

Associates for Scriptural Knowledge • P.O. Box 25000, Portland, OR 97298-0990 USA
© ASK, September 2011 • All rights reserved • Number 9/11

Telephone: 503 292 4352

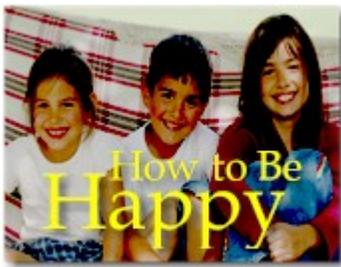
• Internet: www.askelm.com •

E-Mail: askoffice@askelm.com

How to Be Happy

by David Sielaff, September 2011

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for September 2011](#)



Everyone wants to be happy. To be happy means that your experience of life is generally contented, and occasionally joyful and cheerful. No one can be happy all the time, but you can have a life that is happy even when life's great evils occur one after another. As a Christian you should be happy, and for good reason. You have God's assurance of ultimate happiness for you and every human being. That will include people you do not like; it even will include your enemies. That happiness will come through the work of God who gives salvation to all through Christ.

Happiness cannot come through a political system. This is because political theory cannot give or guarantee happiness. The best that political theory of man can do is what is proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence by "the Thirteen United States of America":

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that [1] all men are created equal, [2] that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

This sentence is true. We were created by God. The pursuit of happiness is a right of all individuals, the same as life and liberty are rights. Any "rights" that we possess are not derived from government or men or angels, but they are derived from the Creator Himself. These rights remain our individual legacy even when other men suppress our rights. At present, "**the pursuit of happiness**" can only be a goal. It is not something that can be accomplished in this lifetime. This is the extent of what any system of man (political, social, economic or religious) can devise. Only God can give happiness.

Your Future Happiness

Whatever may be the evils you or your loved ones are suffering in your life now, you should know what is in store for your future, and it is most marvelous. In fact, you should know the future of all mankind. You will be happy. Everyone will be happy when God completes His plan of salvation for all mankind, and finishes the reconciliation of all beings and all creation to Himself through Christ (1 Timothy 4:10, Colossians 1:15–20).

Look at your future and note what you will be like in the resurrection:

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he [Christ Jesus] is pure.”

• **1 John 3:2–3**

John says that each person is to purify him or herself, now. Not later, but now. The apostle Paul writes that when we are resurrected from the dead we will be joint-heirs with Him (Romans 8:14–17).¹ When Christ returns we shall see Him as He is. Most of the beings in the universe must wait until later, and some much later, before they will be reconciled to YHWH, who is God the Father. Only then will God’s plan be completed and Christ will give back all rule and power to the Father.² God tells us through the apostle Paul that God’s love will always be present for us at this time:

“God, being rich in mercy, because of His vast love with which He loves us (we also being dead to the offenses and the lusts), vivifies us together in Christ (in grace are you saved!) and rouses us together and seats us together among the celestials, in Christ Jesus, that, in the oncoming eons, He should be displaying the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness onto us in Christ Jesus.”

• **Ephesians 2:4–7, Concordant Version**³

God has not revealed in the Scriptures details about what will occur after the future consummation of the plan of God, or **“the end”** as the King James Version translates it (read 1 Corinthians 15:22–28, especially verse 24):

“Then comes the end, when he [Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.”

• **1 Corinthians 15:24**

So, we are only told about our happiness through the end of the eons. When God’s plan is completed all human beings shall be like Christ is now.⁴ Whatever will occur after that, we will participate in directly:

“... unto the end [with the result] that we should all attain [1] to the unity of the faith and of the realization [full knowledge] of the son of God, [2] to a mature man, [3] to the measure of the stature of the complement of the Christ.”

• **Ephesians 4:13, Concordant Version**

You will no longer just be observers. This is because you shall be a full-grown and mature child of God, wholly able to eat and digest a full portion of all knowledge God chooses to give us.

“Now solid nourishment is for the mature, who, because of habit, have faculties exercised for discriminating between the ideal and the evil.”

• **Hebrews 5:14, Concordant Version**

After your resurrection and after a period of instruction on the capabilities of your new spiritual body, try to

¹ See my article [“Your Resurrection.”](#)

² When the end of God’s plan comes to pass, when the end of the eons occurs, we (us Christians) will have had the experience of being like Christ (as He is now), for at least 2,000 years. We will have had 2,000 years of happiness helping others come to Christ. How old are you now? How much have you suffered in life. There is a sequel, a relief, a joy to come in the future. See Dr. Ernest L. Martin’s excellent articles: [“The Time Periods for the Resurrections”](#); [“The Time Periods for Salvation - Part 1”](#); and [“The Time Periods for Salvation - Part 2.”](#)

³ **NOTE:** In this article I often quote from the Concordant Literal Version which is often more expressive and more accurate, especially in the New Testament Scriptures, than the King James Version. Look up the passages in the KJV or other translations that you prefer for contrast.

