

A RESTFUL LIFE IN A RESTLESS WORLD --
IS IT POSSIBLE? ~~PSA~~ SA.37:7

Intro: When we read our Bibles, these are the kind of verses which attract our attention because we all sense the need for greater peace in our hearts. It is even true of people in the world. H. G. Wells once complained, "Here I am sixty-five--still seeking for peace" (Quoted by G. H. Morling in his book, The Quest for Serenity, p. 40).

The passages which I have chosen for my text tonight speak particularly of rest. Psalm 37 is a psalm of David, yet in this entire Psalm he only spoke of himself in verses 25, 35, and 36. Even then it was to confirm from his own experience that what he was saying was true. In the remainder of the Psalm David was speaking like a preacher, pointing the way through the difficulties of life to rest even when everything else was in turmoil.

When we turn to the last three verses in Matthew 11, we find the Son of man in a situation comparable to that of David who lived and spoke and wrote 1,000 years before the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Times had changed, but the world had not changed, nor had the hearts of men changed. The Lord was exposed to the restlessness of the world more than anyone else, and it would have affected Him more deeply than it did David, or than it does us, because He was in the world, but not of it. We are in it and of it, too.

But what we need to understand from both of these passages is that it is possible to life a restful life in a restless world. No one, except for our Savior, lived such a life perfectly, but, even though our experience may have its ups and downs and ins and outs, we have every right to believe that this restful life is possible for us, and in an ever increasing way.

Solomon likened the lives of "the just" to a day in which the sun rises and gets brighter and brighter until it is high in the sky in its full brilliance at noon. He expressed it in these words,

But the path of the just is as the shining light,
that shineth more and more unto the perfect day
(Prov. 4:18).

This would lead us to be able to say that the life of the child of God is not only good, but it ought to get better and better. That is the path we walk on.

And yet we all have to bear testimony that this is not always the case.

We are like the unnamed Psalmist in Psalm 42 who professed to have a great hunger for God, and yet he had to confess that tears had been his lot, and that he was cast down in his soul. It seemed as though the Lord had deserted him. Psalm 43 follows along with the same emphasis.

Sometimes our trials, our circumstances, get the best of us. Sometimes people cause us great distress. You will remember that the Apostle Paul listed "the care of the churches" right along with the beatings he had had, the times he had been deprived of rest or of food, or both. Even just living in such a sinful world with many things going on all around us which we know are displeasing to God, can bring great turmoil to our souls. Even though Paul told the Philippians not to worry about anything, yet it seems that we worry about everything. We know that our own country is headed at the speed of a rocket toward the judgment of God, and yet instead of slowing down and improving, things speed up and get worse. And here we are in this world being told by Holy Scripture to "rest in the Lord," and by the Lord Jesus Who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, **and I will give you rest.**" Obviously we can live in this vile world, and be at rest. But how? Let us see what these Scriptures teach us.

First of all, let us define rest.

I. A DEFINITION OF REST.

The Hebrew word which David used in Psa. 37:7 means to stop, or to stop talking and be quiet. A restless person seems may actually be quiet outwardly, but in great turmoil inwardly. David used this expression as though it were our responsibility to make ourselves quiet--when we know that that is our problem. We would have to say that this is impossible for us to do. One of the characteristics of being upset about anything is that we seem to get out of control. The most extreme example of a person who is not at rest is that he will either kill himself, or someone else. But we can be thankful that it doesn't always go to either one of those extremes. It did with Cain, and so he killed Abel. It did with Saul, and he at least tried to kill David. However, even though we don't go to that extreme, we can get very unhappy and very despondent and very discouraged. There are so many circumstances which we cannot change, but the Word of God focuses our attention on what is going on in our hearts, not upon what is going on all around us.

But let us go to our Lord's words in Matt. 11:28, especially the NT word "rest" which we find there. What does it mean?

This word speaks of being refreshed. It is the way a person feels who has had a good night of sleep. This is a word for a servant of the Lord who is weary in the work. "Heavy laden" speaks of an animal that is loaded up with such a burden that it is impossible for him to move. Sometimes it seems like the Lord has forgotten what He had Paul write in 1 Cor. 10:13. It may be the distraction and burden which a mother feels with the care of her children. Or the way a husband feels with his work away and his work piling up upon him, and having to be done in a certain period of time. Even children can "labour" and be "heavy laden."

One fact seems clear from both of these passages: They are addressed to the Lord's people. We must recognize that a person has to have peace with God before they can enjoy the peace of God. How do we find "peace with God"? Romans 5:1 tells us. (Quote.) This is basically what is wrong with so much counseling that is going on today. People are not being told that they need to have "peace with God" before they can possibly experience the true peace of God in their hearts. In other words, people need salvation in order to have true and lasting peace in their daily lives. We need to remember this.

Illus: Dr. Chafer talking to the young lady on the train who was having marital problems.

