

**Lies Christians Believe**  
**A Right to Be Happy, Part 4**  
**Selected Scriptures**

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I was thinking this week about those issues that are quintessentially American. You've heard the saying, "There's nothing more American than baseball, apple pie, and Chevrolet." But there is something, I think, that's more American than that. And it is the pursuit of our own happiness. After all, it is enshrined in our nation's documents.

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

It is our right to be happy. So certainly, seeking our own happiness is thoroughly American. But the question that I want us to ask and consider this morning is 'is it Christian?' Or have we believed one of the lies around us?

We're in the middle of a series that I've entitled "Lies Christians Believe." We began our study in Romans 12. I invite you to turn there with me again, Romans 12. If you weren't here when I covered this passage, I encourage you to go back and listen online because the first message in this series I went through this passage in detail. It's really the foundation on which everything else is built, but let me just briefly remind you of what Romans Chapter 12 says.

Beginning in verses 1 and 2, we're urged in response to the mercies of God, that is those mercies that have been shown us in Christ, the salvation that's ours in Christ. We are urged in verse 1 to give our bodies as a living sacrifice. In verse 2, we are likewise urged to give God, in response to His mercies, our minds. In verse 2, Paul tells us how to use our minds. Notice what he says – first of all in the first half of the verse, he says resist the thinking of the age. The age, meaning certainly the entire age from the time Jesus was here till He returns, but also the word he uses here is a very specific word. Notice what he says in verse 2, "do not be conformed to this world". The word world is 'aion.' It means age, and it really means the mindset, the values, the thinking

of the age in which you live. Paul is saying don't allow your thinking to be pushed into the mold of the way the age around you thinks.

In the second half of the verse, he says I want you instead to embrace the thinking of our God. Notice he says do not be conformed to this world, don't allow your mind to be shaped by the values and mindset of the age, but be transformed. The word transformed refers to a metamorphosis – a radical inward change in fundamental character. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. We are to allow the Spirit of God to use the Word of God to renew our minds.

Instead of believing the lies around us, instead of having our thinking shaped by the mindset of the age in which we live, our thinking instead is to be shaped by the Word of God, by the Spirit of God using the Word of God helping us understand. Notice how verse 2 ends, “the will of God.” Here he is not talking about the subjective will of God, that is what car you ought to buy or who you ought to marry or what career path you ought to choose, but rather the objective will of God, the external word that God has spoken, so that you can understand God's will as it's revealed to us in the Scripture.

So, to help us do that, we are examining some of the dangerous ideas that dominate the culture around us. We're looking at the mindset of our age so that we can understand it, so that, we can defend against it, and so that, we can allow the Scripture to renew our minds. So that, instead of believing the lies around us, instead we believe and embrace the truth of the Spirit of God. So far, we have unmasked three dangerous ideas. Let me just remind you of them. By the way, we started a few months ago using these PowerPoint slides on Sunday morning. The reason, as Jonathan and I talked, is we have a lot of young people in our church. And we want them to learn how to follow and how to take notes. And so, it's a great tool to enable them to do that. Maybe for some of the rest of you it's helpful too. But that was the intention and goal. And hopefully it helps to that end. So, what ideas have we looked at so far?

Number one, “Truth Is Relative.” Truth is relative.

Number two, “There Are No Moral Absolutes.” You get to choose what you want to do and whatever you choose, that's right.

The third lie that we considered is, “Life Is Random.” Life is random. We looked at the lies in each case, and then we looked at what the truth of God has to say in response to each of those

lies. Today we come to a fourth lie that permeates the culture around us, and frankly that many Christians have believed, and that any of us can be tempted to believe.

The fourth lie is this, “The Goal of Life Is My Personal Happiness.” The goal of life is my personal happiness. That’s why I’m here. Now normally, we’re working our way through a passage, and so, we begin by expositing the passage. But sort of following the structure of Romans 12:2, we’re going to start again by looking at the lie. I want you to understand what the lie is and where it came from and what consequences the lies had. And once we’ve done that, we’ll then examine what the Scripture says in response, the truth of God that will allow us to have our minds renewed, so that, we embrace God’s truth instead of the lie.