⁴ See Daniel 7:9, 10:6 for a vision of Christ before He became flesh, see Matthew 17:2 for when Jesus temporarily changed His appearance in the vision at the transfiguration, and see Revelation 1:13–15 for John’s vision of what Christ is like now.

imagine how “mature” you will be! In your life now as a believer you are learning to discriminate **“between the ideal and the evil.”** This is a major step toward maturity.

At present you are limited in your knowledge of God’s workings. You are limited to what God tells you from His Holy Scriptures. You cannot understand matters beyond what God has revealed in the Bible because you are restricted to your five physical senses and their interactions with each other. God’s Holy Spirit that you possess now is a down payment, an earnest, of what you will receive in the resurrection.

“... you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

• *Ephesians 1:13–14*

At your resurrection your celestial body will be filled with God’s Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:35–58, especially verse 40). To repeat, your body will be made from God’s Holy Spirit, just as Christ’s body is now. You shall never again die (John 11:25–26). That expectation alone should make you content now, if not happy.

“Blessed [happy] and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

• *Revelation 20:6*

As His child, God will give you a new spiritual body for your resurrected life. Your body will not work with oxygen flowing with blood in your veins, but it will be formed of God’s own Holy Spirit to accomplish His will in creation, and beyond.

“For our realm is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Savior also, the Lord, Jesus Christ, Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to the body of His glory, in accord with the operation which enables Him even to subject all to Himself.”

• *Philippians 3:20–21, Concordant Version*

Until that time your body, sensations, knowledge, and understanding are limited to what God has revealed to you from His prophets, His Son, and His apostles through the Holy Scriptures (Isaiah 64:4 quoted in 1 Corinthians 2:9–12). After your resurrection those limitations will be removed. Let me repeat, Again, **“we shall be like Him”** — like Christ (1 John 3:2, above). What will occur after God’s plan is completed can only be known by us after our resurrection.

Future Happiness of All God’s People

We are told and can be assured that all Israel shall be saved, as the apostle Paul proclaims (Romans 11:26). God’s people Israel have an assurance of happiness at a future time when God will cause gladness and joy to occur for Judah, Jerusalem, and all Israel:

“For, behold Me creating new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor shall they come upon the heart. But rather be elated, and exult, in the futures of the future which I will create, for, behold Me creating Jerusalem an exultation, and her people an elation. And I exult in Jerusalem, and I am elated in My people. And no longer shall the sound of lamentation be heard in it, and the sound of an outcry.”

• *Isaiah 65:17–19, Concordant Version*

That same promise of exultation and elation will apply to those who participate in the New Covenant. All under that covenant who are saved will be glad and rejoice. God will be joyful!

“Even as David also is telling of the happiness of the man to whom God is reckoning righteousness apart from acts:

Happy they whose lawlessnesses were pardoned and whose sins were covered over!

Happy the man to whom the Lord by no means should be reckoning sin!

This happiness, then, is it for the Circumcision, or for the Uncircumcision also? For we are saying, 'To Abraham faith is reckoned for righteousness.'"

• *Romans 4:6–9, Concordant Version*

The words “happy” (adjective) and “happiness” (the noun) in the above passage are translated “blessed” and “blessedness” in the King James Version. Most all modern commentaries understand that the shared derivative word *makarios* in the Greek New Testament meant “happy” and “happiness” in the common Greek of the 1st century AD.⁵

Old Covenant believers and the New Covenant believers will experience happiness and joy from God in their resurrection. We who understand the Mystery will experience that same happiness:

“For the saving grace of God made its advent to all humanity, training us that, disowning irreverence and worldly desires, we should be living sanely and justly and devoutly in the current eon, anticipating that happy expectation, even the advent of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gives Himself the sake of us, that He should be redeeming us from all lawlessness and be cleansing for Himself a people to be about Him, zealous for ideal acts.”

