

"The Pursuit of Happiness"

The Introduction to the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America contains this long sentence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident,
that all men are created equal,
that they are endowed by their Creator
with certain unalienable Rights,
that among these are Life, Liberty,
and the pursuit of Happiness."

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826, 3rd President of the USA), with the endorsement of the legislators of the then existing 13 States, believed that "the pursuit of happiness" is not only an unalienable right, but that it is endowed by none other than the Creator. Without a doubt, this demonstrates Jefferson's altruistic character. It expresses, I'm sure, his magnanimous concern not only for citizens of the United States but for people everywhere.

With all due respect for Thomas Jefferson and for the governors of the 13 States, nowhere in the New Testament do we find that happiness or its pursuit is a divinely-endowed right during this Era of Grace.

If I am to *pursue* happiness, it must be something outside of myself, beyond myself. I go looking for it. Maybe I pursue developments, conditions and circumstances that I think will bring me this thing called happiness. But does my happiness depend on things and situations? If it does, then I will never be happy, because life is rarely all that I'd like it to be.

According to the Bible, I gain happiness by what I think, say and do; by my godly attitude and disposition, by who I am on the *inside*.

Someone has said, "You don't find happiness looking for it; you stumble across it on the road of service." Happiness happens to you as you live unselfishly for God and for others.

After Jesus showed his apostles how they should *humble* themselves and *serve* one another, he said to them; "*Now that you know these things, you will be happy if you do them*" (John 13:17).

Apostle Paul suffered a lot for his faith and for his faithful activities. But he always had the joy of the Lord. The joy of the Lord does not depend on external situations and conditions. The joy of the Lord doesn't depend on material things. The joy of the Lord depends on the Lord. Joy is a personality trait of the Holy Spirit.

The joy of the Lord is already in you if the Lord is in you. But are you releasing and appropriating his joy? The joy of the Lord means I'm thoroughly enjoying him and he is delighting in me. Nothing stands in the way of full fellowship. The joy of the Lord is a delectable foretaste of heaven. Nothing human compares with it. Apostle Peter (1 Peter 1:8) says the joy of the Lord is indescribable. The joy of the Lord cannot be defined but it can be experienced and it can be demonstrated.

From behind the heavy iron bars of a Roman prison, Apostle Paul writes to the believers in Philippi: "*Rejoice in the Lord always.*"

So, don't waste your time chasing some kind of imaginary, illusive happiness, when you can experience the joy of the Lord.

You want happiness? You already have it. Years ago, when I was much younger, we *knew* what happiness was. It was identified in the gospel song, "Happiness is the Lord!" I would sing it for you but, unfortunately (fortunately?), my voice is not very good today. (*Today?!)*

Happiness is to know the Savior,
Living a life within His favor,
Having a change in my behavior,
Happiness is the Lord.

Happiness is a new creation,
Jesus and me in close relation,
Having a part in His salvation,
Happiness is the Lord.

Real joy is mine, no matter if teardrops start;
I've found the secret, it's Jesus in my heart!

Happiness is to be forgiven,
Living a life that's worth the living,
Taking a trip that leads to Heaven,
Happiness is the Lord,
Happiness is the Lord,
Happiness is the Lord!

Words and Music by Ira F. Stanphill © 1968 - All rights reserved
(You can find the words and music in Cyberspace.) ◇◇◇