

GOD IS THE SOURCE OF JOY

By Alden Truesdell

The Declaration of Independence sets forth three vital qualities as men's "unalienable Rights": "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." These qualities were not given to man by the Declaration of Independence; man already had them as a gift of God. Man therefore will be wise to go right to God to consult with Him as to the priority and use of any one of His gifts. God, and God only, gives life; for God "is a living God" and a "God, of the living." God, and God only, gives liberty; for, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." God, and God only, gives joy, and the "joy of the Lord" is the strength of His creation and His creature.

Throughout the ages men have been seeking joy and happiness. In their search they have striven mightily to improve conditions, attempting by trial and error to set up more satisfactory living conditions. They have legislated new ideas into constitutions and laws. They have met in international councils to formulate ways and means of establishing peace on earth, so that they might live on earth in a happy state.

Man works diligently in his pursuit of happiness. He seeks security in the world and a place in society. He labors prodigiously to lay up treasure for himself, so that he may retire to enjoy his leisure and live off the fruits of his labors. Happiness, however, remains as elusive as ever. Though individuals strive, and communities and countries legislate to set up a manufactured happiness, so far every effort has met with failure, or, at best, with partial success. Perhaps the most insidious influence is a shortsightedness, which strives to establish perfection through prohibitions, a perfection that can be attained only through positive cooperation. Man wants peace, prosperity, success, happiness. These, however, cannot be attained in a negative adjustment to the dictates of the prevailing ruling powers.

As long as man lives, he will seek diligently for what he wants and eventually he will find what he seeks. Everyone who is honest with himself knows that the things that promote happiness are not found in achievement, fame, or wealth. Any memory of happiness, rather is usually associated with some service rendered, for man is most happy when active in some orderly expression. A man may believe that he would like to be free from all the routine responsibilities of life; but, if he were incapacitated for a period, he would be delighted to get back to the living of life in the world and the meeting of the problems of the day. The way to happiness, accordingly, is not in escape from responsibility or service, but in a response to greater abilities and the giving of more efficacious service. Man, however, has familiarized himself with the prevalent and accepted responsibilities, but has been less than fully happy. He has given individual, family, community, national, and international service; and has come up empty, although wiser in experience.

Mankind as a whole has been seeking in the world for happiness and usually has relegated it to some time in the future. Since centuries and millenniums of this practice have failed to produce the desired result, it is reasonable to look in another direction. If it is true - and we have it on the authority of Jesus Christ - that "the kingdom of God is at hand," and "the kingdom of God is within you," a good place to look for happiness or joy, or in fact any desirable commodity, is within and at hand. The practice of looking into the world for satisfaction or into the future for reward must be replaced by an acceptance of such statements as: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty"; "The joy

of the Lord is your strength"; or, "God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery; . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. "

Man has been pursuing happiness outside, when all the time it is within. Once a man has conceded this fact, he finds new vistas opening to his vision. He finds himself in agreement with the Psalmist, who sang, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." He knows why the inscription over the Greek temple of Apollo was "Know thyself." He discovers it to be actually true that "the proper study of mankind is man" - although not the external man of flesh and blood. He understands the story of the Prodigal Son, who pursued happiness to the outermost realm, only to be rewarded with husks; who, when he had come to himself, arisen, and returned to his father, tardily discovered that what he had sought had been his in the beginning.

There is a sure test for the prudent, who want to be sure that they are on the right road before they turn to God within. They need only compare the report of those who have sought happiness apart from God with the record of those who have made God their source of joy. The first report is always negative, empty, wistful; the second is always positive, vital, joyful. The former is summed up in the exclamation: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" The latter is echoed in such cries as: "I delight to do thy will, O my God"; "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore"; "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."

The Scripture confirms that joy is of God, and serious students of the Scripture do not deny it; but only those benefit by this truth who actually accept it as the real or the right way of life. Whoever finds this way will be free from dealing with impermanent structures. He will be free from the unprofitable practice of pursuing an elusive and unsubstantial objective. He will stand still within himself, within his own soul, and he will see the salvation that is his by inheritance. He will experience a joy, an ecstasy so pure and intense that it could come only from the Source of joy Itself. Once the pursuer of happiness arrives at this goal, he ceases to be a pursuer and becomes a partaker. The enjoyment of pleasant experiences becomes subsidiary to the partaking of the pure essence of Joy Itself. Having arrived at this point, the former seeker for joy finds that he has turned completely around, from pursuing material values and giving material service, to the consideration of spiritual values and the giving of spiritual service. He therefore finds himself exercising his spiritual responsibility and responding to his God-given ability.