• *Titus 2:11–14, Concordant Version*

We anticipate **“that happy expectation,”** meaning our redemption, the resurrection (or as the King James Version expresses it, **“that blessed hope.”**)⁶

God and Christ Are Happy

Before His crucifixion Jesus anticipated the joy of His resurrection. He is our example. At the last supper in the upper room Jesus prayed to God about His apostles, and by extension for us and all mankind:

“And now come I to you; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”

• *John 17:13*

In fact, this joy helped give Him strength to endure the crucifixion. Have you ever heard that fact before? Read it for yourself. He is our example in times of trial:

“... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross [stauron, stake], despising the shame, and [now] is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

• *Hebrews 12:1–2*

We should do the same! Jesus was helped to endure the stake because He knew of **“the joy that was set before Him.”** In times of trouble in our lives — even times of horror — we should look to the same joy that helped Jesus endure His mocking, scourging, crucifixion, agony, and death. Christ is experiencing that joy now, seated **“at the right hand of the throne of God.”** We shall be “seated” with Him after our resurrection.

Apply these passages to yourself as well as to the *ekklesia*:

“Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, ...

⁵ There was no special theological language in the New Testament, unless the writers make it clear that they are using words or phrases in an unusual way.

⁶ See Dr. Martin’s article [“The Mystery and the New Covenant”](#) that expands on this important distinction.

And has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church [*ekklesia*], Which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all.

... has quickened us together with Christ, ... And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

• *Ephesians 1:20, 22–23, 2:5–7*

God is happy with the way things are going in His plan for mankind’s salvation. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy to do all “... in accord with the evangel of the glory of the happy God, with which I was entrusted” (1 Timothy 1:11, Concordant Version). Instead of “happy,” the King James Version uses the word “blessed” which does not convey the meaning of the Greek word derived *makarios*).

Later Paul wrote that God was happy.

“I am charging you in the sight of God, Who is vivifying all [spiritually resurrecting all], and of Jesus Christ, Who testifies in the ideal avowal before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this precept unspotted, irreprehensible, unto the advent of our Lord, Christ Jesus, which, to its own eras, the happy and only Potentate will be showing: He is King of kings and Lord of lords, Who alone has immortality, making His home in light inaccessible, Whom not one of mankind perceived nor can be perceiving, to Whom be honor and might eonian! Amen!”

• *1 Timothy 6:13–16, Concordant Version*

Happiness Now

I want to discuss how to be happy now, or at best, how to be happy often. Part of happiness now is the hope, the expectation, of a better future. Our hope and faith in God helps us endure evil at this present time, and it helps us understand an important fact. What you endure at the present time is transitory in comparison to your unending future glorified state, given to you as God’s gift to you (Romans 6:23; 1 John 5:11–12).

“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

• *Romans 5:17–18*

God does not guarantee happiness at this time in your life, although we should be happy much of the time, indeed most of the time, if we properly understand God’s plan for us as individuals and all mankind, and if we follow some basic instructions from God with prayer and thanksgiving. Remember, you have God’s Holy Spirit. You can gradually, perhaps slowly, but nonetheless inevitably, grow in grace and in knowledge of God, and in wisdom in your treatment of yourself and your fellow man.

The pursuit of happiness discussed earlier is a primary drive in the lives of most human beings, although we each go about it in many different ways. Think about it and be honest: Nearly every action you take in life is INTENDED to promote, establish, or secure happiness for you or some other person. That includes nearly every thought word or deed. Let me give you an example.

Wealth and Happiness

Some people seek wealth thinking they will find happiness there. Reading the biographies of wealthy individuals quickly puts that thought to rest. The rich often say they are unhappy in spite of the pleasures of the flesh that are available to them through their wealth. There is good reason for this, as the apostle Paul tells his young associate Timothy. (Note the repetition of the word “Now”):

“Now devoutness with contentment is great capital; for nothing do we carry into the world, and it is evident that neither can we carry anything out.”

Now, having sustenance and shelter, with these we shall be sufficed.

Now, those intending to be rich are falling in into a trial and a trap and the many foolish and harmful desires which are swamping men in extermination and destruction. For a root of all of the evils is the fondness for money, which some, craving, were led astray from the faith and try themselves on all sides with much pain.

Now you, O man of God, flee from these things: yet pursue righteousness, devoutness, faith, love, with endurance, suffering, and meekness. Contend the ideal contest of the faith. Get hold of eonian life, for which you were called, and you avow the ideal avowal [confession] in the sight of many witnesses.”

• *1 Timothy 6:6–12, Concordant Version*

Note that Paul says that “**the fondness for money**” (or, “**the love of money,**” KJV) is a root of all the evils. It is not the only root of all the evils. There are other roots of evil besides “**the fondness of money.**” Furthermore, there are many evils in life. Whatever obsesses your life will likely be a root of evil for you. A “**fondness for money**” is very common. Certainly it is the basis of most all covetousness and theft. Yet, God also says that riches are a gift of God:

“Every man also to whom God has given riches and wealth, and has given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.”