So, let’s begin then looking at a basic definition of this lie. What does it mean, the goal of life is personal happiness? Well, this lie maintains that there is no higher goal for your life than to pursue your own personal pleasure. It’s not only acceptable, it is imperative that I live to satisfy my own needs, my own wants, my own desires. Those who embrace this view, this lie, mean it in two ways. They mean that the chief goal of the whole of life, the entirety of life, should be our own happiness. And they mean that the decisions we make each day and each moment should be made to minimize our personal pain and to maximize our personal pleasure. So, the entirety of life is about my happiness, and I should make decisions every moment that will minimize my personal pain and maximize my personal pleasure.

Now you won’t hear, again, the average person on the street talking like that. Instead, this lie, as it is filtered down to everyday people is expressed in several popular ways. Let me just give you a couple of them, three of them actually, ways this dangerous lie is expressed popularly in the culture.

Number one, I deserve to be happy. I deserve to be happy. Happiness is a right. That means I will make choices that bring me the greatest personal satisfaction. I deserve to be happy. I’ve heard people say that. You’ve heard people say that.

A second way this lie is expressed popularly in the culture is, “it’s all about me.” It’s all about me. People put that on their shirts. It’s all about me. You see, the emphasis on the priority of personal happiness has led to a bizarre kind of self-centeredness in our culture. It’s a narcissism. In 2009 two secular psychologists wrote a book, a fascinating book, entitled “The Narcissism Epidemic.” In that book, listen to what they write, speaking of the American culture,

“our culture’s focus on self-admiration has caused a flight from reality to the land of grandiose fantasy. We have phony rich people, with interest-only mortgages and piles of debt; phony beauty, with plastic surgery and cosmetic procedures; phony athletes, with performance-enhancing drugs; phony celebrities, via reality TV and YouTube; phony genius students, with grade inflation; a phony national economy, with 11 trillion dollars of government debt (that number of course has gone up since this book was written); phony feelings of being special among children, with parenting and education focused on self-esteem; and phony friends, with the social networking explosion.”

They’re absolutely right. We live in a pretend world, and it’s all built on the reality that my personal happiness is the goal of life, and you exist for my happiness. It really is all about me.

Perhaps nowhere in human history has this idea run freer than on the internet with the “me” generation. It began with blogs and MySpace. Then came Facebook, which now has 700 million users. And of course, there’s YouTube, which blatantly invites you to broadcast yourself. I love Twitter because it’s given everyone the chance to broadcast a running commentary of their lives. What shoes they’re wearing, where they’re eating, and other things I really didn’t want to know. Twitter gives the illusion that there are dozens or perhaps hundreds of people who really care what you’re doing right now.

These technologies can be useful tools, and I’m not disparaging them in entirety, kept in their place. But internet technologies have all clearly encouraged narcissism and self-promotion. I think it’s capsulized well by a girl that was interviewed in *USA Today*, 22-year-old who said this, “The internet is just a way for me to reach more people with who I am.” It really is all about me.

A third common expression of this idea, this lie is, “I need to be personally fulfilled.” I need to reach self-fulfillment. Self-fulfillment has become a moral imperative. The reason I should make relational choices, career choices, is about self-fulfillment. What is self-fulfillment? The Oxford dictionary defines it this way. It is the fulfillment of one’s own hopes and ambitions, self-satisfying fulfillment of one’s own potential. So, in the end then, self-fulfillment is really just my pursuit of those things that I believe will bring me happiness. Those are just a few of the popular level expressions of this dangerous lie.

But as with the other lies, it didn’t start at the popular level. Invariably, they start with philosophers and filter down. And that’s exactly what happened with this lie. So, for a brief time,

I want you to know where it came from. I want to look at the philosophical background. Where'd this lie come from? Out from under what rock did it crawl?

Well really, it started in human history in the Garden of Eden with the first man and the first woman. You remember Genesis 3? Genesis 3:6. Do you remember the serpent offers Eve fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Verse 6 of Genesis 3 says this, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate." Now what went on there? Eve first substituted her human reason for divine revelation, which it said you shall not. And then she made a decision to eat. And the basis of the decision was what she believed at the time could bring her the greatest personal happiness. That's where it began.

This same lie then becomes a feature of human history. If you look back at the ancient philosophers of Greece, you find this lie. Democritus in the 400's before Christ was the earliest philosopher we know of that embraced Hedonism. He argued that the supreme goal of life was what he called contentment or cheerfulness, happiness. A hundred years later in about 300 B.C., along came Epicurus and Epicureanism. Epicureanism taught that pleasure is the greatest good and man's highest goal. Now maybe you don't know this, but contrary to common belief, Epicurus himself did not teach that the greatest good was found in wild living.

