

## Hedonism

by Wayne Goff

**Hedonism** is the belief that *"pleasure or happiness is the sole or chief good in life"* [Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth edition, p. 538]. Our country has given itself over to this belief since the mid-sixties, by and large. Some are self-proclaimed disciples of hedonism, but most are the unwitting victims of a cultural revolution that swept the country. Modern man neither cherishes nor rejects religion. He just ignores it.

The playboy philosophy advocated by many more than Hugh Hefner is actually a revival of the old pleasure-seeking philosophy that has always plagued man when he became prosperous. God warned the Israelites not to forget God in their prosperity: *"When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant"* (Deut. 31:20). So the immoral revolution of today is the same old immoral revolt of the past!

Man is not emancipated from the biblical standard of morality to a new life of freedom when he embraces hedonism. Instead he has accepted a haughty authoritarianism that dictates his attitudes and conduct. He has embraced the lifestyle of pleasure-seeking escapism. Its two main components are (1) sensuality and (2) immediate gratification. The hedonist then holds the viewpoint that the present times are happy and he is going to live life to its fullest.

But the hedonistic lifestyle is not without its backlashes. Hedonism cannot avoid the dilemma of either becoming **too immoral** or **too inconsistent**. If left to himself, the hedonist becomes a wicked reprobate. If curbed, then the hedonist feels inhibited, or else he winds up denying his own belief.

Also, it becomes apparent in time that the best way to miss happiness is to seek it! Happiness is not an end in itself. Happiness is a by-product of living a godly, moral life. The hedonist knows nothing about this. Read Solomon's escapades in Ecclesiastes and see how bored and unfulfilled his life became in time. The cause for this is the simple fact that materialism does not satisfy! How many weekend lovers, bottles of wine, and new toys can a man have before he grows weary of it all? Paul warned of those who lived this lifestyle. They are the group *"who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness"* (Eph. 4:19). Note that last phrase: **uncleanness with greediness**. The more one partakes, the less it thrills. The less it thrills, the more one wants of something deeper, more vile, and more wretched than before. In its natural course, such a lifestyle self-destructs. And sadly, in the end, the hedonist is not happy.

**What should we do?** Recognize that hedonism is not a new philosophy but an old trick of the wily Deceiver (Rev. 12:9). Think out this philosophy to its natural end before you begin to walk down that pathway. It will be easier never to begin than to begin and have to learn to crawl out! Then as you see that hedonism has no lasting fulfillment, and no promised hope at the end, understand what God said about such living. That to whatever you yield yourself to obey, you become the servant of that choice (Rom. 6:16). Any choice other than a God-fearing, God-glorifying life will be the wrong choice. Why? Because God made the world and God made man. He made man to *"seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him"* (Acts 17:27). When man finds God for himself, then he finds purpose, fulfillment, peace of mind and hope. That is what makes life worth living.

Listen to the inspired conclusion of Solomon after his experiment with the hedonistic lifestyle: First he said, *"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun"* (Eccl. 2:11). Finally, after looking for happiness everywhere else, he concluded: *"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them'. . . . Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."* (Eccl. 12:1, 13). A word to the wise is sufficient. The fool will have to learn such wisdom for himself. Which is your choice?