• *Ecclesiastes 5:19*

Those believers who are rich now, how should they act and deal with their wealth, so as to bring them contentment? Well, they have a responsibility to act wisely. Read Paul’s advice to his young colleague Timothy on how to encourage those who are rich now:

“Those who are rich in the current eon be charging **not to be haughty, nor yet to rely on the dubiousness of riches, but on God, Who is tendering us all things richly for our enjoyment; to be doing good acts, to be rich in ideal acts, to be liberal contributors, treasuring up for themselves an ideal foundation for that which is impending, that they may get hold of life really.**”

• *1 Timothy 6:17–19, Concordant Version*

Being rich is not a requirement for being happy. But the rich can be happy.

“The poor is hated even of his own neighbor: but the rich have many friends. He that despises his neighbor sins: but **he that has mercy on the poor, happy is he.**”

• *Proverbs 14:20–21*

Happiness in the Old Testament

The Hebrew word *asher* means “happy” or “happiness.” Jacob’s eighth son by his handmaid Zilpah was named Asher, the patriarch of the tribe of Israel that means “happy.” Below are some Old Testament passages that relate to happiness now. Most are from the Psalms. Read and learn. Note those that appeal to you:

“**Happy is the man who does not** [1] **walk in the counsel of the wicked, Who** [2] **neither stands in the way of sinners,** [3] **Nor sits in the seat of mockers.** But rather his delight is in the law [*torah*] of YHWH, And he is soliloquizing from His law by day and night.”

• *Psalms 1:1–2, Concordant Version*

“O YHWH of hosts, blessed [happy] is the man that trusts in you.”

• *Psalms 84:12*

“YHWH knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. **Blessed** [happy] **is the man whom you chasten, O YHWH,** and teach him out of your law; That you may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. For YHWH will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.”

• *Psalms 94:11–14*

“Praise Yah! Acclaim YHWH, for He is good! For His benignity is eonian. Who can declare the masterful deeds of YHWH, or make all His praise heard? Happy are those keeping right judgment, Executing righteousness in every era.”

• *Psalm 106:1–3, Concordant Version*

“Praise you YHWH. Blessed [happy] is the man that fears YHWH, that delights greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endures for ever [for the future]. Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.”

• *Psalm 112:1–4*

“Blessed [happy] are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of YHWH. Blessed [happy] are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.”

• *Psalm 119:1–2*

“As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy [happy] is the man that has his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.”

• *Psalm 127:4–5*

“Blessed [happy] is every one that fears YHWH; that walks in his ways. For you shall eat the labor of your hands: happy shall you be, and it shall be well with you.”

• *Psalm 128:1–2*

“Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in YHWH his God.”

• *Psalm 146:5*

“Happy is the man that finds wisdom, and the man that gets understanding.”

• *Proverbs 3:13*

“Happy is the man that fears alway: but he that hardens his heart shall fall into mischief.”

• *Proverbs 28:14*

So God gives us information in the Old Testament how to increase your happiness in life. They are not hard and fast rules that work every time. They are not the sort of rules that promise, “if you do A, you will get B result.” Life as God has set it before us does not operate that way. This is the major topic (and problem) expressed in most all of the wisdom books of the Old Testament (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes). The historical and prophetic books show how the people and nation of Israel failed to honor God properly, and therefore they did not find blessing, happiness, but instead received punishment and horror from God’s instruments of punishment due to their sinful and evil actions.

Life is not fair. Do not ever expect it to be so in this lifetime. In fact, life is not even “good” for most people in the world today. People in the world are suffering to various degrees. Human existence has been summed up as, “You’re born, you suffer, you die.” For some the suffering is constant, but for most people things are not as bleak, yet happiness is transitory. Why? Because God has lessons for us to learn (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8). That takes lifetimes of varying lengths according to God’s determination for each of us (no, not reincarnation!). It requires that most of us suffer from pains as they age, which is normal as we move toward death, or we suffer from debilitating diseases, malnutrition, oppression, or threats to life and limb:

“He who observes instruction shall know no evil matter, And the wise heart shall know time and judgment. For there is time and judgment for every event, Since the evil for a man is great upon him. For no one knows what shall come, For just as it shall be, who can tell him?”

No man has authority over the spirit to detain the spirit, And no one has authority over the day of death; There is no dismissal in war, And wickedness shall make no way of escape for its possessor.”

• *Ecclesiastes 8:5–8, Concordant Version*

Yet the Bible talks about happiness and how to be happy. God gives us instruction for you to bring happiness in your own life as best you can. Do not expect any one or several of God’s motivating statements to bring total happiness to you or to protect your loved ones. These rules and instructions will help you trend toward happiness while you **“work out your own salvation”** (Philippians 2:12), and increase your understanding of what God wishes and requires from each of us as His children.