In fact, originally in the Epicurean view, the highest pleasure was found in personal tranquility and freedom from fear. So, his idea was to try to remove yourself as much as possible from life and those things that could cause your heart rate to go up – stress, pressures, etc., and just live the calm and tranquil life. And that would be the greatest pleasure, and that's what you should live to seek. And he did, the first couch potato.

Fast forward to the 1700's, and you still find this idea very popular. Voltaire, the French philosopher, wrote, "Pleasure is the object, the duty, and the goal of all rational creatures." Then along came Darwinism. And as with so many of the ideas of our times, it became the mother to this idea as well. The main standard bearer for man's happiness as the goal of life since Darwinism has become humanism, which is closely related to Darwinism.

In the Humanist Manifesto, the Second Humanist Manifesto, we read this, "Happiness and the creative realization of human needs and desires, individually and in shared enjoyment, are continuous themes of humanism. We strive for the good life here and now. The goal is to pursue life's enrichment." Reduced to its simplest terms, humanism teaches this - the end of all being is

the happiness of man. The end of all being – the purpose, the goal for which everything that exists, is the happiness of man.

At first, humanists meant mankind's happiness, mankind as a whole. So, there was philanthropy, and there were humanitarian projects. Today, that has become something much coarser. Now the goal of life is not the happiness of mankind. Instead, the goal of life is my personal happiness. That's where this lie comes from. It has permeated the culture from those fountains, and especially from humanism that grew out of Darwinism. If we're all there is, then we might as well receive the focus of all creation. Everything exists for us. The end of all being is the happiness of man, so get all the happiness you can.

Now, like the other lies we've studied, this lie too has not stayed in the world of academics. It has not stayed even at the popular level outside the church. Tragically, this lie as well has infiltrated the church. And for just a moment, I want, before we look at the Biblical teaching and response to this lie, I just want to share with you a few ways this lie has hurt the church, the lethal consequences in the church. Let me give you several.

Number one, this lie has produced man-centered Christianity. Man-centered Christianity, with the influence of humanism, Christians have bought into humanism. They've bought into the reality that it's all about us, our happiness. They've concluded that even salvation that God offers, God's whole redemptive plan, is all about us. When you start with man as the center, you can quickly come to the conclusion that even God exists for us. They would never say this, but in essence, this has become the mantra of modern Christianity. God's chief end is to make us happy and to meet all our needs. God exists to make us happy and meet our needs.

I love what Alan Cairns writes. He says, "Every belief or practice that makes God the means to an end and the happiness of man the end is humanism." If God is the means to anything, it's humanism. God is never the means. God is the end, we are the means.

A second lethal consequence of this idea in the church is the pursuit of personal happiness has become an excuse for sin. On at least three occasions, I think there are more, but I can remember at least three times in my ministry between here and back in California, that I met in my office with a professing Christian who was planning to divorce his or her spouse without biblical grounds. And I sat in my office pleading with them don't do this, this is dishonoring to God, this is disobeying the Scripture, showed them the passages, had them read the passages, had them agree with me that that's in fact what the passages teach. But then, in all three cases, and again I

think there were others, but I remember the three. In all three cases, they said something like this. I know that's what the Bible teaches, but – I hate that statement. I know that's what the Bible teaches, but it'll be ok.

And when I ask them why, again in all three cases their response was, "it'll be ok because God wants me (what?) to be happy." God wants me to be happy. God exists for my happiness and to promote my happiness. So, what I'm about to do is completely contrary to everything in God's nature, to everything He's revealed, but it's okay because more important than all of that to God is my personal happiness. Because of man-centered Christianity, we tend to think of God like an indulgent grandfather who spoils us and refuses to say no if it leads to our happiness.

A third lethal consequence is when trials come, it's created an atmosphere for anger and bitterness to flourish. Think about it. This philosophy works pretty well when life's going along well, right? When things are good, and life is good, then we can think of God's main goal and my main goal as being personal happiness. But what happens when trials and difficulties come? Well, if you believe God wants your happiness most of all, and He brings these trials into your life, and He doesn't take them out right away, then you can quickly feel that God is treating you unfairly. And you can become full of anger and bitterness. That is the fruit of believing that God's goal in life is your happiness.

