

HAPPINESS LIES IN OBEDIENCE.

Notes of an Address

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I WANT you all to look at me this evening. I want to see your faces, that I may judge if you are happy, really happy, now and for eternity.

Earthly happiness does not last. For instance, you may be looking at a beautiful sight, when suddenly a little grit gets into your eye, and you can no longer enjoy the scene. Yes, a tiny speck of dust, so small that you can hardly see it upon the corner of your mother's handkerchief when she has removed it, can spoil all your happiness. Or you have gone for a

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nice long walk, and your shoe pinches; the aching foot destroys all the pleasure of the walk. Or, may-be, you are having a game of cricket, when a little splinter runs up your nail. Where is your enjoyment then? Yes, dear children, a grit in your eye, or a tight boot, or a splinter up your nail, will, in a moment, stop all your earthly happiness.

I want to talk to you of a happiness that will *last*.

How long will it last?

“For ever.”

Oh, some of you know about it then! Are *you* happy for ever?

My text to-night is not to be found in the Bible. It is not a long one, so all can easily remember it.

“Happiness lies in obedience;” that is, to be happy you must be obedient. Now, are you happy?

No, I can see children here who are not happy, and I know why. They are not obedient.

Let us look at one or two examples in the Bible of people who were happy because they were obedient.

Daniel is the first I mention. They wanted him to eat of the king's meat, and to drink of the king's wine, but he refused. Why? Because they had been offered to idols. He was obedient to the true God, and refused, asking to be allowed to have pulse to eat and water to drink.

How would you like to have nothing to eat but oatmeal day by day, for breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper, and only water to drink?

But Daniel was happy, because he was obedient.

At the end of ten days they had a good look at Daniel, and found his

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face fairer and fatter in flesh than the faces of those who had not been obedient to God. Daniel was obedient, and so he was happy, and his face showed it.

David too, we shall see, was happy, because he obeyed. Saul was pursuing him, seeking to take his life, but David was happy. Would you be happy if a man were after you endeavouring to kill you? David sang the 63rd Psalm then, so we know he was not miserable. He could say at such a time, "Because Thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee. Thus will I bless Thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in Thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips." These are not the words of an unhappy man.

Paul was happy. He had been beaten with many stripes; and such stripes! a tall, strong Roman soldier, with all his strength, using a great whip with a large thick thong. Every stripe would break the skin, and cause the blood to flow. Then, with smarting, bleeding back, he was hurried to the inner prison, and his feet made fast in the stocks. But he was happy; for we read, "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God." In obedience to God he had been preaching the gospel; and he was indeed happy, because "happiness lies in obedience." And if *you* are obedient to God, *you* will be happy now and for ever.

You need never have another unhappy day or hour if you do what God tells you.

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Are you saying, "I want to be happy"? Listen then.

Your *teachers* all want you to be happy. Your *parents*, if they have been made happy themselves, desire it. *I* want you to be happy; but, above and beyond all, *God* desires your happiness *now, in this world*—not waiting till by-and-by in heaven—but *now*, as well as for ever.

Was Daniel in heaven when he was happy? No, nor yet David, nor yet Paul. They were happy on earth; and God wants us to be happy down here as well as up there.

Remember, then, my text: "Happiness lies in obedience."

Now comes the question, What are you to obey? This, the Lord's invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. 28.

Have you obeyed that "Come unto Me"? You all know what "*come*" means. When mother calls, "Joey, come upstairs to bed," Joey knows what it means. Some of you are twelve, some fourteen, and some sixteen years of age, and yet you do not seem to know what *this* "come" means.

You are not happy, for you are not obedient; you have not yet "come." You cannot see Christ with your natural eyes; but you are to come to Him just as though you could see Him and speak to Him. Come now to Him then, tell Him your need, or tell Him you wish to come to Him just as you are.