You can be happy even in adversity, pain, toil, and suffering. The apostle Paul was. You can be happy even when God is chastising, even severely punishing you as His child, even though you are filled with His Holy Spirit. In fact, God chastises, punishes, all His children — believe it or not. God is not being sadistic. He is acting in your best interest for your future so that you will be resurrected, having learned the lessons He has chosen for you to learn. It builds your character. I will present more about God’s chastisements and punishments of His children.

The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes are a major source of instruction on how to be happy in life. Most commentaries acknowledge that the King James Version translation of the word “blessed” in the New Testament does not convey the imputed theological meaning attributed to it. The word simply means “happy.” The Greek adjective *makarios* occurs in the New Testament 50 times. The KJV translates the term “blessed” 44 times, “happy” 5 times, and “happier” 1 time.

“The New Testament employs various forms of *makarios*, a term with an ancient pedigree going back to Homer and Hesiod, used chiefly of the gods and the departed dead, which carries with it the idea of one who is blessed, happy, or to be congratulated. Jesus provides in the Sermon on the Mount a radical new vision of happiness for his followers: blessed (*makarioi*) or to be congratulated are the poor in spirit, the sad, the poor, the hungry, the persecuted for the sake of Christ (Matt. 5; see also Luke 6).”

- **“Happiness,” Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling**⁷

The Beatitudes of Matthew chapter 5 are part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus’ longest sermon. The people followed Him and gathered on a mountain. Jesus always spoke to the people only in parables (Matthew 13:34–35), but in this instance He spoke to His disciples (the apostles and others to total about 120, see Acts 1:15) and the multitudes were present. In other words, Jesus specifically addressed His disciples, but the people listened to what He said.⁸

“Jesus starts by telling his disciples how to be happy. His list of eight happy attitudes turns popular values upside down (5:3–12). Most people assume happiness is:

- **achieving our goals of wealth and success; leaving others behind.**
- **always being fun to have around — the life and soul of every party.**
- **being strong, or beautiful, or rich, or clever; being independent, secure and in control.**
- **getting our terms agreed, our rights established and ensuring that justice is done.”**

- **Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, p. 413**⁹

Let us review the beatitudes. Again, I present them with the Concordant Version because of its consistency and accuracy, and but if you do not like this translation, then read your King James Version or any

⁷ David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill, *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling*, 2nd ed., Baker reference library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), p. 541.

⁸ A portion of Jesus’ words are repeated in a shorter list in Luke chapter 6, accompanied with a list of woes, which are actions to avoid doing. The list in Luke is shorter and specific to his Gentile audience. It was also given at a different time.

⁹ Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), p. 413.

other translation for comparison. Read and think about each one carefully:

“Now, perceiving the throngs, He ascended into the mountain. And, at His being seated, His disciples came to Him. And opening His mouth, He taught them, saying,

- Happy, in spirit, are the poor,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
- Happy are those who mourn now,
for they’ shall be consoled.
- Happy are the meek,
for they shall be enjoying the allotment of the land.
- Happy are those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.
- Happy are the merciful,
for they shall be shown mercy.
- Happy are the clean in heart,
for they’ shall see God.
- Happy are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called sons of God.
- Happy are those persecuted on account of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.
- Happy are you whenever they should be reproaching and persecuting you and, falsifying, saying every wicked thing against you, on My account.

Rejoice and exult [!], for your wages are vast in the heavens. For thus they persecute the prophets before you.

You are the salt of the earth. Now, if the salt should be made insipid, with what will it be salted? For nothing does it still avail except to be cast outside, to be trampled by men.

You are the light of the world. A city located upon a mountain can not be hid.”

• *Matthew 5:1–14, Concordant Version*

The extent you do what God and Jesus says to do, is the extent you will accrue “**your wages in the heavens.**” Note also that they were to expect persecution. Andrew Knowles comments further on the Beatitudes:

“Jesus describes a happiness which doesn’t depend on possessions, circumstances or good luck. It’s a happiness God gives us now which nothing can take away. It’s a happiness which looks forward to wonderful rewards when God’s kingdom finally comes. Jesus adds a blessing for those who suffer for their faith in him. He promises that God will make it up to them, with a reward which is far greater than anything they can imagine. And persecution is a compliment of sorts. It means we’re being treated like the old prophets.”