This new way of life is the transcendent science that Jesus Christ taught and practiced. This is the doctrine that invites man to look toward God, to exalt Him, to praise His name. This science tells man, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." It instructs, "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." This is the new song sung by "the ransomed" who "return with singing," because they have been released from the bondage to matter and to mind. This is "the song of the Lamb," "which taketh away the sin of the world." Acceptance of this unexplainable science into the mind and consciousness offsets the effects of former subscription to lesser doctrines. Physical appearance, mental propositions (of utmost importance to the material and mental practitioner) are as nothing in the light of this new science. They are not destroyed, but are relegated to their proper places, where they "work together for good to them that love God."

"When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." The object of Christian teaching is joy. The Father's pleasure is delight in man's joy. The Holy Spirit, living man's life for him, fulfills God's intention. This is the Gospel, the "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

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ROMANS

By Robert Applegate
(Continued from last month)

The concluding part of Paul's Letter to the Romans (Chs. 9-15) falls into two clearly defined sections. In the first section, Paul returns to the question with which he opened his letter: Why do not the religious accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ? This was an acute problem for Paul; for he was of a religious bent himself, and he hated to see those who were like himself cut themselves off from the fulness of life that was offered to them and of which they were the logical recipients. It is also a question that meets the Truth student at every turn today. Why do not the educated, the cultured, the religious accept the Truth of Jesus Christ? They are the ones who might be expected to accept it most eagerly. Why, then, do they either oppose it or accept it in such an attenuated form as to rob it of its vitality? Paul, in discussing his fellow religionists, gives the answer in one sentence: "Being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." (All quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.) It is as simple as that. Whenever a person seeks to establish his own virtue, no matter how sincere or how unselfish and dedicated he may seem to be, he has cut himself off from God. The reward that was his by right, before he tried to deserve it, will go to another, who seemingly does not deserve it at all.

That this seeming paradox is central to life and is actually operative in every life is shown by the emphasis that it receives in the New Testament. It is, as Arnold Toynbee says, "A reversal of roles through a transfer of God's priceless gift from human hands that might have had it for the taking to other hands that, at the opening of the play, do not appear to have any prospect of attaining the prize." As Toynbee also points out, Jesus Christ continually warned his listeners of this pitfall: "The moral that is pointed in the parables of the Labourers in the Vineyard and the Wicked Husbandmen is likewise the moral of the parables of the Prodigal Son, and Dives and Lazarus, and the Pharisee and the Publican, and the Good Samaritan, and the guests who rebuff or evade the invitation to the feast and whose places are filled with the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind from the streets and lanes and highways and hedges."

Jesus emphasized this point also in direct and forceful instruction, as well as in parables:

"If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." "The last will be first, and the first last." "He who is least among you all is the one who is great." "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner." "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me." "To such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

It is clear therefore that it is not enough to be sincere in one's efforts to do what is right. The first and the essential task is to realize that "with

God all things are possible," and without Him nothing is possible. This fact, however, is so difficult for men to accept that it is usually only when they are compelled to do so by intolerable circumstances that they turn to God and acknowledge Him. It is for this reason that "the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven" before many who seem more deserving. It is for this reason that Jesus was crucified by the religious leaders of his day and that His teaching was accepted, not by the religiously inclined nor by the educated, but, for the most part, by the slaves and former slaves of the Roman world, as Paul makes clear in his letters to the Corinthian church. It is for this reason that boasting "is excluded," as Paul declares.

Paul knew the importance of this matter, and therefore he returns to it again and again in his letters. He had seen the results of the outworking of the principle involved, both in his own life and in the reactions of those to whom he preached and ministered. He had experienced the bitter results of foolish pride, and he is accordingly insistent and forceful in calling for men to turn to God.

All men are equal in the sight of God; all are loved by Him. They have only to turn to Him to receive that which He offers freely and equally to all. "The same Lord is Lord of all," Paul declares, "and bestows His riches upon all who call upon Him. For, 'every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

The last part of Paul's letter to the church at Rome, as of all his letters, is composed of what are generally referred to as "moral exhortations." The expression is unfortunate. The word moral suggests either a Victorian priggishness or else a striving to be good in order to receive a reward. This is a false way in which to regard Paul's instructions. Paul has already stated that God freely gives us everything that we can desire; that we can do nothing to deserve His gifts; that we can only turn to God, have faith in Him, and look toward Him. If we could follow this instruction steadfastly, there would be no need for the concluding section of the letter. If we could face toward God and stay faced toward Him, we would need no further instruction. But we have to grow up to the point where such practice will be possible for us. Therefore, while we are seeking to follow the first and primary instruction and are strengthening ourselves in this practice, we must follow also the external steps that will help us toward this goal. We do not expect anything as a reward for doing these things, but we regard them as means to an end; while, at the same time, they are pleasant in themselves. To disregard them is not wicked (in the sense in which we use the word); it is simply foolish.

