

The Blessedness of Faithful Obedience

Ponder: Lovers of liberty being happy by obeying

Scripture: “Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold in it” (Isaiah 56:2a, NKJV).

How can obedience result in happiness? Worldly thinking supposes that happiness occurs when we do exactly as we please. We Americans take particular delight in liberty. Nobody tells us what to do! (There are limitations, but you get the point.)

God’s word teaches that real happiness (blessedness, as opposed to superficial happiness) arises from faithful obedience to Him. This chapter begins with the exhortation, “Keep justice, and do righteousness” (56:1). Treating others fairly (keeping justice) and living consistently with God’s will (doing righteousness) are not behaviors that come naturally or automatically. We have to discipline ourselves to overcome the desires of the flesh.

At the time Isaiah was written, God’s chosen people lived under the Law of Moses. It makes perfect sense, then, that Isaiah specifies some of the things that were involved in keeping justice and doing righteousness according to that system: “Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hands from doing evil” (v. 2). The Law placed great emphasis on observing the seventh-day Sabbath. It was a sign between the Lord and His covenant people; violating it made one liable to capital punishment (Exodus 31:13-14). However, God never intended for the Sabbath to be a burden, as the Pharisees in New Testament times made it; to the contrary, He wanted to bless His people.

Though we do not live under the Law with its Sabbath-keeping requirement (Colossians 2:14-17), the fact remains that we enjoy true happiness (blessedness) when we faithfully obey the Lord according to the New Covenant. During the social upheaval of the 1960s we were told, “If it feels good, do it!” That philosophy produced wretchedness, not happiness. We are creatures made in the image of God. Our happiness stems from our relationship with Him, not from gratifying the desires of the flesh.

You will never be more miserable on this earth than when you are living in rebellion against God; and you will never be happier than when you faithfully obey Him!

Song: “Trust and Obey”

Prayer: Father, your servant Jeremiah told us that it isn’t in us to direct our own steps. Please forgive us when we fail to believe him, when we foolishly think we will find happiness by following our own selfish desires. Help us, we pray, to keep justice and do righteousness. In Jesus’ name, Amen.