

# The Comfort of Contentment

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**Bible Text:** Hebrews 13:1-8  
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Our Scripture reading for this evening, brothers and sisters, to which I invite you to turn with me at this time is found in the New Testament book of Hebrews, the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter. It is near the end of the Bible after the epistles of the Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus you will come to Hebrews. Right before the book of James and the epistles of Peter. Hebrews chapter 13.

The book of Hebrews, the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter. We read at this time through the eighth verse. But I draw your especial attention to verses five and six. Verses five and six will constitute our text for this evening. Hebrews 13 beginning in verse one. Hear, then, the Word of the Lord.

Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow-prisoners, and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering. Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.<sup>1</sup>

Thus far the reading of God's holy Word.

As always, dear friends, I ask and urge you to keep your Bibles open and handy as we look to God's Word together on this Lord's Day.

Dear congregation of Jesus Christ, recently I read the supposedly true story that in the pocket of a man who had just committed suicide police found 30,000 dollars along with a letter which read in part, and I quote, "I have discovered during my life that piles of money do not bring happiness. I am taking my life because I can no longer stand the

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 13:1-8.

solitude and boredom. When I was an ordinary workman, I was happy. Now that I possess millions I am infinitely sad and prefer death,” end of quote.

Now, friends, think about that. In fact, when I read that account recently it reminded me of similar expressions, several others who have expressed that same kind of sentiment down through the years.

For example, the great American oil magnate John D Rockefeller once said, and I quote, “I have made millions. They have brought me no happiness. I would barter them all for the days I sat on an office stool in Cleveland and counted myself rich on three dollars a week,” end of quote.

W H Vanderbilt, once said this of his family’s vast fortune. “The care of 200 million dollars is too great a load for any brain or back to bear. It is enough to kill anyone. There is no pleasure in it.”

And then finally this. Andrew Carnegie, the great American industrialist once succinctly said, “Millionaires seldom smile,” end of quote.

Now, friends, while it is certainly true that many of the Old Testament patriarchs were exceedingly godly men who were incredibly wealthy and while it is also very true, as one commentator has so wisely said, listen carefully, please, as I quote. “There may be possession of much wealth with no love of it. And there may be very little in actual possession with a most intense desire after it.” And I am going to read that again. Listen again. “There may be possession of much wealth with no love of it. And there may be very little in actual possession with a most intense desire after it,” end of quote.

Still and all the fact of the matter is that as we turn our attention to the words of our text for today, recorded for us in Hebrews 13 verses five and six, we find that in the midst of a society, in the midst of a country, in the midst of a culture which is increasingly characterized by an insatiable desire for more, for more, the Lord our God clearly commands his people here there and everywhere to passionately renounce such covetousness and to personally rest, rather, in the comfort of contentment.

Now, brothers and sisters, that begs a question, does it not? Given the culture in which we are living, given the increasingly secularized culture in which we are living, the increasing materialism of our day and age, how does one come to rest in the comfort of contentment? How could we grow ourselves in the grace of contentment and simply resting in that which our good and gracious God has promised to provide for each and every one of his people?

Well, as we work our way through the words of our text we are going to find that by the grace and mercy of God you and I need to take three key steps toward the comfort of contentment in order for that to be true of you and true of me.

Step number one, our text teaches us, is that there is a requirement to obey. For notice,

after having set forth essentially the same content of the Seventh Commandment of God's law, namely, "You shall not commit adultery,"<sup>2</sup> in verse four of our Scripture reading where the biblical author writes, "Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral,"<sup>3</sup> essentially a setting forth of the Seventh Commandment, we get to the words of our text, verse five. Look with me, please.

"Keep your lives free from the love of money."<sup>4</sup>

Now stay with me. Those last six words that I have just read, namely, "Free from the love of money,"<sup>5</sup> are all a single word in the original Greek language. Those six words, "Free from the love of money,"<sup>6</sup> are one word in the original language. But that one word—and, again, stay with me—is a combination of three different Greek words. And they are very simple.

The first word is α (ah) which is a negation or it means not.

The second word is φίλος (fee'-los) which means a friendship kind of love.

And the third word is ἀργυρος (ar'-goo-ros) which means money or silver.