And so we need to remember this when we are seeking to help people. But it is still possible for us to be saved, and to have "peace with God" in salvation without enjoying the "peace of God" in our day by day experience. How can this be?

Well, let us look at these verses again.

II. THE FIRST STEP TOWARD HAVING A PEACEFUL HEART.

The Psalmist said, "Rest in **THE LORD.**" Jesus said, "Come unto **ME.**" And then He added, "And I will give you rest."

It seems that we always come to the Lord after we have tried everything else. Or we go to the Lord with the idea that we are going to do all that we can, and then trust the Lord for the part that we can't do. But neither of these verses even hint at that. We must come to the Lord first! We come in our helplessness and in our need, remembering Who He is, remembering His wonderful promises--that He will never leave us nor forsake us, that He is working all things out after the counsel of His own will, that He is working all things together for good for us, and for His glory, regardless of what the problems might be. That is hard to believe about

the frustrations of life, and yet it is true. There is nothing too hard for the Lord. He is able to do not just more than we ask or think, but exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. Coming to the Lord doesn't just mean coming to Him in prayer, but it means coming to Him alone, casting all of our care upon Him, approaching Him knowing that He is the only One Who can help us. I am not saying that the Lord doesn't use other people in our lives, but let us remember that our help always comes from the Lord through those people. If you trace the help back to its original source, the path will lead you directly to the Lord.

This is point is so obvious in Scripture, but I find that it is the easiest thing in the world to forget it when we are in the midst of our trials.

However, we are not through. We need to see the latter part of David's statement in Psa. 37:7. Notice that David pointed out:

III. THE NEED TO WAIT, AND TO WAIT PATIENTLY.

It would be wonderful if the help we need would come immediately. We are inclined to feel that if the Lord would give us the help we need, then we could be at rest. But notice that our verse says that we have rest while we are waiting. Too often we are like the man who was greatly disturbed about something, and when he was asked why, he responded by saying that it was because he was in a hurry, but the Lord wasn't!

I take it that David was saying here that we can be at rest before the source of unrest is taken away. We can sing in prison like Paul and Silas did when they had no expectation that help was on the way.

This is implied in Phil. 4:6, 7. The peace of God is there right along with whatever is causing us to worry. Eventually the Lord will meet the need in one way or another, but in the meantime we wait, and wait patiently. We wait in the certain hope that the Lord will meet us in our need in His own time and in His own way.

Notice also that the Lord Jesus in the Matthew passage talked about taking His yoke upon us, and learning of Him. While we wait, we don't stop living. We can't do that. Life goes right on, and we have to keep going. Taking His yoke means that we recognize that we belong to Him, that we are to do His bidding (as oxen did that of the farmer), and in those circumstances we find that the Lord opens our hearts to a knowledge of Himself and to a fellowship with Him that probably goes beyond anything that we have ever known before.

We tell the Lord to get us out of whatever the trouble may be, and He tells us that He wants to minister to us right where we are with circumstances as they are. That is what makes it so wonderful. It makes us realize that the trials we face are not our enemies, but under the blessing of the Lord, they are our friends. Our impatience is an expression of pride. The Lord shows us in our trials His meekness and His lowliness of heart because He wants to make us like He is in these two wonderful characteristics. Pride stands in the way of blessing; meekness and lowliness of heart are the two companions which throw open the door to the blessing of the Lord.

But we are inclined to feel that we wait, but nothing happens. We feel that we are waiting for the Lord to work, but He is waiting for us to get the message of these verses which we have been considering tonight. When we are like Jacob and quit struggling and start trusting, then we see that the Lord works in us before we see how He is going to work for us.

But let me close with a last, very important point.

IV. THE CERTAINTY OF OUR LORD'S PROMISE.

The Lord Jesus Himself said, "And I (the Lord) will give you (the needy one) REST." How could this be more personal or more precious? "I...you..." Say that over and over until the Holy Spirit writes that on your heart. I, the Lord, and you, whatever your name may be. The Lord is the Giver; you are the receiver. I am the receiver. There is no uncertainty in what the Lord said. If we come to Him, and learn of Him, and continue serving Him, the rest will come--and it will come before the problem is taken away.

Concl: When we look at our world tonight we see a most disturbing sight, don't we? We see crime out of hand. We see sin of all kinds running rampant. We see homes being destroyed, and children guilty of terrible crimes. We see a nation disregarding what God says about right and wrong. We see indifference toward the things of the Lord on the part of many who claim to know Him. The future can be very difficult indeed. But in spite of all of the problems, God is not dead. In fact, He is still in control. We may not see His hand moving against sinners in any unusual way. But the world needs to beware, and we need to strengthen our relationships with the Lord, and to trust Him to keep our hearts at rest, at peace, regardless of what conditions might be like in the world.

Yes, we can thank God that by His grace we can live restful lives regardless of how restless the world may become.