

## **Every Reason to Be Happy!**

No matter who you voted for in this latest election, there are certainly mixed feelings about the results. The one thing that we can count on is that the experiences that make up our lives never remain the same for long. Those who are happy now can assume that no matter what they would want to happen the 'good times' probably won't last. And those who are in agony at the present time can feel pretty sure that the situation will change, eventually. Lives lived on an emotional roller coaster can often leave us sick at our stomachs. If we only find happiness in the moments in which we seem to be getting what we want, or think that we need, we're going to be very unhappy people much of the time. On the other hand, if we believe what the Bible teaches, Christians have every reason to live contented and happy lives regardless of our circumstances (Philippians 4:11-13).

To make this point, I want to reference a small portion of the life and writings of eighteenth century pastor and author, Jonathan Edwards. Edwards is often remembered as the man who preached a sermon entitled, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." If this sermon is the only thing about Edwards that you're aware of you may think of him only as a very stern and serious man and yet biographers picture him in an entirely different light. Edwards loved life and shared his happiness with others. For example, he loved to spend quality time with his children. He enjoyed a wonderful and healthy marriage with his wife Sarah and he loved his work as a pastor and as an author. But Edwards had difficult times as well including the untimely death of a beloved daughter and being wrongly tossed out of his church after having served faithfully for 23 years. Still, in good times and in difficult times, Edwards sought to live a joyous life. One scholar writes,

"Unlike many people, Jonathan Edwards knew happiness at the very core of his being...[Edwards] strove to know God with his mind, to experience the goodness of God with his heart, and to lead others to do the same...Many people today don't know such peace and happiness. They live with constant tension, often acting contrary to what their mind and their conscience tell them is right. They rebel against their Creator.....Though they may know satisfaction for a brief period, lasting happiness evades them." You might ask, "What was the key to Edwards' happiness?"

The key lay primarily in his belief in the biblical truth that God is fully Sovereign over the circumstances of our lives (Genesis 50:20; Acts 2:23) and that God's Word, as well as his work is designed to bring about his glory and the ultimate good of his children in every situation (Romans 8:28). Two church historians, Owen Strachen and Doug Sweeny, having studied extensively the sermons and writings of Edwards, give us the following insight into his life and thought. "[Edwards taught that] all the God-centered life is calibrated to bless people of God as they glorify God in all that they do....Those who live to display and image the beauty of God will, in whatever circumstances they find themselves, experience happiness that comes directly from God himself. Happiness then, is not a state outside of ourselves that we must strive for.

It does not ebb and flow with our life situation. Happiness is doing the will of God, for the will of God always yields the glory of God....When one obeys God by loving His Son and following His Word, one glorifies the Lord and tastes the sweetest, richest happiness known to man. This and no other substitute is the good life. It is what God always intended for mankind.”

The blessings of God in Jesus Christ are an ever-flowing stream (John 1:16). Regardless of the many difficulties that we will face in this life and regardless of how you feel about the outcome of our most recent election, Christians have every reason to be happy as we seek by grace to, ‘glorify God and enjoy him forever.’

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