• *Andrew Knowles, The Bible Guide, p. 414, emphasis mine*

God’s Promises

The Old Testament prophet Amos spoke to the people of Israel and gave them a promise from God:

“**Seek good, and not evil** [Why?], [1] **that you may live:** and [2] **so YHWH, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as you [YHWH] have spoken.**”

• *Amos 5:14*

Yes, God promises life (continued life) to Israel in times of trouble, even after they have been consistently and constantly disobedient and evil. Nevertheless He said that He would be with the people of Israel — if they obeyed God according to Israel’s covenant with Him. What a tremendous promise. What needs to be

done to gain these two benefits? Do as Amos says, “**Seek good, and not evil.**” In other words, you are to avoid evil, and not seek it out.¹⁰ First comes trust and obedience to God, then God will fulfill His promises.

“**Blessed** [happy] **is the man whom you choose, and cause to approach unto you, that he may dwell in your courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of your holy temple.**”

• *Psalm 65:4* (italics are not in the Hebrew)

How would this verse apply to us? We of the *ekklesia* of God indeed shall be judged in His Holy Temple in heaven after our resurrection and receive our reward for good works (not for salvation), before being assigned to reconcile the universe. Israel and the New Covenant *ekklesia* shall reconcile those on earth.

Psalm 33 says that entire nations can be happy with YHWH as their God, as it states in Psalm 33:

“**Blessed** [happy] **is the nation whose God is YHWH; and the people whom he has chosen for his [God’s] own inheritance. YHWH looks from heaven; he beholds all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashions their hearts alike; he considers all their works. ...**

Behold, the eye of YHWH is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for YHWH: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, [why?] because we have trusted in his holy name. Let your mercy, O YHWH, be upon us, according as we hope in you.”

• *Psalm 33:12–15, 18–22*

Happiness and rejoicing are the result of acknowledging and serving YHWH as God. Specifically, of course, verse 12 is referring to the people and the nation of Israel. They were chosen by God to be His people, His special inheritance, and His nation. Nothing in this passage says that other nations cannot have YHWH as their God. They can and they will acknowledge Him as their God and obey (Isaiah 19:23–25).¹¹

Happiness under God’s Correction and Discipline

Note what was said by Job while he was undergoing his trial, that others like him should be happy:

“**Behold, happy is the man [!] whom God corrects: therefore despise not you the chastening of the Almighty: For he makes sore, and binds up: he wounds, and his hands make whole. He shall deliver you in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch you. In famine he shall redeem you from death: and in war from the power of the sword. You shall be hid from the scourge**¹² **of the tongue: neither shall you be afraid of destruction when it comes.**”

• *Job 5:17–21*

¹⁰ In Romans the apostle Paul said it was impossible for the people of Israel to obey God. In the time of Amos they lacked Christ’s example of righteousness, lacked God’s calling, and lacked God’s Holy Spirit for God to change their hearts. God had blinded Israel (2 Corinthians 3:14–16). The people of Israel will be given the ability to perform God’s will in the future. You have that ability now. At present Israel’s situation is this (Romans 11:25–26):

“**that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, ‘There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.’”**

¹¹ No nation has done that; Israel has not. Occasionally Israel acknowledged YHWH as their God and acted properly in that belief. They soon went astray after other gods or going through the rituals of the Law of Moses without belief or understanding. This was the complaint of the Old Testament prophets as well as the last and greatest of prophets, John the Baptist (Luke 7:28).

¹² This word “**scourge**” is the same word in the Greek Old Testament, as the Greek term used in Hebrews 5:12. It is correctly translated “**scourge**” in the King James Version at Matthew 10:17, 23:34. The Greek word means to whip, scourge, or flog. See most any Greek lexicon of the Bible. In Matthew 20:19; Mark 10:34; Luke 18:33; John 19:1, the same Greek term is used in reference to the scourging of Jesus before His crucifixion.

Can anyone be happy when they are being punished? Job says we should be. This strange truth is said several different ways in the Bible. God’s chastening can be severe, and as Job discovered, that chastening can be because God wishes to make an example of you for others. Such is the sovereignty of God!

“The discipline of YHWH, my son, do not reject, And do not be irritated by His reproof, For whom YHWH loves He corrects, And [as a father] He gives pain to the son He holds dear. Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains hold of comprehension, ...

Length of days are in her right hand, And in her left hand are riches and glory. ... She is a tree of life to those holding fast to her, And those upholding her [wisdom] will be happy.”

• *Proverbs 3:11–13, 16, 18, Concordant Version*

At first glance there appears to be a problem with Proverbs 3:12, especially the phrase in the last half of the verse: **“For whom YHWH loves He corrects, And He gives pain to the son He holds dear.”** This must be an erroneous translation! Yet this Concordant Version rendering comes from the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, considerably different from the King James Version that translates from the Hebrew. Furthermore, the apostle Paul uses the Greek translation word for word in Hebrews 12:6.

