

# God Wants Me To Be Happy

By Rodney Pitts

The thought presented in the title of this article is *true*. Yet, this thought has also become one of the most successful *deceptions* the Devil uses to enslave the hearts of mankind. How could something be both true and a deception at the same time? Hear me out. When I say this is a deception, I am not saying that God wants His people to be miserable and unhappy. Of course He doesn't. Jesus, in the parable of the talents, told about those who used their talents faithfully entering "into the joy of your lord" (Matt. 25:21, 23). Paul also spoke of how God will fill us with "all joy and peace in believing" and that we should "rejoice in the Lord always" (Rom. 15:13; Phil. 4:4). God wants his people to be joyous and happy.

So, why would I say that the idea that "God wants me to be happy" is also a *deception*? The reason is that this statement, for most that use it, has become a cry of justification for continuing in some particular sin, or sinful relationship, in which the individual desires to remain *despite* what God's word has to say about it. One of the most common examples of this is seen when people read the truth about God's will concerning marriage and divorce. In Matthew 19:9 Jesus himself said, "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." More often it seems, when those who have divorced for reasons other than sexual immorality and married again are confronted with the truth of this verse, they are quick to defend their sinful situation by saying, "Well, I know God wants me to be happy!" In other words, they have been led to believe that God wants them to be happy even if it means *violating* His revealed will in order to do it. And, therein is the deception!

As much as God truly loves us, He has never guaranteed to believers that their physical circumstances demanded by a faithful life will always "make them happy." The New Testament speaks of how "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). And, the New Testament examples of those living faithfully in Christ prove this to be true. Consider Peter and John. These men were threatened and beaten simply for preaching the eternal salvation found in Christ Jesus (Acts 4:21; 5:40). Consider Stephen. Here was a young man who stood for the truth of God and it cost him his life, being stoned to death by a wicked and angry mob (Acts 7:57-60). And, of course, there is Paul. In his second epistle to the Corinthians Paul speaks of being put in prison, beaten five times with thirty-nine stripes, beaten three times with rods, being stoned, shipwrecked, in perils of robbers and the Jews, in weariness, toil, hunger and thirst, all for the cause of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:24-28). Without question, these brethren faced their miserable situations because each one lived with faith in Christ and a commitment to the fact that God wanted them to stand strong in the faith and *obey*, even if it meant that they were to be physically miserable or even lose their life for Christ's cause and the hope of eternal life (Revelation 2:10)! That, my friends, is what God desires.

Now, in saying this I do not intend to indicate that New Testament Christians, even the ones who suffered immensely for the cause of Christ, lived their lives in sorrow and unhappiness. From all indications, these people lived with joy and steadfast hope of the resurrection to life eternal in the hereafter. This is seen in that even when suffering at the hands of evil men, Christians like Paul and Silas were able to sing praises to God and rejoice in the fact that they were able to suffer *with* Christ (Acts 16:25). Peter, whom history tells us died a very horrific death because of his faith, wrote: "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:12-13). The men and women of the New Testament were not miserable. Their happiness and hope were not dependent upon their physical circumstances. They were laying up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19-20).

So, if you are defending a present state of sin or seeking to justify a future choice that is contrary to God's revealed will based upon the idea that "God wants me to be happy," you *must* reconsider. The faithful have always obeyed despite the consequences, even if it meant a loss of "happiness" in the

short-term. I urge you, therefore, to consider your life and put your faith in God and His word and live for the life to come. Those who do so will not be disappointed (Matthew 10:39)! ■