

The Oologah Informer
June 30th, 2013

Address

13800 S. 4080 Rd on Hwy 169
South of Oologah

P.O. Box 527
Oologah, OK 74053
918-443-2025

www.oologahcofc.org
oologahcofc@oologahcofc.org
facebook.com/oologahchurchofchrist

Service Times

Sunday

Bible Class: 9:30 A.M.
Worship: 10:30 A.M. & 5 P.M.

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7 P.M.

Preacher:

Russ Earl

AM Sermon:

Guest Speaker: Caleb Jacobs

PM Sermon:

Man & God #4
Man's Worship of God

Sunday AM Bible Class:

Report of Work – C. Jacobs

Wednesday Bible Class:

Summer Series:
Challenges Facing the Christian

This week's lesson:

**“Understanding God's
Commands on Marriage”**

Steve Lay

MUST WE ALWAYS BE HAPPY?

Garrett McGilvray

The song “Happy Am I” (818 in *Praise for the Lord*) pops up in the selection from time to time, but it is not one of my favorite songs. It's not that the words are at fault, and the tune is certainly peppy (how could it be otherwise?), but it's rather that the line “I'm always happy” in the chorus stings a bit when we sing it. The truth is that I'm not always happy. Sometimes, I'm stressed. Sometimes I'm discouraged. Sometimes I'm just plain sad. In short, my emotional pallet is not limited to one hue. I cannot peer into the hearts of others to know how they truly feel, but I suspect that most people encounter times when they are not happy.

Yet sometimes there are people who *seem* to be always happy, and some of them think that Christians should never have any cause to be unhappy. Some would even say that for a Christian, sadness is sinful. After all, Paul did say, “Rejoice always” (1 Thess. 5:16). If there is ever a time when we are not happy, are we not violating the command of that passage?

In fact, we cannot isolate 1 Thess. 5:16 from the rest of Scripture as though rejoicing is the only emotion God expects from Christians. Sadness and other so-called negative emotions are a reality of life. Jesus himself often experienced emotions other than happiness. One notable example is when Jesus said from the Garden of Gethsemane, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death” (Matt. 26:38). He was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). Far from turning away the sorrowful as though they were sinners, the Lord “heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds” (Psa. 147:3). There are at least three reasons a Christian might be sorrowful.

The most obvious is simply that life is filled with hardship, pain, and loss. The Lord knows of this reality, and he is there to help us through those difficult times. David said, “The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit” (Psalm 34:17-18). It's true that Christians have hope for their sorrow as no other. For example, we are sad when a dear brother or sister passes from this life, but we do not “sorrow as others who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). As greatly as that is a comfort, consider however the case of a dear one who dies lost in sin. Only the hardest of hearts could not feel grief at so great a loss. Indeed, I would that we feel the sting of sorrow at the passing of a lost soul more often, in order to stir up our zeal for evangelism.

Secondly, there is sorrow for sin, and in many cases we should feel more sorrow for sin than we do. James wrote, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,

and he will lift you up” (James 4:8-10). The terribleness of sin should touch more than the sensitivities of our intellect alone. Similarly, Jesus said that a lowly spirit and mourning for sin are two attributes of a godly servant: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4-5). Sorrow over sin is in fact a useful means for bringing about faithfulness, both by encouraging us to avoid sin, and by motivating us to repentance, for “godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted” (2 Cor. 7:10).

Thirdly, Christians must be a people of empathy. Paul told us to “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15). When our brother or sister in Christ is distressed, we often try to comfort with help or encouraging words. It may be that a brother’s fear could be unfounded, so that it can be assuaged with gentle words, or he could be facing a situation that can be alleviated with our helping hand. Other times, however, a brother’s grief may be of the sort that no well-meaning word can lighten nor helping hand can eliminate. He must work through his grief, and a thoughtless “Cheer up!” can do more harm than good. Rather, we should share his pain, recognizing that his pain is our pain, just as his joy is our joy. He will know that nothing we can do can change a sorrowful situation, yet he knows he is not alone in his suffering.

So what can we make of the command to “Rejoice always”? Paul gives more clarification the way he says it in Phil. 4:4: “Rejoice **in the Lord** always. Again I will say, rejoice!” Our joy is rooted in the salvation of our Lord, and there is truly nothing to be regretted in that. Perhaps that is what the song “Happy Am I” means, for the chorus begins similarly: “Happy am I **with my Redeemer.**” Additionally, the sorrow that we do have in this life becomes overshadowed by the blessings from above. Because of this, Paul could talk about his own hardships in service with a hopeful outlook: “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Cor. 6:10). Christians are the only people that can truly rejoice in the midst of sorrow.

No, Christians are not always happy, but “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. - 2 Corinthians 1:3-4