Here is a chart to show all the information in one place. Note the shaded portion:

Proverbs 3:11–12 (KJV translation from Hebrew)	Proverbs 3:11–12 (CLV translation from Greek)	Proverbs 3:11–12 (Greek text)	Hebrews 12:5–6 (Greek text)	Hebrews 12:5–6 (KJV translation from Greek)
[no introduction]	[no introduction]	[no introduction]	(v 5) καὶ ἐκλέλησθε τῆς παρακλήσεως, ἥτις ὑμῖν ὡς υἱοῖς διαλέγεται,	(v 5) “And you have forgotten the exhorta- tion which speaks unto you as unto children,
(v 11) “My son, despise not the chastening of YHWH; neither be weary of his correction:	(v 11) “The discipline of YHWH, my son, do not reject, And do not be irritated by His reproof,	(v 11) υἱέ μὴ ὀλιγώρει παιδείας κυρίου μηδὲ ἐκλύου ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐλεγχόμενος	Υἱέ μου, μὴ ὀλιγώρει παιδείας κυρίου μηδὲ ἐκλύου ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐλεγχόμενος.	‘My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him:
(v 12) For whom YHWH loves he corrects; even as a father the son in whom he delights.”	(v 12) For whom YHWH loves He corrects, And [as a father] He gives pain to the son He holds dear.”	(v 12) ὃν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ κύριος παιδεύει μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱὸν ὃν παραδέχεται	(v 6) ὃν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ κύριος παιδεύει, μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱὸν ὃν παραδέχεται.	(v 6) For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.”

The message of the Greek of Hebrews 12:6 is the same as that of the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint (the LXX). The Concordant Version is more accurate than the Hebrew translation because the apostle Paul confirms it to be so. There can be no doubt. Paul’s quotation of Proverbs 3:11 in Hebrews 12:5 contain essentially the same Greek words, with incidental variation in the first two words. The apostle Paul chose to use the text from the Greek Old Testament (whether from the Septuagint or another Greek text), rather than using the Hebrew, which conveys an entirely different meaning. Paul’s choices of words are authoritative in this matter!

The purpose of this table is to show that God’s harsh discipline, even to the extent of causing pain in extreme punishment is part of being a child of God, now, at this time. Note also that in verse 6, the King James Version uses the word **“scourges,”** which is the same term in Greek.

The apostle Paul goes on to explain in Hebrews 12:7 and following:

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons.

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he [God, chastened us] for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

• *Hebrews 12:7–11*

If you receive chastening from God it is a sign that you are His child! Otherwise He would not bother with you at this time. God is communicating with you directly (and more than just through His Word). Do you want evidence that God is paying attention to you? Then disobey. If you are enduring trial, if you are being chastened by God, then you are assured that God is noticing you, nurturing you, loving you.

God’s Peace after Chastening

God says we are to be happy with His chastisement. Job tells us the same thing. And Job says this while suffering! Read Job 5:17–21 again. The psalmist says the same:

“Blessed [happy] is the man whom you chasten, O YHWH, and teach him out of your law; That you may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be dug for the wicked.”

• *Psalms 94:12–13*

“For his anger endures but a moment; in his favor is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”

• *Psalms 30:5*

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

• *Revelation 3:19*

Remember, you as a believer in Christ’s resurrection have God’s Holy Spirit to help you do what is right.

“Blessed [happy] is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed [happy] is the man [adam] unto whom YHWH imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit [man’s spirit] there is no guile.”

• *Psalms 32:1–2*

We should be happy and rejoicing in God, His love, and His works. Your thoughts determine your state of mind, which in turn determines your actions in life:

“Be rejoicing in the Lord always! Again, I will declare, be rejoicing! Let your lenience be known to all men: the Lord is near.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, [then Paul gives a promise:] and the peace of God, that is superior to every frame of mind, shall be garrisoning your hearts and your apprehensions in Christ Jesus. For the rest, brethren,

- whatever is true,
- whatever is grave,
- whatever is just,
- whatever is pure,
- whatever is agreeable,
- whatever is renowned

— if there is any virtue, and if any applause [praise], be taking these into account.”

• *Philippians 4:4–8, Concordant Version*

What a remarkable passage! Admonition, hope, explanation, exhortation, and a specific promise: “... **the peace of God ... shall be garrisoning your hearts and your apprehensions in Christ Jesus.**” All these benefits are contained in this one passage. Paul then says for them to rejoice. This verb “**be rejoicing**” is in the imperative mood. It is not a request, it is an order — do this! Immediately. Without fail. Constantly.