When you put them all together you have the word ἀφιλ-ἀργυρος (af-il-ar'-goo-ros) or do not love money, do not be a friend of money. Do not endear money to your heart, do not draw it to yourself. Do not grow in your affection for it. ἀφιλ-ἀργυρος (af-il-ar'-goo-ros), do not love money.

King James version translates that portion, "be without covetousness,"<sup>7</sup> or, again, as the NIV translates it, "Keep your lives free from the love of money."

Now why do you suppose that is so important? Why do you suppose the Holy Spirit inspired author sets that forth in such powerful and passionate fashion? Well, at least part of the answer to that question is found in the gospel according to Matthew and I would ask you turn there with me just for a moment please to Mathew chapter six verse 24 where our Lord Jesus is speaking.

And in Matthew six verse 24 Jesus says this. "No-one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Exodus 20:14.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 13:4.

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 13:5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 6:24.

“Consequently,” writes the great biblical commentator Matthew Henry, “we must take care not only to keep this sin down, but to root it out of our souls.”

Listen to what he is saying. We must take care not only to keep this sin down, but to root it out of our souls. And that is true.

In fact, turn with me if you would, please, just before the book of Hebrews to the first epistle of the apostle Paul to Timothy, his young son in the faith. 1 Timothy, right after the Thessalonians, 1 Timothy chapter six.

I am going to begin reading in verse six of 1 Timothy six and I am going to be reading through verse 10.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.<sup>9</sup>

Boys and girls, that word “contentment” can also be translated satisfied or being satisfied. You get a piece of pizza at home and your brothers and sisters want to eat the rest and you want two pieces and your mommy or your dad says, “No, be satisfied with one.” That is the idea of contentment.

Think about what we just read and don’t close Timothy.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.<sup>10</sup>

I once read that Alexander the Great on his deathbed gave the command to his subordinates that when he died he was being carried to the cemetery, his hands were not to be enclosed in the funeral shroud as was the custom. He wanted his hands outside of the funeral shroud, in fact, outside of the casket so that they could be seen outside of the funeral bier, B I E R.

He gave that command because he wanted the world to know that he who had conquered worlds was taking absolutely nothing with him when he left, not a single one of his vast worldly treasures.

I think I was in high school when evangelist Billy Graham once said, “I never saw a hearse pulling a U-haul.”

That is true. Think about that. It is true.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. [Verse eight] But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Timothy 6:6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money...<sup>11</sup>

Now underscore that. It is not just money. It is not the money that is the problem. It is “the love of money that is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”<sup>12</sup>

It is true, so, so, true.

Back in the words of our text, verse five of Hebrews 13.

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content [be satisfied] with what you have.”<sup>13</sup>

Brothers and sisters, is it not true that that is much easier said than done?

“Be content with what you have.”<sup>14</sup>

That is much easier said than done.

In fact, the apostle Paul himself struggled with that issue of being content. In fact, turn back several pages to the left, please, to Philippians chapter four. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians; Philippians chapter four. I am going to read verses 10 through 13. Paul is writing to the Church in Philippi. He is in prison as he writes this and yet we find him rejoicing in the Lord and talking about a peace that passes all understanding all the rest. But in Philippians four beginning in verse 10 Paul says this. He says to the Philippian Christians:

I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been 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 whatever the circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

He was not by nature. You and I by nature are not content in whatever our circumstances may be. The apostle Paul himself said, “I have to learn to be content, whatever the circumstances.”

Then he goes on to say:

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Timothy 6:10.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrews 13:5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Philippians 4:10-11.

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 everything through him who gives me strength.<sup>16</sup>

“Even being content whatever my circumstances may be.”

Question. My friend, have you learned the secret of being content? Have I learned the secret of being content in whatever our circumstances may be? Or are you and I increasingly characterized by the seemingly insatiable desire for more which floods our country and our culture and, indeed, many parts of the world?

You know, this is a critically important question that each and every one of us singly, personally has to answer. In fact, the question is so important that the Bible says it can literally affect the destiny of our eternal souls.

In fact, turn to the gospel according to Luke with me if you would just for a moment. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; Luke chapter 12 beginning in verse 13. Jesus is speaking to a crowd of people in Luke 12:13 and following and in Luke 12 verse 13 we read that, “Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’”<sup>17</sup>

I have had Christian attorneys tell me that it is so sad even in the Christian community you see world wars practically over the settlement of inheritance issues. It is incredible.

