26-1101a - Detailed Summary

26-1101a - *Contentment, Steve Cain*

Bible Readers: Kevin Woosley and Roger Raines

See the transcript: Transcript HTML - Transcript PDF

Contentment

1st Reading (0:04 - 0:54): Kevin Woosley **Philippians 4:10-13**: Kevin opened the service by reading from Philippians chapter 4, verses 10 through 13. The passage begins with Paul rejoicing greatly in the Lord that the Philippians' care for him has flourished again. Though they surely did care, they lacked opportunity. Paul clarifies that he does not speak in regard to need, for he has learned in whatever state he is to be content. He knows how to be abased and how to abound. Everywhere and in all things he has learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. The reading concludes with the declaration that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. Kevin affirmed the reading with "	***Continued*** "Amen to that. **2nd Reading** (0:59 - 1:41): Roger Raines **Proverbs 30:7-9**: Roger then read the second scripture from Proverbs 30, verses 7 through 9, using the New American Standard Bible. The text presents two requests: "Do not refuse me before I die. Keep deceptions and lies far from me. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that is my portion." The purpose is that the speaker not become a fool and deny the Lord, saying "Who is the Lord?" nor that in want he steal and profane the name of his God. Roger concluded the reading.

Summary of Transcript (0:04 - 30:59), Preacher: Steve Cain

(1:46 - 3:49) Introduction:

Holy Spirit Prompting and the Theme of Contentment

Steve began by expressing that he felt the Holy Spirit was with the congregation that morning. He explained that the message was not one he had prepared solely for himself. He started preparing one message, but along the way thoughts came to him which he credited to the Holy Spirit. He wanted the hearers to realize that what he would say were things he thought about being prompted by the Spirit. He announced the topic of contentment and asked whether the congregation understood what contentment is. Citing Webster's Dictionary, he defined it as a state of happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment. He expressed his love for Paul and for everything Paul writes, especially when Paul speaks of his own personal experience. In the Philippian letters, Paul talks about how he came about his contentment. Steve prefaced the lesson by stating that if one is not content—content, not tempted—it is not God's fault. God does everything in His power to look after people, to meet their needs, and to make sure they are fulfilled. If one is not content, it is not God's fault; one needs to make internal thoughts about why contentment is lacking.

(3:54 - 7:23) God's Lifelong Care and the Call Not to Worry (Matthew 6)

Steve noted that Paul points out (though he did not have the specific scripture before him) that God took him from his mother's womb. This implies that from the moment Paul was born, God took over his care, looking after him and meeting his needs. The same is true for every person: every child that is born, God personally begins looking after and meeting its needs. This is an awesome concept. Even if one does not think God was looking after him or her, God met needs all the time while growing up and continues to look after people in adulthood. Jesus points this out in Matthew chapter 6 in the Sermon on the Mount. Starting at verse 25, Jesus says not to worry about life, what one will eat or drink, or about the body and what one will wear. Life is more than food and the body more than clothes. Look at the birds of the air: they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, yet the heavenly Father feeds them. Are people not much more valuable than they? Can anyone by worrying add a single hour to life? Why worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow; they do not labor or spin, yet not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you, you of little faith? Do not worry, saying "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" The pagans run after all these things, and the heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. In other words, God is looking after people even as adults, from the day of birth until the day they are taken up. God is looking after you and meeting your needs. Therefore, if one is not content, it is not God's fault.

(7:32 - 11:04) Paul's Experience in Asia and Learning to Rely on God (2 Corinthians 1)

As the congregation reflected on this, Steve observed that Paul knows God has been looking after him all this time. One passage he likes to bring out, familiar to the hearers, is found in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, particularly verse 8. He was reading from the New International Version. Paul is on a journey and finds himself in a situation over which he has absolutely no control. He tells the Corinthians that he is under threat for his life and the safety and well-being of those with him. He explains why he did not get to them on time as expected. In verse 8 he says, "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death." He is truly in threat for his life and concerned. He has not yet learned a lesson, but he is about to, because God allowed him to experience this situation. In verse 9 Paul continues that this happened so they might not rely on themselves but on God who raises the dead. He has delivered them from such a deadly peril and will deliver them again. On Him they have set their hope that He will continue to deliver them. As the Corinthians help by their prayers, many will give thanks on their behalf for the gracious favor granted in answer to the prayers of many. Paul realizes that his contentment is relying entirely upon God. It is not that he is relying on God to meet his needs, because God already is. What he must do is rely on God and let God do His thing. God is looking after him, and that is exactly why God allowed him to experience what he experienced. Perhaps that is exactly why God allows each and every one of us to experience what we experience: so that we might become reliant on God and recognize that God is in control of our lives and meets our needs as we need Him. Steve noted that he loved the prayer Scott had just given concerning his aunt; it expressed the very things he was expecting to say as well.