Number four, it has led to designer churches and consumer Christians, designer churches and consumer Christians. Just like toothpaste companies have to create different types of products. I don't know about you, but when I stand in the toothpaste aisle anymore, I'm sort of frozen. There are way too many choices. And so, they're trying to reach their consumer base and keep their consumer base happy, and so you get lots of choices, choices for every conceivable kind of teeth cleaning and whitening and gingivitis fighting toothpaste.

Churches have done the same thing. Because the goal is your happiness, then let's make the church designer. And let's give you, the consumer, lots of choices and options. So, in some churches, you can choose between a traditional service, a contemporary service, an emergent service. You can choose between Saturday night or Sunday anytime you like. You can have hot tea or latte. It's up to you. You're the consumer, you get to choose because your happiness is the main goal.

Number five, another lethal consequence is this lie has encouraged pastors and churches to neglect hard unpopular passages and truths. When difficult passages are taught in the church, it's

common to hear Christians saying something like this, “Well, you know that didn’t really do anything for me. I didn’t get anything out of that sermon.” And so of course, the goal is your happiness. And so, the pastor instead of disappointing that desire, intentionally aims his messages at popular topics, routinely appealing to personal happiness. Right now, a local mega-church is doing a series on how to make your dreams become your destiny. What you’ve dreamed will make you happy can become a reality in your life. What could be more geared to your happiness than that?

Couple more, before we get to what the Scriptures teach, couple more lethal consequences.

Number six, it has produced a man-centered evangelism, a man-centered evangelism. In its liberal form, when they said man’s happiness is the goal, liberals said let’s make man happy here and now, and it led to the social gospel. Let’s take care of his physical needs, and that’s really all the gospel’s about, making man happy here. Tragically, the response of evangelicals and fundamentalists was no better. It was also tainted with humanism. Liberalism said let’s make man happy here. Evangelicals came along and said we still buy into humanism, and so the point is still your happiness, but not here, hereafter. Believe in Jesus and you’ll have a wonderful eternity. It’s still man-centered.

Number seven, finally, it has produced man-centered missions. What do you think is the most common reason missionaries go to the mission field? If you were to ask most missionaries why they’re in the difficult places they are, what would they say? Thankfully this isn’t true of the missionaries we support. But the most common reason would be something like this, “because those poor helpless people have a right to hear. It wouldn’t be fair if they didn’t have a chance to hear the gospel.” Listen, folks, that is a humanistic lie. It’s an attack on the justice of God. It says God wouldn’t be just if He condemned that poor person to hell without a chance to hear.

What does Romans 1 say? Romans 1 says all men have suppressed the knowledge of God that He Himself has made clear. They are as we were in active rebellion against God. And apart from divine grace, they will respond to the gospel the same way first century Israel responded to the Son of God. And if they never hear, if they never hear the gospel, they like we will still deserve eternal hell. The right reason to go to the mission field isn’t for those poor people. Instead, we are compelled to go to the mission field, and that’s a passion of our church and of mine personally to see folks go out from here to the mission field. But why? Not for those poor people, but for God. God is so great and so powerful and so gracious that He deserves to be known and worshiped among the nations.

Or as the Moravian call for missions used to be, “The Lamb who was slain deserves the reward of His suffering.” That’s why you go to the mission field. The Lamb who was slain deserves the reward of His suffering. He deserves the prize for which He died, an inheritance of nations as we sing.

So, the lie has permeated the church. The lie is this. The goal of life is my personal happiness. We’ve seen the basic definition, the philosophical background, the lethal consequences in the church. Now let’s see what the Bible says. Let’s let the Scripture sort of wash away that lie. What does the Bible say in response to the lie of the culture that the goal of life is my personal happiness?

First of all, understand that as with all of Satan’s lies, there is an element of truth to this lie. What is that element? Well, it is true that man instinctively pursues his own happiness. Augustine saw this universally true. The church father Augustine writes,

“Every man whatsoever his condition desires to be happy. There is no man who does not desire this, and each one desires it with such earnestness that he prefers it to all other things. Whoever in fact desires other things desires them for this end alone. Whatever you want, whatever you desire, in the end you desire it for your own happiness.”

