

26-0913a - Detailed Summary

26-0913a - *The Secret of Contentment*, Tom Freed

Bible Readers: Mike Mathis and Roger Raines

See the transcript: [Transcript HTML](#) - [Transcript PDF](#)

The Secret of Contentment

Scripture Readings

1st Reading (0:04 - 0:51): Mike Mathis

Hebrews 13:5-6: Mike opened the service by reading Hebrews 13:5-6. The passage exhorts believers to let their conduct be without covetousness and to be content with such things as they have, because God Himself has promised, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” On the basis of that promise the reader may boldly say that the Lord is his helper and therefore need not fear what man can do to him.

2nd Reading (0:56 - 1:55): Roger Raines

Philippians 4:10-13: Roger then read Philippians 4:10-13.

Continued

Paul rejoices that the Philippian church has revived its concern for him, noting that they had always been concerned but had previously lacked opportunity. He immediately clarifies that he is not speaking from want, because he has learned to be content in whatever circumstances he finds himself. He knows how to get along with humble means and how to live in prosperity; in every circumstance he has learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, of having abundance and of suffering need. He concludes with the well-known declaration that he can do all things through Him who strengthens him.

Summary of Transcript (0:04 - 15:27), Preacher: Tom Freed

(1:59–4:22) Introduction and Paul’s Example of Learned Contentment

Tom began by greeting the congregation and noting that it was again his turn in the preaching rotation. He admitted that the subject of the sermon is one with which he personally struggles: contentment. The message is titled “The Secret of Contentment.” He observed that the surrounding culture is professionally discontent. Every advertisement, every social-media scroll, and many ordinary conversations quietly insist that a person would be happier with a little more money, comfort, recognition, a better job, house, body, or relationship. Tom acknowledged that he himself has thought that way. Yet those who already possess such things are often just as restless as those who lack them.

Against this cultural current stands the apostle Paul. Writing from prison, having known both hunger and plenty, abundance and need, Paul states that he has learned in whatever situation he is to be content. He knows how to be brought low and how to abound; in every circumstance he has learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. The key word, Tom emphasized, is “learned.” Contentment is not a personality type, nor is it the result of finally arranging one’s circumstances correctly. It is something a follower of Jesus is taught by Christ Himself. Contentment is not found by changing the situation. Paul had every natural reason for discontent—beatings, shipwreck, slander, imprisonment, and near destitution—yet if contentment depended on external conditions he would have possessed none.

(4:22–6:20) The Illusion of “When” and Biblical Gain

Believers commonly reverse the biblical order. They tell themselves they will be content when the job becomes easier, the bills are paid, health improves, or they finally obtain what others have. The problem is that “when” never arrives; the finish line keeps moving. Tom confessed that this pattern is especially true of him: after receiving something he desires he feels happy and content for a few months and then wants something else. Paul therefore does not tell Christians to wait for a better chapter. Instead he points to what God already calls gain in the present moment.

Citing 1 Timothy 6:6-8, Tom quoted the principle that godliness with contentment is great gain, because we brought nothing into the world and can take nothing out of it. If we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. Proverbs 30:8-9 supplies a matching prayer: “Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.” The healthy place is the middle—neither too much nor too little. Contentment is not asking God for the most; it is asking Him for enough and then trusting Him with it. The world insists that gain comes from getting more. God insists that the great gain is learning to need less than one thought necessary and to find sufficiency in Him. Discontent, Tom added, is often unbelief wearing a respectable face—a quiet suspicion that God has not yet been good enough.

(6:20–8:16) Contentment Rests on God’s Unchanging Presence

If a person is not content, that person is in effect declaring that he or she is not content with what God has already provided. Contentment therefore rests on God’s presence rather than on possessions. Hebrews 13:5-6 supplies the reason: keep your life free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Consequently one may confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” The foundation is not that one has enough stuff; the foundation is that one has God.

Tom asked how many people still live by the bumper-sticker philosophy “He who dies with the most toys wins.” God replies that life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. The same promise given in Hebrews was first spoken to Joshua: “I will not leave you or forsake you.” If the Lord is with a person, that person is not actually lacking the one thing that matters most; everything else is secondary. That is why Paul could say he had learned the secret in any circumstance: circumstances change, but Christ does not.

(8:16–10:31) The Danger of Comparison and Unsatisfied Appetites

Comparison is deadly. When believers measure their lives against someone else’s highlight reel they begin treating God’s specific gift to them as insufficient. The problem is especially acute on social media, where one sees only the great things happening to others and can feel depressed or deprived. God, however, did not call anyone to live another person’s life; He called each believer to be faithful in his or her own.

Contentment is a practice, not merely a feeling. Paul learned it; it did not come automatically. The first practice Tom named is specific thanksgiving—not a vague “I’m blessed,” but the naming of what God has actually given: today’s food, a roof, work to do, and mercy that is new this morning. Lamentations 3:22-23 declares that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is His faithfulness. Thanksgiving starves

discontent.

A second practice is to stop feeding the appetite for more by limiting the inputs that train the heart to want what it does not have. Comparison is a habit; so is contentment. Proverbs 27:20 observes that Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man. One can never be satisfied by acquiring more. Tom testified that this has been true in his own life; he keeps thinking that “enough” will eventually arrive, but it never does. Even billionaires still want more money and more things.

(10:31–13:15) Practices That Cultivate Contentment

A third practice is to remember what lasts. Houses, cars, titles, and bank accounts remain behind. The work done in the Lord is not in vain. First Corinthians 15:58 therefore exhorts believers to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord their labor is not in vain. A Christian has no retirement from faithfulness; believers work until Jesus comes, and the reward is not more stuff but Christ Himself. There is no 401(k) for the Christian; the work of faithfulness continues.

A fourth practice is to pray instead of rehearsing lack. Anxiety and discontent often travel together. Rather than turning a need over in the mind a hundred times, the believer is to bring it to God. Philippians 4:6-7 commands, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

A fifth practice is to hold things loosely. We brought nothing into the world and take nothing out. Tom’s favorite illustration is that one never sees a U-Haul behind a hearse. The tombs of the Egyptian pharaohs, filled with possessions intended for the afterlife, were still there thousands of years later; the owners took nothing with them. Job said it best: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” That truth frees a person both to give and to stop treating everything as if it were his or hers to keep.

None of these practices means that Christians stop working, planning, or seeking to improve their situation. Paul himself worked, received help, and was not passive. Contentment is neither laziness nor a pretense that pain is unreal; it is the refusal to let pain or lack become one’s master.

(13:15–15:27) The Secret Is Christ Himself and the Call to Respond

The secret Paul discovered is not a technique but a relationship: “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” The verse is not about athletic achievement or career success. In context it means having enough of Christ to be content when one has little and humble when one has much. Jesus is enough when the job is heavy, when the body aches, when the house is small and the future unclear, when one is single, tired, or overlooked. The world will never stop telling people they need more; Christ simply says, “I am with you. That is enough.” David states the same truth in Psalm 23:1: “The Lord is my shepherd; I lack nothing.” Those who have Jesus have the greatest thing in the world and therefore have everything they need.

If a person has never come to Christ, contentment will always remain just out of reach because the one thing actually needed is missing. Christ invites people not first to a better set of circumstances

but to Himself. For those who already belong to Him the call is both simple and hard: stop waiting for life to get easier before trusting Him. Learn, as Paul learned, in the situation that exists right now. He will not leave; He will not forsake. That is the secret.

Tom closed by inviting anyone who needed the prayers of the church or who needed to become a Christian to come forward.