

# Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness

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**John 10:10** The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

**2Corinthians 3:17** Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.

**Romans 4:7-8** - "*Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*"

Our Declaration of Independence states: "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." I have come to realize more and more lately that this is both a precious gem of truth, and a powerful reality that has the power to alter life. God has given us the right to live, the right to liberty, and the right to pursue happiness. It is the great aspiration of people all over the world and I tend to agree with President Bush that men everywhere desire to be free. Freedom from enslavement gives men the opportunity to act out and pursue these rights.

Different cultures have different views on the definition of life, of liberty, and of the pursuit of happiness; but there is common ground I think among all people. The right to life as a fundamental starting point is, to everyone, to be able to breathe and have our movement in an environment where the likelihood of someone snuffing out our lives intentionally is very low or nonexistent. Liberty is seen by most people as the right to make choices about the direction that freedom will take us, and to choose routes of freedom where we can benefit from the advantages all around us. Pursuit of happiness is viewed by most people as the right to choose a direction in which to go that will result in finding a place of fulfillment and joy as the likely outcome. So these are basic statements about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

I want to suggest today, that for all the aspirations of men to exercise life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, most of them miss the mark. The reason this is true is found in our text verses. So, taking those verses, we want to examine how humans may successfully pursue life with liberty, and in the pursuit of happiness.

## **I. The Inalienable Right To Life Granted by the Lord Has Conditions**

- Life is a Wonderful Opportunity to Excel in Human Achievements
- Each one of you in this room is a living testimony of this
  - ▶ Life For a Human is a Space in Time to Exhibit Who He or She Is
    - There's not a one of us here that is exactly like someone else - we are each a living expression of who God has made us, and of how we see ourselves.

- ▶ But Life For a Human Occurs For the Glory and Pleasure of the Lord
  - **Rev. 4:11**- Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.
- ▶ Life For a Human Only Has Lasting Meaning When It Achieves The Ends Intended By The Lord
- ▶ And Life to Which People Have a Right Can't be Fully Realized if that Life is Alienated From God
- ▶ The apostle sheds light on the reason this is true in a statement about the condition of unsaved people in
  - Eph. 4:18 - "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:"
    - ✓ Let's just imagine for a moment how life would be for us if we were kept in a bare darkened room from the time we were born until we were grown. In that room there was nothing but walls and a bed to sleep on. The same dish of food and glass of water was handed to us through a slot in the wall each meal and we could not see what was on the other side of that slot. Having grown to adulthood in an environment like that, how much would we know? How much would we understand? This illustrates the relative understanding of people who are alienated from the life of God through lack of knowledge of Him and His saving power. This illustrates why people who do not have salvation cannot experience the true meaning of "pursuit of life."

- Then, of Course, the Only Life People Can Possess That is Not Alienated From God Has Only One Source - in **John 1:4**, John is describing Christ and he writes, "In Him was life..."

Christ was explaining to Thomas about the way of salvation and about who He, as Christ, was in **John 14:6**, and He said, "I am the way the truth and **the life**..."

John put it well in **1John 5:12** - "He that hath the Son **hath life**; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

## II. The Right to Liberty Also Exists For a Purpose Higher Than He Who Has It

- **LIBERTY:** The condition of being free from restriction or control.
  - ▶ **The right and power to act, believe, or express oneself** in a manner of one's own choosing.
  - ▶ **The condition of being physically and legally free from confinement, servitude, or forced labor.**
  - ▶ Freedom from **unjust or undue governmental control.**
  - ▶ **A right or immunity to engage in certain actions without control or interference.**
  - ▶ Statement: Generally, liberty has the meaning of being free from some kind of constraint that limits personal advancement, or that controls advancement in a direction that is not our choice.

## ■ **The Road To Liberty Starts At One Source**

▶ Liberty, as the unsaved human heart interprets it, cannot be a reality-let's connect some dots:

- In **2Tim 2:25-26** the bible commands us ministers to: "In meekness instruct(ing) those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; (26) And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are **taken captive by him at his will**."

