

Column

Happiness is very much a state of the soul, as exemplified by a widow I know in Atlanta. Despite severe health problems, she remains buoyant in spirit and inspiring in her witness to others. What's her secret?

She told a mutual friend that she has a two-pronged approach to life. First, upon arising she thinks of one thing for which to be thankful that day. Then, as the day goes on, she looks for one thing to make her laugh.

Upon hearing of her technique, it occurred to me how much happier and more productive we all would be if this practice were adopted and maintained. Words found in Proverbs still hold: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (17:22).

The Apostle Paul in the New Testament seems to have adopted a similar approach to life. When faced with a painful challenge, he first took the matter to the Lord. The answer he received back was not the one for which he was hoping. Instead of instantly taking this challenge away, God promised to join him on his journey and to give him grace to triumph through his painful challenge. In response, Paul gave thanks. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me," he wrote 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Paul found that day something for which to be thankful: the presence and power of God in all the vicissitudes of life. Whether he also found something at which to laugh we are not told. Hopefully he did. After all, laughter is a great medicine for the soul.

If you think about it, a Christian is in a better position than most in finding humour in the absurdities of life. How so? Because, in the words of the hymn writer Horatio G. Spafford, "It is well with my soul."

The big things of life have been settled. We know where we came from and where we are going. The rest is details.

A Morning Resolve

I will try this day to live a simple, sincere and serene life, repelling promptly every thought of discontent, anxiety, discouragement, impurity, and self-seeking; cultivating cheerfulness, magnanimity, charity, and the

habit of holy silence; exercising economy in expenditure, generosity in giving, carefulness in conversation, diligence in appointed service, fidelity to every trust, and a childlike faith in God.

In particular I will try to be faithful in those habits of prayer, work, study, physical exercise, eating, and sleep which I believe the Holy Spirit has shown me to be right.

And as I cannot in my own strength do this, nor even with a hope of success attempt it, I look to thee, O Lord God my Father, in Jesus my Saviour, and ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (Forward Movement)

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