Blaise Pascal wrote,

“Man wishes to be happy, and only wishes to be happy, and cannot wish not to be so. We always choose as human beings what we believe will bring us delight. That’s true even when we choose poorly. We see people who make terrible decisions, who wreck their lives. Even they were pursuing their own happiness, just poorly.”

Augustine again writes, “Indeed man wishes to be happy, even when he so lives as to make his happiness impossible. No one instinctively chooses what will make him unhappy.”

The problem is this. We were created to find our happiness in God and in God alone. But because of our fallenness, instead of seeking the only true source of happiness, we try to find it everywhere else. And we seek that happiness in something other than God, whether it’s in sinful things or even the good things He’s made, we become idolaters because we have taken a desire

for something God made and made it greater than God Himself. When we give any human desire precedence over God, we have become an idolater.

So, that's a basic understanding of what the Bible teaches, but let's break it apart. Let's look at each truth individually and turn to some passages that illustrate it. Let me reduce what the Bible teaches in response to this lie to three truths. Let's look at them briefly.

Number one, the end of all being is not the happiness of man, but the glory of God. The end of all being is not the happiness of man, but the glory of God. God's glory is the ultimate end of everything He does. Look back at Romans 11. When Paul finishes the first half of this letter, the instructional part of this letter where he tells us about human sin and human salvation and the process of sanctification. He tells us about God's sovereign election of Israel and of us, and God's plans for the future of Israel in Chapter 11, he ends all of that with a great doxology at the end of Chapter 11.

One of your favorite passages probably as it is mine, verse 33. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" [You can't search out His judgments, you can't fathom, you can't find the bottom of His ways, they're too deep. God doesn't need us to counsel Him. He's got plenty of wisdom on His own. He's got a perfect plan. And then he concludes with this great sweeping statement,] verse 36. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things." [Underline that, all things.] "To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

Now what is Paul saying here? This is a huge statement with sweeping ramifications. Paul says all things, that is, everything that exists. There are no exceptions. Everything that exists is from God. That is, God is the source of it. There is nothing that exists that doesn't have its origin or source in God. The only exception being evil, but evil isn't really something positive, it's the absence of God and good.

But everything that exists, God is the source of. He made it, He created it. And then he says not only is it from God, are all things from God, they are through Him. What does that mean? That means everything that exists God sustains. He causes it to continue to function as it functions. You realize as you sit here this morning, the reason your heart has continued beating through the last minute or two of this message is because God has caused it to be? He is sustaining everything in the universe. He's the One who's causing the hydrological cycle to function. Or in our case right now in Texas, not to function as well. He's in charge of all of that. He's the One

who keeps the planet in alignment and spinning. They are through Him, everything is through Him.

But notice the last statement, all things are to Him. In other words, the purpose, the goal of all things that exist are God. God is the end of all things. And what purpose does God have in everything that exists pointing back to Him? Look at the rest of the verse. “To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” God is the end, the purpose, the goal of all things so that He would be glorified. There is the end of all being. Not the happiness of man, but the glory of God.

And by the way, “all things” here has to include us. It has to include man. God created even man for His own glory. That means the chief end of man is what? What does the Catechism say? To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. That’s where this comes from. The chief end of man is to glorify God.

By the way, you can see this negatively back in Romans 1. Look at Romans 1, Paul begins the bad news in verse 18 of human sinfulness, why we need the good news of the gospel.

And he says in verse 18, “... the wrath of God is [being] revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth,” that is they hold down the truth. You say wait a minute. What truth are people holding down? Well notice he goes on to explain, verse 19. “because that which is known about God,” the truth about God. People suppress the truth about God. So how do they have the truth about God? Well, he says God, the truth about God, “that which is known about God is evident within them,” [within their ability to reason and within Chapter 2 says the law of God written on every heart.]

God has given a witness to Himself inside of every human being who has ever lived. He goes on to say there’s external evidence. God made it evident to them for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, and he mentions a couple of them here, His eternal power and His divine nature. The truth about God has been clearly seen. Being understood, it’s not just seen, it’s understood through what has been made. So, that they’re what? Without excuse.

You know, I get questions all the time. What about some poor person in some jungle somewhere who’s never heard the truth of Jesus? Paul’s answer is they are what? Without excuse. Because God has manifested Himself in their hearts, in His law written on their hearts. He’s manifested Himself in creation. And instead of responding to that truth, what has man done? He’s

suppressed it. He's held it down, and it's led to all kind of idolatry. He worships things that God made, he goes on to say.