- Then in **Romans 6:16** scripture gives us **this warning**: "(Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; (whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?)"

- Now to **John 8:32, 36** "And ye shall know the truth, and the **truth shall make you free.**" (36)

## ■ This verse states a divine and eternal principle: **freedom comes from knowing the truth**

▶ In the same way you can't imprison a man inside a room if he knows there is an unlocked door on one wall, you can't imprison a man when he knows the truth! You can cause him grief, you can detain him, you can put obstructions in his way, but knowing the truth swings the door to freedom wide open.

▶ This country was founded as a result of a process that started with a vision of certainty by a group of men that we could live and prosper, and have a new and productive level of freedom, by breaking free from the oppression of England. This certainty was a TRUTH that they had grasped which launched America into the nation we have become.

▶ This eternal principle has been understood elsewhere among men throughout history. One more example from bible history may be the best one to refer to: **I Samuel 17** we find Israel in a bad state because God has rejected Saul from being king because he disobeyed Him about destroying the Amalekites in Chapter 15. Now the Israelites are in a Mexican standoff with the Philistines and here stands Goliath challenging anybody from the Israeli camp to come and do battle with him as a representative of Saul. Now, even with several heroes in Israel, like Abner the general of the army, and Jonathan the son of Saul who had lately killed a whole garrison of Philistines with only a thousand men; but at the point in **I Samuel 17** the Philistines are intent on enslaving Israel; and they want to do it by having Israel's best champion fight with Goliath, and if Goliath wins then Israel will become the servant of the Philistines. Now verse 11 says, "When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid." But David has been sent by his Dad to take food and check in on his three brothers who are in Saul's standing army at the battle front. He comes, gets rebuked by his brothers, and in the meantime hears about Saul challenging Israel. Now listen to his remark about this situation in verse 26: "**who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?**"

▶ This statement got Saul's attention and he sent for David and talked to him about

this attitude and David told Saul how he had killed bears and lions who threatened his Dad's sheep and he said: (verse 36) "...this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."

▶ **WHERE DID THIS UNDERSTANDING AND REALIZATION BY DAVID COME FROM?** It came to David because he knew the truth and the truth made him free! - "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

▶ David recognized how God works and he challenged Goliath with certainty because he knew a certain truth: **that God is not mocked** (Gal. 6:7)

▶ This truth gave him the realization that Israel had a birthright to liberty and knowing that compelled him to challenge Goliath with a freedom that only knowledge of the truth can produce.

■ Which brings us to this fact: **The Purpose of Liberty Is, As With Life, For the Glory of God**

▶ I believe that it redounded to the glory of God to make the United States a free nation; the liberties we gained by our separation from English rule were liberties that God could be glorified by.

▶ I believe it greatly glorified God to give Goliath over to the young David and thus vindicate the claims that Israel made about the power of Jehovah.

■ I said at the start of these comments about liberty that **true liberty starts at one source**. By that I mean that we should be able to go to one spot and find the fountainhead of true liberty. I have said that the keystone principle about having liberty is that "**ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.**" Taking that principle let's go find the fountainhead. America found freedom; that freedom was established on the principles of Christianity; David found freedom for Israel; that freedom stemmed from the principle of God as the only rightful king and ruler. So let's look at the fountainhead of these truths:

■ **John 14:6:** Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, **the truth, and the life:** no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

▶ Christ had to be very clear about this because among men, truth comes in a lot of different colors and sizes

▶ Philosophers have debated for centuries about what constitutes truth

▶ Today, you are personally bombarded with a broad array of definitions about what constitutes truth

▶ If your liberty is dependent on knowing truth (and it is), then it is critical that you know what real truth is

▶ Here is a clear statement from God the Son and you don't need any other definition

▶ So, here is the fountainhead; you must know Jesus to find true liberty

- (Short statement or two about how to know Him)

▶ The process of salvation's work of bringing liberty in a capsule verse: **Romans**

**8:21:** "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the **bondage of corruption** into the **glorious liberty** of the children of God."