Here someone in the crowd says to Jesus, “Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”<sup>18</sup>

Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And he told them this parable.<sup>19</sup>

Boys and girls, a parable, as you know, is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. I learned that in Sunday school. It is the same thing they taught us in seminary. They said a parable is an earthly story with heavenly meaning. And that is what it is. Here we go.

"The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy;

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<sup>16</sup> Philippians 4:12-13.

<sup>17</sup> Luke 12:13.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Luke 12:14-16.

eat, drink and be merry.” "But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life...’<sup>20</sup>

The Greek says your ψυχη (psoo-khay’). It probably should literally be translated “your soul.

“... will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? "This is how it will [said Jesus] be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God.”<sup>21</sup>

You see.

Consequently if you or I or anyone truly desires to rest and rejoice in the comfort of contentment and by the grace and mercy of God you and I also need to take this first step towards such contentment. We need to keep our lives free from the love of money and be content with what we have. We must obey this requirement.

Well, friends, a second key step which we must take in order to rest and rejoice in the comfort of contentment is that there is a reason to observe. There is a reason to observe. That is the reason why God gave us this requirement. Look again with me at verse five of Hebrews 13 please.

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.”<sup>22</sup>  
Why? Here is the reason. “...because God has said...”<sup>23</sup>

And you can’t tell it in the English, brothers and sisters, but that word “said” in the Greek has the sense of he said it and his Word on this is going to endure forever because God has said—and stay with me—you ought to see this in the original language, five negatives piled up on top of each other, translated in the English, “never” and then again as “never.

Never, five negatives. No way. Don’t even think about it. It is impossible. This could not possibly ever happen. That is what it means.

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”<sup>24</sup>

That is what it means. Think about that.

Now, you may have a footnote in your Bible there as I do which say that that is a quotation taken from Deuteronomy 31 verse six and, indeed, it is.

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<sup>20</sup> Luke 12:16-20

<sup>21</sup> Luke 12:20-21

<sup>22</sup> Hebrews 13:5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

As I was cross referencing that statement I found that there were many places actually in the Scriptures where God says essentially that very same thing. In fact, if you want to just listen that is ok, but otherwise I would encourage you to turn back with me just for a moment to the book of Genesis the 28<sup>th</sup> chapter verse 15.

God is speaking to Jacob who is fleeing from his brother Esau who wants to kill him. And some of us are involved in relational difficulty and family problems and interpersonal relational issues. And maybe we are afraid. Maybe we are frustrated. Maybe we it shows that we are on the run as Jacob was.

Well, here in Genesis 28 verse 15 God says to Jacob, “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”<sup>25</sup>

Essentially God is saying here, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”<sup>26</sup>

And then keep going to the right, please, if you are turning with me, to the book of Deuteronomy, the last book of the Pentateuch, first five books of the Old Testament. And in Deuteronomy 31 verse six Moses is about to die. And he is speaking the Word of God to the people, some of the last words Moses will speak to God’s people before he passes away. And in Deuteronomy 31 verse six Moses says to them, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”<sup>27</sup>

And flip over a few more pages please to the book of Joshua. Joshua succeeds Moses. He now, young people, is the new leader of the Israelites. He is the one God has raised up to lead them into the Promised Land.

Now some of us have that kind of a challenge before us. We feel like God is calling us to be something, to do something, to go somewhere, to accomplish something for him. And like Joshua we could tend to be afraid. But here in Joshua one verse five God says to him, “No-one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.”<sup>28</sup>

Think of it. “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”<sup>29</sup>

And then, again, one more in the Old Testament. It was so fun to check this. Go to 1 Chronicles chapter 28. Right after the books of Samuel, Kings, you come to Chronicles, 1 Chronicles 28.

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<sup>25</sup> Genesis 28:15.

<sup>26</sup> Hebrews 13:5.

<sup>27</sup> Deuteronomy 31:6.

<sup>28</sup> Joshua 1:5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



David is speaking to his son Solomon and Solomon is about to build the temple for the Lord and in 1 Chronicles 28 verse 20 David says to Solomon his son, 1 Chronicles 28:20, “Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the LORD is finished.”<sup>30</sup>

Friends, the God who is our God said that same thing to his people throughout redemptive history over and over and over again.