But notice how we should have responded, verse 21. They fail to respond to the revelation of God, the truth about God. How should they have responded, verse 21. "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God." Literally, the Greek text says they did not glorify Him as God. There is the chief sin of mankind. From God's perspective, man's chief end is to give Him glory and to fail to do that then is the greatest sin. God's glory is the reason all men exist. It is true of those who believe, it is true of those who will never believe. All men exist for the glory of God. Let me make it personal. You exist for one reason. You have life for one reason, and that is to bring glory to God.

And because God always does what He plans to do, you will bring God glory. You will either bring God glory by refusing to repent and believe in His Son, and He will show the glory of His power and wrath in your eternal destiny in hell, or you will repent and believe in His Son, and He will make you an eternal powerful illustration of the glory of His grace. But one way or the other, you will bring glory to God. The goal of your life is to glorify God forever.

That brings us to a second truth. We best bring glory to God when we find our happiness in Him alone. We best bring glory to God when we find our happiness in Him alone. Listen, we were hard-wired by God to find our happiness and our delight not in anything He made, but in God Himself. And when we find that delight and happiness in God, it brings glory to God. There are a lot of places we could go to see this. I want you to turn to one of my, another of my favorite Psalms, another of David's, Psalm 16.

David understood this. God was His delight, and God was pleased and glorified through that. Psalm 16, David, David writes, "Preserve me," verse 1, "preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You. I said to the LORD, 'You are my Lord; I have no good besides You.'" [God, if anything else is compared to you, it's not good in comparison to you. You are my greatest good. Not the stuff You've made, not the things of this life I enjoy, but you, God, are my greatest good, my highest happiness.]

Then he goes on to explain what that looks like. That means I delight in the saints who know you and worship you, so I delight in them because I delight in You. I don't have anything to do with idols, verse 4, because you're the only true God. And notice what he says in verse 5, I love this. Yahweh, "The LORD is the portion

of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.”

What does that mean? Well, you remember when the land of Israel was divided up in Joshua’s day? And the people of Israel were given certain places as their inheritance, it was their land. You remember the Levites didn’t get any land. Instead, their inheritance was what? God Himself. David is saying that’s how it is with me, God. You are my inheritance, and I’m happy with that. I’m thrilled with that. If I get nothing else, and I get you, it’s enough for me. You see him delighting in God?

He goes on to talk about his delight in the presence of God, verses 7 and 8, verse 9. And then in verse 10, he says “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,” [that is to the grave,] “nor will you allow your Holy One to undergo decay.” [Now in context here, David is talking to a certain extent about himself, but his own resurrection, which is what he’s talking about, is based on a greater resurrection.]

And so, in the book of Acts, the apostles come back to this verse and say it was a prophecy of the death and resurrection of Christ. God would not allow Him to undergo decay, but would raise Him from the dead. Our resurrection is built on that resurrection. So, David had confidence of his own resurrection because of the coming resurrection of Christ.

And then he ends it with this in verse 11, “You will make known to me the path of life,” [that is the path that leads to life,] “In your presence is fullness of joy,” [I find my greatest joy, God, I will find it, in Your presence] “and [at] ... your right hand, there are pleasures forever.” God, you are my greatest joy, my highest delight. You are my happiness, and in that, God was glorified.

Jonathan Edwards writes,

“The end of the creation is that the creation might glorify God. Now what is glorifying God but a rejoicing at that glory God has displayed?” [Now listen to what he says.] “God is glorified not only by His glories being seen.” [In other words, God doesn’t just get glory when we say wow, that’s impressive. Look at that, look at what God did, look at who God is. He goes on to say,] “God is glorified not only by His glories being seen, but by its being rejoiced in. When

those that see God's glory delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it."

Listen, God gets glory from you when you see who He is. And rather than just sing, you glorify Him as a result of it. You praise Him, you adore Him, you rejoice in who He is. You delight in who He is like David does in Psalm 16. As John Piper writes, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." We best bring glory to God when we find our happiness in Him alone.

