviour in the Sermon on the Mount, for the Greek word *makarios* is translated both as *happy* or *blessed*. "3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. 4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the Earth. 6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the Children of God. 10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (5:3-10). In other words, *to be truly Christian is to be truly happy*. "8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (Galatians 3:8-9).

What, then, is happiness, if the LORD Jesus Christ said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake" (Matthew 5:10)? How does persecution put a smile on your face? Did happiness describe Jesus hanging on the cross as He was persecuted for righteousness' sake? Most certainly! Jesus, in all likelihood, was *not* smiling, but listen to the Scriptures describe the work of Christ on the cross as the "Author and Finisher of Our Faith" (Hebrews 12:2). "Who for the **joy** that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God" (12:2). Though happiness *may* take the form of persecution for a True Christian, it would be absurd to conclude that all the fear, pain, and misery in the world should be equated to happiness. After all, it was just such fear from which the Christian was delivered when he was Born Again. "14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He [Jesus] also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through Death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; 15 and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (2:14-15).

Happiness Comes From Seeking Highest Good of God and Man

Happiness results from the choice of seeking the highest good of God and man, i.e., "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the First Commandment. And the Second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mark 12:30-31). God Himself must seek His own highest good as His happiness, and secondarily, He seeks to make us happy. "God so loved the world, that He gave [to us] His Only Begotten Son" (John 3:16). For us, happiness is, most importantly, seeking God, His Kingdom, and His Righteousness, i.e., "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness" (Matthew 6:33); and, in the second place, happiness is not seeking your "own, but every man another's wealth" (1Corinthians 10:24). *Happiness is a byproduct of obeying God's command of loving Him supremely and your neighbour as yourself*; however, our previous failure to do so necessitated the requirement to be Born Again into the family and Kingdom of God. "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). The New Birth restores us to God's original intention of making us happy, when we seek His happiness first and our neighbours' happiness equally as our own; but, this happiness only resulted when the Spirit of God worked "in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Restoring us to obedience to God makes us happy. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 24:46). And, that happiness is assured through the New Testament ministry of the Holy Spirit.

"I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My Statutes, and ye shall keep My Judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:27).

Since happiness results from obeying the command to love God supremely and your neighbour as yourself, then any action thus motivated by the Spirit of God will make you happy, in whatever world you find yourself. "10 If ye keep My Commandments, ye shall abide in My Love; even as I have kept My Father's Commandments, and abide in His Love. 11 These things have I spoken unto you, that My Joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:10-11). *Obedience to God's commandments makes us happy*. Our happiness and joy is promoted by our opportunity to "keep His Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1John 3:22).

Obedience Promotes Happiness

For instance, obedience to the following commands promotes our happiness.

- *First*, "Rejoice evermore" (1Thessalonians 5:16). We must choose to be glad, whether or not our circumstances are pleasant or unpleasant. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2Corinthians 6:10). Rejoicing is a picture of joy coming to us in the form of the LORD Jesus Christ, producing a voluntary resonance of your heart and will, and causing that joy to return to God and shower upon man, while making you happy. "Rejoice in the LORD always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).
- *Second*, "Pray without ceasing" (1Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer is the secret tool of the Christian to prevent careflessness, i.e., sinful anxiety about today or tomorrow, "for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself" (Matthew 6:34), and promote happiness. "6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). [Read R. A. Torrey's classic book, "[How to Pray](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/How.to.Pray.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/How.to.Pray.html> --.]
- *Third*, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the Will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1Thessalonians 5:18). Joy is that sense of gladness and happiness resulting from realizing what the LORD has done. "10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the LORD" (Luke 2:10-11). In contrast, to "give thanks" is to consciously and volitionally thank God "in every thing" (1Thessalonians 5:18). We will heighten our joy and happiness by multiplying our thanks to God. "1 I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. 3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His Name together" (Psalms 34:1-3).
- *Fourth*, "Quench not [literally, extinguish not] the Spirit" (1Thessalonians 5:19). Since our God is the Trinity in unity, we understand that our Secret and Invisible Ally is the Indwelling Spirit of the Living God. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1Corinthians 3:16). This is the magnificent promise and result of the New Covenant

(Jeremiah 31:31) or Testament, prophesied of old. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31). "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a New Spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19). To prevent from extinguishing the influence of the Holy Spirit, we must be careful to walk in obedience, i.e., for the Holy Ghost is "given to them that obey Him" (Acts 5:32). But, our happiness cannot be easily quenched, since one of the chief designs of the Spirit's indwelling presence has been to guarantee our obedience, and our consequent felicity. "And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My Statutes, and ye shall keep My Judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:27). [See our editorial, "[Is It Possible to Guarantee Our Obedience?](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Edit_Guarantee.Obedience.html)" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Edit_Guarantee.Obedience.html --, to see that God can guarantee our happiness.]

- *Fifth*, "Despise not prophesyings" (1Thessalonians 5:20). The world despises the Word of God because it shows them to be sinners that reject God's Counsel, i.e., "For every one that doeth evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John 3:20); but, the Saints love the Law of the LORD. "But his delight is in the Law of the LORD; and in His Law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalms 1:2). How can you separate a Christian from the Word of God without taking away his happiness, prosperity, and success? "This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8). Gauge a man by his love of the Scriptures. "But he that doeth Truth cometh to the Light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John 3:21). **Mark that man as happy.** "15 I will meditate in Thy Precepts, and have respect unto Thy Ways. 24 Thy Testimonies also are my Delight and my Counsellors" (Psalms 119:15, 24).
- *Sixth*, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1Thessalonians 5:21). The "Children of Light" (John 12:36) look for the Light that comes from God's Word to know what to believe and to do. "To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). It is the joy and happiness of the Saints to hear and obey the Saviour's Word. "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28). It is just such proving that happily will keep the Righteous from falling into the ways of the Antichrist. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1John 4:1). And, once we know the Truth, never let It go. "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9). Remember, since happiness is the result of a volitional choice, we cannot cease to hold fast to that which is good without losing our reward, i.e., "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2John 8). "But Christ as a Son over His Own House; Whose House are we, IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the Hope firm unto the end" (Hebrews 3:6).
- *Finally*, "Abstain from all appearance [literally, fashion or shape] of evil" (1Thessalonians 5:22). Such a command is anything but grievous or burdensome, because we take absolutely no delight in evil. "For this is the Love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous" (1John 5:3). We are happy only when He is happy; and, if abstaining from conduct that has the fashion, shape, form, and appearance of evil makes Him

happy, then we will abstain. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2Corinthians 6:17). Whether our concern is the stumbling of a weaker Brother, confusing of an observant Unbeliever, or our own purity, abstaining from all appearance of evil seeks to promote the greatest good possible for the Kingdom of God. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth" (Romans 14:22). This eighteenth verse of First Thessalonians chapter five reflects both the concern for self-purity and concern for others expressed in Jude's Epistle. "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23). Love produces the happiness that seeks not the contention of potentially "doubtful disputations" (Romans 14:1) over this verse with honest Christians. "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:28).

Conclusion

Our happiness is found in Jesus, and particularly, we take great comfort and consolation in the hope of His Soon Return. "And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23).

Amen, and Amen.