



Holiness and Happiness

Happiness is the opposite of holiness. At least that's what the devil tells us. You can have either happiness or holiness but you cannot have both. And given the choice, most try happiness. Wouldn't it be great if God had said somewhere that holiness and happiness are inseparable, that you can't have one without the other.

He did? Where? What exactly did He say?

'This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep... for the joy of the Lord is your strength' (Neh. 8:9-10). The people had rightly mourned over their sins, but there came a point when their weeping went on too long and too deep, and God said through Nehemiah, *'This is a holy day. Therefore let it be a happy day'*. He underlines by saying, *'Go home, have a feast, and celebrate with your friends and family, because this is a holy day'*.

The logic is inescapable. Happiness is not only compatible with holiness, it is an essential part of it. Without happiness, holiness is incomplete. Indeed, it is no longer holiness.

But what kind of happiness are we talking about?

Nehemiah defines it as *'the joy of the Lord'*. It is a joy that comes from God and is centred in God. God gives it and God is it. And given that the people had been repenting of their sins, this can only be an Old Testament call to joyful faith in God as their Saviour from sin.

And as if we needed another reason to pursue, accept, and enjoy the happiness of holiness, Nehemiah adds the motive: *'For the joy of the Lord is your strength!'* Holy happiness strengthens us. It produces defensive and offensive strength. It powerfully protects us from evil and it empowers us to fight for good.

Holiness, happiness, and hardiness. A blessed trinity from the Blessed Trinity!

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