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”<sup>31</sup>

And he says it again in the words of our text for tonight.

I would encourage you to put your name in the place of that text. It is by the grace and mercy of God you profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Put your name in Hebrews 13 verse five as I read it again.

God is saying to you, his son, his daughter, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”<sup>32</sup>

Put your name in there if you are a child of God.

And oh, my dear, dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, think of this. If the God who created the universe, if the God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, if the God who declares in Haggai two verse eight that “The silver is mine and the gold is mine,”<sup>33</sup> is our God, why would we not want to keep our lives free from the love of money, possessions, position, power, what one commentator has so well called petty securities. Who of us then when we understand who God is, what he has promised us would not want to keep our lives free from the love of money and be content with what we have?

In fact, in the gospel according to Matthew the sixth chapter verses 25 and following our Lord Jesus puts it this way, Mathew 6:25.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour

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<sup>30</sup> 1 Chronicles 28:20.

<sup>31</sup> Hebrews 13:5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Haggai 2:8.

was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your 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.<sup>34</sup>

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."<sup>35</sup>

That is the reason for this requirement which we must observe.

Well, brothers and sisters, there is a third and final step which we must take toward the comfort of contentment and that is that there is a response to own. There is a response to own that is, personally, by God's grace through faith in Christ. There is a response to own.

Let's go five and six of Hebrews 13 together one last time.

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said..."<sup>36</sup>

Imagine all those negatives piled up on top of each other. Never, no way, will I leave you. Never, absolutely impossible will I forsake you.

"So we say with confidence..."<sup>37</sup>

The King James says, "So that we may boldly say..."<sup>38</sup>

"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"<sup>39</sup>

Look at the text carefully. Very literally, I don't know if any of the translations say this. The Greek actually says, "What will man do to me?"

He is not just speaking theoretically. It is speaking actually in reality as to what is going to happen. What will man do to me if God is my helper.

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<sup>34</sup> Matthew 6:24-34.

<sup>35</sup> Hebrews 13:5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Hebrews 13:6.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Now you see another footnote there and it tells us that that is a quotation from Psalm 118 and, indeed, it is. But in Psalm 118 verses six and seven it is fleshed out just a little bit more and I am going to read that full quote to you.

Psalm 118 verses six and seven. The psalmist says:

The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, as he fearlessly stood his ground before formidable opposition I believe it was the reformer, Scottish Reformer John Knox who was the first to confidently declare—and I quote—“A man with God is always in the majority.”

And, young people, never forget that. Someone told me that when I was in high school. I didn't know John Knox had said it, but I never forgot that. You and God are a majority in any and every situation.

A man with God is always in the majority.

And, brothers and sisters, let us also never forget the words of the sacred song writer when he said:

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose  
I will not, I will not desert to his foes.  
That soul though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I will never, no never, no never forsake.

Glory be to God.

My friend, is that your testimony tonight? Can you and I confidently declare in the words of Scripture, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man...”<sup>41</sup> What will man do to me?

Oh, my dear friend, if that is not your testimony tonight because you are not a child of God, I would urge you even in this hour by his grace to repent of your sins and profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. And then pray also for the grace along with me to hear his Word and to heed his Word and to claim the precious promises of his Word, because, you see, then you and I alone with all of the members of the family of God near and far will be well on our way toward living and dying, resting, rejoicing in the comfort of contentment. Amen.

Let's bow our heads and our hearts together in prayer.

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<sup>40</sup> Psalm 118:6-7.

<sup>41</sup> Hebrews 13:6.

*Oh Lord our God, as John Calvin once said, "It is certain that the source of covetousness is mistrust, that is mistrust in you, mistrust in your Word, mistrust in your precious promises."*

*And so, oh faithful Father, by your grace and mercy through faith in the name of Jesus enable and empower each and every one of us we pray today and every day to crucify whatever sense or semblance of covetousness may remain within us. Enable and empower us, oh Lord, today and every day to put our trust in you alone, to personally take you at your Word when you said to your children, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

*Graciously grant to each and every one of us, oh God, the comfort of contentment. Hear us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.*