If a cook put salt into a cake instead of sugar, we would not consider her immoral or wicked; but the result would be an unsatisfactory product. To produce a satisfying cake the cook follows a recipe, because it leads to the desired result. Similarly, Paul's instructions are practical steps leading to a satisfactory life. They are a recipe for producing happiness in our own lives. Paul proved himself to be competent to speak authoritatively on the subject, and therefore we follow his instructions gladly.

What, then, are the practical steps that will lead us to satisfaction, happiness, and a knowledge of God? They are simple, but they are not always easy to follow. We know them well, but we need to remind ourselves of them constantly:

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. . . . I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly

than he ought to think, but to think with sober Judgment. Let love be genuine. . . . never flag in zeal. Rejoice in your hope, . . . be constant in prayer. . . . Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. . . . Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. . . . Let us no more pass judgment on one another, but rather decide never to put a stumbling-block or hindrance in the way of a brother."

These are practical steps that will help us on the way to the good that we desire. They are not an end in themselves, though the practice of them gives joy; but they will help us to receive the good that God wants to give us. They will not affect God, but they will prepare us to receive his gifts and to receive Him. We need only try them to prove this, but we never want to forget that everything depends, not on our efforts, but on God.

"O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! . . . For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen."

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ARE YOU IRRITATED?

By Nell Truesdell

In our ongoing, the best practice to cultivate is the ability to loose and let go experiences that come to pass. We frequently read the phrase in our Scripture, "And it came to pass . . ." That is what it did (whatever it was). It came in order that it might pass.

If we attract a negative experience, or fall into the mire of delusion through mistaken or misapplied processes of mind (thinking), we can disentangle ourselves easily by pulling our attention away from whatever has attracted and held it, and settle that attention on God in the midst of us. "God in the midst of thee is mighty." "The Kingdom of God is within you."

Irritability is common to humankind. The vexations that arise through personal contacts tend to excite us to impatience, or annoy us so that we are angry, at no great depth of duration to be sure; but nonetheless their effect causes discomfort and unhappiness.

In the overall picture of existence, irritation can be compared to the tiny speck of matter in an oyster's interiors. Because of it, the oyster formulates a pearl of great price. His common, ordinary brother lives a fat, happy life, in his freedom from irritation, little realizing that ultimately he will end up on some gourmand's plate, wallowing in hot pepper sauce. On the other hand, the oyster subject to constant irritation is forced, in order to exist, to separate off the foreign matter by means of secretions that he manufactures out of himself. Ultimately, the irritant is transformed, and something marvelous is produced that continues to be valued and praised long after the oyster passes from the scene.

All creative genius goes through tremendous suffering. However, the discomfort is never allowed to distract the wise one from his goal. Rather, it serves as an incentive that forces him toward fulfillment of his destiny. Only weaklings surrender for the safe, the unmolested places of existence.

Love overcomes all irritation. By it we learn to take the troublous, disturbing experiences of life along with the good; and our love of the good overbalances the petty distractions in such a way that we are rewarded far beyond our worth. Too, we remember that if others can annoy us, we must certainly annoy them at times.

Sir William Osler wrote, "Learn to accept in silence the minor aggravations, cultivate the gift of taciturnity and consume your own smoke with an extra draught of hard work, so that those about you may not be annoyed with the dust and soot of your complaints. More than any other, the practitioner (of Truth) may illustrate the Golden Rule, that we are here not to get all we can out of life for ourselves, but to try to make the lives of others happier."

Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day Of The Month

NOVEMBER 1952

1. Thou ANOINTEST my head with oil.

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3. BE thou faithful.

4. COMFORT ye, COMFORT ye my people.

5. DO the first works.

6. It is EXPEDIENT for you that I go away.

7. FEAR not.

8. Rejoice, and be exceeding GLAD.

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10. Blessed are the pure in HEART.

11. I am come IN My Father's Name.

12. Your sorrow shall be turned into JOY.

13. My KINGDOM is not of this world.

14. I LAY down My LIFE for My sheep.

15. MY sheep hear MY voice.

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17. Thou art NEAR, O Lord.

18. The Father . . . shall reward thee OPENLY.

19. Ye are all PARTAKERS of My grace.

20. It is the Spirit that QUICKENETH.

21. He that RECEIVETH me, RECEIVETH Him that sent Me.

22. For their SAKES, I SANCTIFY myself.

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24. THEY shall be all TAUGHT of God.

25. How UNSEARCHABLE are His judgments!

26. Believe Me for the VERY works' sake.

27. WHY are ye fearful?

28. I ascend unto My Father, and YOUR Father.

29. Peace be unto you.

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"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

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As electricity is the working power of the electrical principle,
SPIRITICITY is the working power of the Spiritual Principle.