(11:07 - 13:19) Illustrations of Contentment: Children and Cows

Contentment is something people need to be able to have naturally—just being content. What kind of contentment are people really needing? Steve offered an illustration that came to him while preparing the lesson. Think in terms of children. There is a young man with us; think of young men and women and our children. As they are in our care and growing up, before they get ready to leave the house, what kind of cares do they have? They are content. That is the sign of content. He had also thought in terms of cows before using this illustration. Cows out in the field are lying down, sitting around, chewing a cud, ruminating. They are content. There is a saying something like "milk from contented cows" or "contented cows give better milk"; he could not remember the exact phrase. They are content, and so are our children. How about when you were growing up? Were you concerned about whether the folks could make the rent? Were you concerned whether they could feed you? Were you concerned about whether you were going to go to school or be able to go to a movie? You were not concerned. You had no cares in the world. Those are the signs of being content. God is saying to you that you can be content.

(13:19 - 16:24) Revisiting Philippians 4: Learning to Be Content in Every Circumstance

Paul understood when he wrote those words about contentment. Steve returned to the passage in Philippians chapter 4 to see what Paul is talking about. Paul had that experience in 2 Corinthians of having to wait for God instead of putting it all on himself. He needed to rely on God, learned a lesson, and is trying to help us appreciate that he carried that lesson with him into adulthood. Looking at chapter 4, starting with verse 10: "I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content." The key word is "learned." It is something experienced, placed on God, and His help is experienced. Paul experienced it and got to the point where he learned to rely on God; he put it on God. He says he has learned to be content whatever the circumstances, and he means whatever the circumstances. Verse 12: "I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through Him who gives me strength." What is he saying in that last phrase? He is saying he can put all his cares and concerns on Him. He has learned to do that because God has given him strength to be able to do that, and God will give you the same strength to learn to rest on Him. "I have learned to be content." It is a lesson. It is an experience.

(16:24 - 21:56) Paul's Conversion, Clean Conscience, and the Path to Contentment

As we reflect on Paul's contentment, there is one more thing involved: his relationship with God. Can you imagine if God had just left him on the road to Damascus and did not tell him to go in and ask for Ananias, who would tell him words about how to be saved? There was a purpose in that. Here is Paul, very vigorously going out and persecuting the churches and the Christians, having them bound up, some imprisoned and killed. All of a sudden Jesus appears to him and he is made aware that Jesus is real—that he has been wrong all this time and looks at what he has done. If God or Jesus had not told him to go on into Damascus, what kind of burden would be on this man the rest of his life when he realized he had been wrong and looked at all the people he had been killing and putting in prison? Oh, his conscience. Up until then he was in good conscience; he will tell you he did these things in all good conscience. But now, what is he going to do? How can he make amends? What can he do to correct what he has been doing? Can God ever forgive him for what he

has been doing to Him? Jesus knew that He could forgive him because that is the reason He came and died on the cross—to reconcile us to God. God was extending to him the right hand of fellowship. All he has to do is come to Him through Jesus and acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Then God forgives him. That will take care of his conscience. Oh, to have a nice, clean conscience, to be able to come before God and say, “God, would you look after my aunt? Would you look after my son? Would you look after my daughter? Would you look after my parents?” What if you do not have a clean conscience? What if you have not been given the avenue to which to go? You would not be able to do that in your conscience, because we have a way of violating God, of angering Him, by language or by action or by whatever. We are defying Him every time we do those things. How can we be reconciled to Him? Where is our clear conscience? We cannot have a clean or clear conscience until we know we are right in the sight of God. We have to be right with God. So how can we be right with God? God is saying, “Accept my Son as a propitiation for your sin. Accept my Son who willingly went to the cross and died for you, died for me, died for us all.” He is willing to apply His righteousness to you if you will just acknowledge Him and become His disciple, acknowledge Him as the Lord and Christ, and be baptized and put Him on in baptism. That is exactly what was offered to Paul. He went on into Damascus and Ananias was sent; people went to seek out the prophet, the teacher. Ananias came in and said, “Paul, God has forgiven you. Rise and be baptized for the remission of your sins.” Paul did. That is how he can live in complete, total contentment.

(21:56 - 22:08) Invitation

Steve asked, “How about you? If you need complete and total contentment and to finish it out, I would like to extend to you the opportunity to do so while together we stand and sing the song of encouragement.”