- When saving knowledge of Him who is truth is yours, then the truths that are part of what He is become known to you. You then use those truths to lift you to greater and greater liberty in your life.
  - ✓ When you first ever sit down at a computer and begin to try to use it, you are impressed by the things it does. But, if you dare to explore some, you are soon almost overwhelmed by the many things hidden inside it. Then, if you dare to start tinkering with those software programs, tinkering with the configuration of that computer, adding things to it, taking things away, you soon realize that it may contain more secrets than you can ever make use of in the things you do. So is the truth of the Lord! It is more than you know, more than you can comprehend, more than you can use as a single human being. But, all of the potential of the truth of God is right there at your fingertips in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you dare to explore, to use, to produce based on these truths, the potential for liberty is limitless.
- ▶ **John 8:36** If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free **indeed**.

### **III. The Right to Pursuit of Happiness Has Conditions To Be Met In Order to Find True Happiness**

- **In our present culture, society and our philosophers suggest a multitude of ways for people to find happiness**
  - ▶ For romantic folks, it may be to grow up in a loving family, find a partner whom we love with all our hearts, who also loves us totally, marry, settle down in a little house with a white picket fence or a landscaped lawn, have kids, work at a job we love which pays more than 80 thousand a year, and enjoy all our favorite recreations throughout our life
  - ▶ For intellectual folks it may be to grow up in a loving studious family of geniuses, go to the best schools, including Harvard; have a troop of friends with an IQ of at least 170 or more, land a job as a top scientist with the European Organization for Nuclear Research, or Lockheed, or as a brain surgeon, drive a Mercedes, have a spouse who likewise earns 6 or 7 figures and is perfect in every way, retire at 50 with a billion dollar retirement package, and play golf and meet interesting people.
  - ▶ For people whose dream of happiness is business and riches it may be to find a place to make millions in an atmosphere where they can exercise their money-making skills and their business savvy to acquire their millions while enjoying all the atmosphere of business competition and retire at an early age and enlist one or more of their children in taking over the family business.
  - ▶ For the sports minded, it may be to grow up playing all kinds of sports, to become expert in one of those sports, get hired into the major league making 10-50 million a year, become famous and loved in the eyes of the public, retire at 35 and live the life of Riley off the money they have made.
- All these things are human-perceived roads to happiness which are the inventions of

human emotions operating in a free society which has such a multitude of choices.

- ▶ (It's not wrong to want to be an intellectual success, a sports star, or even to amass a fortune [although, the pursuit of riches for the sake of pursuit of riches alone is a snare by which many souls pierce themselves through with many sorrows- **1 Timothy 6:10**])

■ **In reality though the Pursuit of Happiness Can Only Succeed Through One**

**Process - Let's look again at part of our text; Romans 4:7-8 - "...Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."**

- ▶ The biblical word "blessed" comes from a Greek word (Gr. Makarios) that today would be rendered "happy" or "fortunate because of being well off."
- ▶ If you have had your iniquities forgiven you are in a state to be happy
- ▶ If you have had your sins covered you are in a state to be happy
- ▶ If you are a person to whom the Lord will not impute sin you can be a happy person
  - ("does not impute sin" can best be understood like this: God inventories all the things that may be said about you and when He goes over that inventory he does not find any mention of sin being one of those things that can be said about you. It is as though someone made up a list of all that describes what you do or do not have and when that list is reviewed nothing on that list is sin of any kind).
- ▶ **Psalms 144:15** Happy *is that* people, that is in such a case: *yea*, happy *is that* people, whose God *is* the LORD.
  - Felix Adler (a German American professor): "The truth which has made us free will in the end make us glad also."

OTHER QUOTES:

Allan K. Chalmers (a writer): The Grand essentials of happiness are: something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.

Amy Lowell (American poet):

Happiness: We rarely feel it.

I would buy it, beg it, steal it,

Pay in coins of dripping blood

For this one transcendent good.