Number three, God's primary goal for us in this life is not our personal happiness, but our likeness to His Son. God's primary goal is not our personal happiness, but our likeness to Christ. Look at Romans 8. Paul addresses this. He's just finished wonderful sections about our salvation, our sanctification, and then he gets to the reality of here and now. It's trouble, it's suffering, it's difficulty. Verse 18 of Romans 8, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time." It's not about my happiness, it's suffering. But those sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us. Now's not the time for our constant happiness. That time will come. For now, we're longing for the creation to be changed. Now there's futility, there's suffering, there's groaning.

So, how do we live in the middle of this? Verse 28, we know that God is causing all those things, all those difficulties, all those troubles, all the issues of life to work together for our good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose, that is who have been effectually called in the gospel to Him. So, what is this good God is working? You know, we say that. God's working all things together for good. What good? Verse 29 explains. For, here's what happens, for those whom God foreknew, that is those God elected, when He elected them, He predestined them, that is He predetermined their destiny. And here's the destiny He predetermined for all of us, to become conformed to the image of His Son.

Listen, in this life, there will be trouble and difficulty. There will be joyful days and wonderful times, and there will be trouble and difficulty and suffering. And God is working all of that together for our good, not for our happiness, but our good. It's interpreted in verse 29, our predetermined destiny to be conformed to the image of His Son. That's what God's doing. Sometimes that goal means God brings hard things into our lives and trials and persecution and difficulties and pressure. Look down at verse 35, sometimes we wonder if we're going to be separated from the love of Christ because things get so bad. But we're not going to be. He's working it all together for good. His love will never leave us.

All right, so those are the truths. How should we apply this? What should we do with this?

Number one, let me just give you a couple of thoughts. Number one, we should recognize our desperate need for Jesus and the gospel. Listen, you and I exist to bring glory to God, but instead of bringing glory to God, we have sinned against His glory by looking for our happiness everywhere else. We look for it in the things He's made, in good things like marriage and children and whatever, and we look for it in sinful, disgusting things. We replace God with our disgusting sins. We deserve His wrath, but here's the good news. Jesus did perfectly what you and I have never done. He lived His life for the glory of God. For 33 years, the ultimate aim of His life was nothing else but the glory of God, so that at the end of His life, He could say on the night of His crucifixion in John 17:4, "I have glorified You on the earth." You can't say that, I can't say that. Jesus could say that about every second He lived.

Jesus is the only person to ever completely fulfill the reason human beings exist. And then He died, not for His own sin, but to satisfy the wrath of God our failure to live for God's glory deserved. And if you and I will repent of our sins, if we'll turn from our sins and put our faith and confidence in Jesus and His life and His work, His death and His resurrection, God will forgive our sins, and God will treat us as if we had lived a life perfectly in accord with His purpose for us, and that is a life lived to His glory.

Number two, as a Christian, you must determine to live for God's glory. Thomas Watson says, "Aim at the glory of God." Stephen Charnock writes, "We cannot actually glorify Him without direct aims at the promoting of His honor." In other words, you can't accidentally do this. There has to come a point in your life when you make a conscious decision that you are going to live not for your own happiness, but for the glory of God.

Paul begins that section on Christian conscience in 1 Corinthians 8 with this. First Corinthians 8:6, there is one God, and we exist for Him. He ends that section on Christian conscience in 1 Corinthians 10:31, that verse that you know and have quoted many times before. "Whether, then, you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all (what?) to the glory of God." We exist for Him, so whatever you do, make a determined effort. "Do all," it's a command, an imperative. You decide that you're going to do even whether you participate in your Christian liberty or not, it's going to be about God's glory.

Number three. Pray that by God's grace, you will find your greatest delight and joy in God. You see, you can't decide what you will delight in. You understand that? You can't determine that,

you can't just flip a switch and delight in something different than you've delighted in all these years. God has to change your affections, God has to change what you delight in. And so, you pray that God would do that. You see, because true and lasting joy is found only in God. In your presence is fullness of joy, at your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

When we realize that, and we start to live like it, it brings glory to God. So, pray that God would change your delight so that your ultimate joy is found in Him, and not in the things of this world, good things. And not in sin like illicit sex or pornography or Facebook or whatever it is, careers, power, money, just to be left alone and have personal peace, whatever it is. By the way, how is a delight in God expressed? If you delight in God, it's not expressed by some emotionalism. Read the Bible, read the Psalms. Guess how delight in God is expressed?

