

The Happy Series – “Happiness vs. Pleasure!”

The Terrible Turk (Yusuf Ismail)

This morning I want to introduce you to Yusuf Ismail, aka “The Terrible Turk.” He was an international wrestling phenomenon in the 1890’s; who was known for demolishing his opponents. He was also a highly suspicious man who demanded his winnings in gold which he strapped in a huge money belt on his waist.

His fame in Turkey took him to France and then to the United States. After soundly defeating his American opponents he returned to Europe a richer man as the undefeated World Champion. On the return voyage his ship, a French luxury liner, collided with a British sailing ship in thick fog off the coast of Nova Scotia.

Yusuf was one of 600 passengers who perished in the accident. Survivors recall “The Terrible Turk” acting like “a wild beast” forcing his way through the frightened crowds knocking over other passengers who were waiting to board lifeboats. He came to a fully boarded boat that was already being lowered into the water.

Ignoring the shouts of the crew, Yusuf jumped into the life boat. His significant weight with the force of his leap overturned the boat and all its occupants were thrown into the sea. Yusuf, though a strong athlete and good swimmer, was dragged to depths of the Atlantic by the weight of his money belt which contained 10,000 dollars in gold coins.

While no man could beat him; his own greed and impetuous behavior were his greatest opponents; they were the undoing of the Terrible Turk, Yusuf Ismail.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul, describes some folks who make the Terrible Turk seem pretty tame.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

Take note of the statement “lovers of!”

This is a list of descriptors that you do not want on your resume unless you are a WWF wrestler. These folks are heartless and yet at the same time they love all the wrong things. They are narcissistic, materialistic, sadistic, and hedonistic.

He concludes that they will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God!

Hedonism

The Greek word for “pleasure” here is “Haydonay.” It literally means: pleasure, desire for pleasure, and it can also mean lust.

From this word the Greek philosophers developed the idea called: Hedonism. Hedonism is simply the idea that pleasure and personal happiness are the most important goals in life. A hedonist strives to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain.

This word is used several times in the New Testament usually in a negative sense.

Titus 3:3

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.

Here are 4 descriptors that you do not want on your life resume:

Foolish

Disobedient

Deceived

Enslaved

Certainly the Terrible Turk died enslaved to his greedy, selfish, passions, and pleasures. He was a fool for trying to hang on to his gold while the ship was sinking.

Do you remember our talk from last week? Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes where Jesus tells his listeners that they can be blessed (Makarios) or happy despite hardship.

It’s not all about pleasure seeking. The sermon concludes with the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders, a lesson on obedience.

Jesus also uses the word “Haydonay” in the Parable of the Soils.

Luke 8:14

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

Unfortunately; I have seen this parable live out in the lives of others way too many times. I have seen sports, hobbies, careers, properties, and people serve as a distraction for many. These folks get sidetracked and their spiritual growth is stunted.

Spiritual Growth Assessment

Speaking of maturity. We have a new online tool on our church website that can help you assess your level of spiritual maturity.

It comes from Lifeway. Our goal is to use it in a way to help you grow and mature by understanding your current level of growth. Let's bring it up online!

Over the years I have discovered one very sad thing about spiritual maturity. Age and duration of a person's faith are not consistent with maturity. I have seen lots of spiritual immaturity come from older folks and folks who claim to have been long time Christians. What hindered their growth? In this instance Jesus says: worry, wealth, and pleasures.

Happiness vs. Pleasure

Now I want you to see a very important distinction. The Greek word, "haydonay," that I introduced to is a derivative of the word "handano" which means "to please!" Inherently this is not an evil word or concept. The object of the pleasure makes the difference. Let's look at another passage.

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

The focus and priority of our pleasure is what makes all the difference.

Psalm 37:4

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 16:11

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

King David's son, Solomon, had to learn the hard way.

Solomon's Experiment (700 wives & 300 concubines)

Ecclesiastes 2:1-3, 10-11

I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. ² "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?" ³ I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives... I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my

work, and this was the reward for all my labor. ¹¹Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:26

To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God.

True happiness and eternal pleasures will be given to the person who chooses to please God. The Greek philosophers that promoted hedonism failed to learn from Solomon's experiment. Pleasing God will bring true happiness, joy, and pleasure unlike anything else the world can provide.

Happiness is about: Who; not what!

Solomon learned the true lesson of happiness after he sought the pleasures of this world. Learned the hard way – he offers this word of wisdom.

Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Protect your heart! Guard it for Godly things.

The Terrible Turk

Yusuf Ismail, the Terrible Turk, died guarding his money belt. With his great strength he could have been remembered as a brave courageous man who selflessly helped families onto to life boats. But no, he truly was terrible. He was a selfish, self-centered, greedy, violent, brute of a man who pushed people out of the way to preserve his own life and fortune.

He got his name, The Terrible Turk, for being an amazing highly competitive wrestler. He is remembered as being terrible because his heart was corrupt. He died a coward enslaved by his greed and selfish pleasures.

In the last days the times will be terrible; because of the condition of people's hearts. Timothy says they will love themselves, money, and pleasures. They will be cold, cruel, and heartless not lovers of God. Let that not be said of us.

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

One century before, Yusuf Ismail, the Terrible Turk, Robert Robinson, an English Baptist pastor, at the age of 22, wrote these words, that are forever remembered, and contained in the song: *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*:

Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee, Prone to wander Lord I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love, Here's my heart Lord take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above

Robert Robinson recognized at an early age how important his heart was. He recognized that God was the ultimate source of blessing and happiness. Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing was Robinson's humble prayer of help to protect his heart from pleasures and distractions of this world.

My Happy Prayer:

Dear Lord,
Help me please you today, tomorrow, and all the days of my life.
Help me protect my heart from the pleasures of this world.
May my happiness be found in you.
May I bring a smile to your face.
Me

Response: *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*