

## “HAPPY NEW YEAR!”

This warm and cheery greeting is often heard this time of year. The word *happy* appears 27 times in the Bible, or more, depending on translation.

Here are some verses that use the word *happy*:

“*Happy* are the people whose God is the LORD (Psalms 144:15).

When Leah gave birth to a son, she exclaimed: “*Happy* am I...and she called his name Asher (Gen. 30:13). The name Asher means Happy.

When the Queen of Sheba journeyed to visit Solomon she was overwhelmed with his wisdom and the grandeur of his kingdom. She exclaimed: “*Happy* are your men and *happy* are these your servants, who stand continually before you! (1 Kings 10:8).

“*Happy* is the man who finds wisdom (Proverbs 3:13). When Paul enumerated gifts of the Spirit, he spoke of the word of wisdom *and* the word of knowledge. Sometimes we may have knowledge of something, but *wisdom* is needed to know what to do with that knowledge!

Numerous gospel songs have a happiness theme. What had long been a gospel song, *O Happy Day*, was recorded by Glen Campbell and crossed over to the pop charts. As a result, many people who would not be in a church service, were hearing words like: *O happy day*, when Jesus washed my sins away!

A gospel chorus I recall from the 1950s spoke of happiness:

*I'm so happy, and here's the reason why,  
Jesus took my burdens all away!  
Now I'm singing as the days go by,  
Jesus took my burdens all away!*

Ted Lewis, a noted bandleader back in the 1920s, was known for his line: *Is everybody happy?* Later, someone wrote a Christian chorus:

*Is everybody happy? Is everybody glad?  
I don't want to see you looking weary,  
I don't want to see you looking sad.  
I just want to see you keep on smiling,  
Jesus is at the door,  
Keep on shouting "Hallelujah,  
'till we meet on the Golden Shore!*

Our dog *Buddy* is a happy dog. Daily we enjoy his enthusiasm. It does not take much to make him happy. Just say the word *go* and he is ready to go! It may be a walk around the block or an extended trip of many miles.

Some years ago we heard a preacher tell a *story* about a cat that was not happy, even though it lived in a beautiful house on a hill. One day it headed down into town and passed another cat who asked: *Where are you going?* The unhappy

cat answered: *I am not happy; I am running away from home!* *But why would you do that?* the other cat questioned. *Don't you live in that beautiful house on the hill?* *Yes,* the unhappy cat replied. *It's not the house, it's those people up there. They rub me the wrong way.* *Well,* the other cat replied, *“you could turn around and face the other direction!”* ☺

Not all problems in life are this easily solved. But if everything seems to rub us the wrong way, maybe we need to change our direction. If we are going the wrong way, God does allow U-turns!

We have seen bumper stickers that express what different people may regard as happiness: *Happiness* is owning a horse, *Happiness* is owning a boat, *Happiness* is being married, etc. The Bible gives this definition: *Whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he* (Proverbs 16:20 NKJV). We are reminded of the words that appear on our money: *In God We Trust*.

Happiness was on the mind of those men who framed *The Declaration of Independence*:

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*.

Worldly people are prone to think happiness comes from *getting* not *giving*. But Proverbs 14:21 says: *He that has mercy on the poor, happy is he.* Though it is not recorded in the Gospels, we know from the book of Acts that Jesus said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive* (Acts 20:35).

When Jesus spoke of being *blessed* by giving to others, it is the same word that is translated *happy*. This word appears in the Beatitudes, those statements of Jesus that begin with the words: *Blessed are...* and could be translated, *happy are...* (See Matthew 5:3-10).

Peter wrote, *If you suffer for righteousness sake, you are happy* (1 Peter 3:14). Such reasoning sounds foolish to the natural man, who receives not the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Christians were being persecuted, were enduring severe trials in many places, yet they rejoiced with *joy unspeakable* and full of glory (1 Peter 1:7, 8).

With the coming of the Year of our Lord 2018, we will do well to recall the words of Paul: *...forgetting those things which are behind* those failures, disappointments, and discouragements of the past *and reach forth unto those things which are ahead, pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 3:13, 14).

Though in the world there will be tribulation, Jesus says, *Be of good cheer* *be happy* *I have overcome the world* (John 16:33). There *is* victory in Jesus!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

*Ralph and Arlene Woodrow*