He says “**do not worry about anything, ... but let your requests be made known to God, ... and the peace of God shall be garrisoning your hearts and your apprehensions in Christ Jesus.**” This is not easy to do, but Paul says do it anyway. Peace is necessary for happiness. Your worries, your apprehensions serve no purpose if you can do nothing about them. You and God are already aware of your problems. Give your worries and apprehensions over to God. Release them. Pray to God — “Father, you take care of this problem, I’ve done all I can do, this problem is too big, too complex, too horrible for me.”

Do you know what may happen? Your problem(s) may get worse. You may suffer because of your problem. You may lose everything in this world because of your problem. You may die because of your problem. Yet you have the promise of God that — so far as your consciousness is concerned — you will be resurrected seemingly the moment after you die.¹³

Yet make no mistake, death is not a mercy, it is an enemy to be fought. It is your enemy, It is the last enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26). Death is not just mankind’s last enemy, death is your last enemy.¹⁴

“He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord YHWH will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for YHWH has spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, ‘Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is YHWH; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

• *Isaiah 25:8–9*

Yes, God’s salvation will bring us gladness and rejoicing. The apostle Paul quotes this passage from Isaiah, writing about the future time when death will have no more power over you or anyone else:

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?”

• *1 Corinthians 15:54–55*

This is the anticipation we should be living with at this present time. This is our “**blessed hope**” as it is expressed in the King James Version of Titus 2:13:

“For the saving grace of *God made its advent to all humanity, training us that, disowning irreverence and worldly desires, we should be living sanely and justly and devoutly in the current eon, anticipating that HAPPY EXPECTATION [“blessed hope,” KJV], even the advent of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

• *Titus 2:11–13, Concordant Version*

Hope is not merely a desire or a wish, it is a powerful “**expectation**” of what will occur, based on God’s promise. It will happen because God has decreed it to be so. We have “**hope of eternal [eonian] life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began**” (Titus 1:2). The Concordant Version makes this point clearer: “**in expectation of life eonian, which God, Who does not lie, promises before times eonian.**” We have God’s promise from “**before the foundation of the world**” (Ephesians 1:4), from “**before times eonian.**”

“Behold, we count them happy which endure. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of YHWH; that YHWH is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.”

• *James 5:11*

¹³ My article “[Forgiving God](#)” explains when and if God should receive forgiveness from us in this life.

¹⁴ See Dr. Martin’s article “[The Death of Death](#).”

How Then Shall We Live?

Paul's two epistles to the *ekklesia* at Thessalonica speak specifically of the period just before Christ returns, near the time of the end (still several decades ahead of us today in September 2011). First and Second Thessalonians encourage us how we should act during that difficult time. They are prophecies about conditions and problems of the *ekklesia* at that time still future to us.

“... for God did not appoint us to indignation, but [God appointed us] to the procuring of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for our sakes, that, whether we may be watching or drowsing, we should be living at the same time together with Him. Wherefore, console one another and edify one the other, according as you are doing also.

Now we are asking you, brethren, to perceive those who are toiling among you and presiding over you in the Lord and admonishing you, and to deem them exceedingly distinguished in love, because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

Now we are entreating you, brethren;

- admonish the disorderly,
- comfort the fainthearted,
- uphold the infirm,
- be patient toward all.
- See that no one may be rendering evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue that which is good for one another as well as for all.
- **BE REJOICING ALWAYS.**
- Be praying unintermittingly.¹⁵
- **In everything be giving thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**
- Quench not the spirit.
- Scorn not prophecies.
- Yet be testing all, retaining the ideal.
- From everything wicked to the perception, abstain.

Now may the God of peace Himself be hallowing [setting apart, purifying] you wholly; and may your unimpaired spirit and soul and body be kept blameless in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ! Faithful is He Who is calling you, Who will be doing it also.”

• *1 Thessalonians 5:9–24, Concordant Version*

Read this same passage in the King James Version or another favorite translation for a different perspective. The message is nevertheless the same. Note what I have strongly emphasized: God shall accomplish in you what He set out to do. This is joyous news indeed. You can and should live and act as Paul advises in this Thessalonians passage. God will give you the power to do so:

“Now may the God of expectation be filling you with all joy and peace in believing, for you to be super-abounding in expectation [hope], in the power of holy spirit.”

• *Romans 15:13, Concordant Version*

Whatever your present situation, your future could not possibly be brighter, or more secure. Rejoice in that knowledge! Enjoy and luxuriate in God's love.

David Sielaff, September 2011

¹⁵ See the article [“The Essentials of Prayer”](#) by Dr. Martin.