Psalms 1 begins by saying, "The righteous person delights in (what?) the law of God." Read Psalm 119. Nine times in Psalm 119 the Psalmist says, "I delight in your Word." If you delight in God, I can promise you this. You will delight in His Word. And if you don't delight in His Word, I can promise you, you don't delight in God. The two are intimately tied.

Number four and finally, beware of the idols of happiness. Beware of the idols of personal happiness.

Let me ask you this question. What are at this moment of your life your greatest desires? What do you want? Understand this, there is a very real risk of those desires becoming idols in your life. How? How can we recognize if our desires have become idols?

I love the test that R.L. Dabney, the American theologian, offers. Let me give them to you. Here's how you can tell if your desire has become an idol in your life.

Number one, do you love that thing more than you love anything else, including God?

Number two, are you willing to disobey God to have it?

Number three, is that desire and its fulfillment what you believe will bring you the greatest happiness? Do you sacrifice for that desire? Are you willing to sacrifice your family, your time, your health, your money? If you're willing to make sacrifices to it, it's an idol. Are you willing to sin to get it? And will it cause you to sin if you don't get it?

Turn with me to one last passage, Jeremiah 2. Jeremiah confronts the people of Judah for their idolatry. There's a powerful lesson here for us. In Jeremiah 2, verses 7 and 8, God says look, I brought you into the land, and soon after I brought you into the land, you began to pursue other Gods, especially Baal worship,

[So, in Verse 9, God says this,] "Therefore, I will yet contend with you, declares the LORD, and with your sons' sons I will contend." [This is the language of law. God says I have a court case against you, I'm suing you. What you've done, God says, is hard to believe. Verse 10,] "... cross to the coastlands of Kittim and see, And send to Kedar and observe closely." [He's saying look, go across the Mediterranean to Cypress and the other islands there. Ransack the world] "And see if there's ever been" something like this happen. "Has a nation changed gods When they were not gods?"

But my people have changed their glory For [what] ... does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this, And shudder, be very desolate,' declares the LORD." [So, what had they done? Verse 13,] "For my people have committed two evils:" [Here it is. One,] They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters. [Two, they have hewn] "for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, That can hold no water.

Now, for us, those images are not immediately powerful. Let me explain them to you, and they will be.

You're talking about a land where it's very dry. A land like southern California, some of you have been to or lived in southern California. Very dry during the summer months, that's how Israel is. Drought like we're experiencing now, even here in Texas. And in a land like that, you desperately needed water. And there were only two kinds of sources of water. One was a fresh water fountain, and the other was to dig out a catch basin for rain water. Now obviously if you had a choice, which would you want? Fresh water fountain, makes sense, right?

But imagine people living in the middle of a drought where water is precious, who have on their property a wonderful fresh water fountain, and they just board it up and abandon it. They act as if it's not there, and instead they go over here to another piece of their property, and they dig a basin to catch rain water. And they don't even bother too much about it because it's got cracks in

it, it's not sealed. And so, the rain comes, falls, and it leaks and the water's all gone. They have no water.

That's the picture. What's the point? The point is why do you and I abandon a single-minded devotion to God? Why? Why do we live for our own happiness? We conclude that God alone can't satisfy our needs. That's the only reason in drought, you abandon your fresh water fountain. Then we conclude that what we really need can only be attained somewhere else.

Listen, folks. Don't abandon the fountain for a broken cistern. Don't dig useless wells. Don't listen to the idols that promise happiness. Instead, find your joy in God, in the only fresh water fountain there is. And don't be like the rest of humanity, digging worthless pits to collect water to satisfy their souls, and it's nothing but dry dirt.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for your Word, and yet, even as we thank you, we cry out for your forgiveness. Forgive us for having you and wanting anything else. Forgive us O God for making our happiness the reason for life when from You and through You and to You are all things.

Father, may our lives be lived out for your glory. Help us O God to find our true delight in You so that You would be glorified, so the people around us would see that You were enough. And we don't need to be splashing around on the, in the puddles of sin when the vast ocean of who You are is available to us.

Father, I pray for the person here today who doesn't know You, who's still living for self, for their own happiness, entirely. Father, I pray that today You would help them to see themselves before You as You see them, and help them to see the absolute beauty of Jesus Christ, and to want him so badly that they're willing to give up everything else in life to have Him. Father, do your work in hearts. May we, your people, live intentionally to Your glory.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.