Who will be the happier then? The Lord Jesus will. You will be happy, but He will be happier still. It makes Him happy to see children

obedient. You know how God gave His only begotten Son. You know how the Lord Jesus came, how He died upon the cross, and how His precious blood was shed, and that it cleanses from all sin. Come then to Him and be cleansed. Do not wait until you are washed from your sins before coming to Him, but come to Him in order to be washed from them.

Do you say you are afraid to come to Him? The little children were not afraid of Him when He was here.

You little ones know how, if you are ill, you like mother to take you into her arms and comfort you there. It was just in this way Christ welcomed the little ones. "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them."

I am not stopping to tell you the gospel to-night. I am sure you all have heard it; but some of you have not obeyed it, and you are not happy, because you have not had to do with the Saviour who invites you to come.

I was reading this afternoon of a little boy who heard the Saviour's message, and who came. He was not like most of you. His clothes were patched and ragged, his boots were almost without any soles, his hair uncut and growing up through his torn cap—altogether he was a pitiable sight.

It was after a gospel address, one Sunday evening, that this poor, uncared-for lad went to his teacher and said, "Please, teacher, I should like to stop to the prayer-meeting, for I've given my heart to Jesus to-night."

He was of course allowed to remain,

and his parting words that night were, "Teacher, I'm so happy, I am sure I have given Jesus my heart to-night."

The day following the same teacher was in Wapping, when he saw his little friend coming along like a little London merchant on his own account. On his shoulder a small bag was slung, and in his hand he carried some bunches of lavender. He soon made up to his teacher with, "Teacher, will you buy some hearthstone this morning?"

"No, my boy, I have no use for it," was the reply.

"Then have some lavender. Look, here's a pen'orth for you."

"No, thank you, I've no need of lavender either, but you're welcome to a penny."

"Teacher," said the boy before a

gang of workmen, "I've been so happy all night;" and he went on to tell how he knew his sins were all forgiven, and that he was a child of God.

Taking the poor lad with him for a few steps, the teacher entered the shop of a fellow-worker, where the boy told the same blessed news—"He knew Jesus had received him."

Whilst they were speaking together the captain of a vessel just about to start from the dock came in to pay his account. He was in want of a cabin-boy, and it was suggested to him that he should take the now happy lad, who was only delighted at the thought of going. Upon their promising to give him an outfit, and make him tidy a bit, the captain engaged to, and left. After having a good dinner, a hot bath, his hair cut,

and being rigged up with his new clothes, the lad looked altogether changed, and was ready for his first voyage.

He had no father living. His mother was a drunkard, whom he did not know where to find, so he had no farewells to give, save to his teacher and the kind friend who, for Christ's sake, had helped to give him a new start in life.

At three o'clock the steamship started with the boy on board.

From Gravesend the captain wrote, expressing his satisfaction with the lad. From Sunderland he wrote again, saying he was fond of the boy, he was so good; but telling how he was so ill that he had been sent on shore to the hospital. The vessel stayed in the port some days, and on the Sunday evening before putting

off the captain called to see the suffering boy. He found him sinking fast, and was only just in time to receive his parting message for his friends in London: "Tell teacher that I thank him for his kindness, and tell Mr. Smith that I am going home to Jesus."

The captain could not refrain from tears, as he told of the boy's triumphant death.

"I never go to church," said he; "but that Sunday night I spent in Sunderland Hospital beside the boy's death-bed quite broke me down. It was really beautiful to hear him talk about Jesus."

That lad had come to Christ, and was happy.. Do you think he knew that he was at the last preaching he would ever hear? No; he did not know, neither did the preacher.

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Perhaps *you* are listening to the last address. You may never hear the invitation given again; for you may be dead before to-morrow. Oh, be obedient to-night! "Come unto Me," the Saviour calls. Speak to Him now in your heart; tell Him you are only weak and sinful and lost, but you want to come to Him.

How will those around you know you have come? By your altered ways and words.

Now, as I close, remember my text, "Happiness lies in obedience."