

Mark 8: 34-38; "Your Bedroom of Christian Discipleship", Sermon # 59 in the series - "Astonished at His Teaching", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall On January 24th, 2010, in the Morning Worship Service.

The rooms of this house of Christian Discipleship are many. That is because there are many aspects to our following and our obeying our Lord Jesus Christ. There are, as I have said before, rooms on several different levels of this great house which Christ has built for us by His obedience and His sufferings. We have looked at all the rooms on the Main level except the Bathroom, which I have determined that I will save for a little later because there are bathrooms on all the levels of this house. And so we will tour all of them in one sermon later on. But today we want to go upstairs to the bedrooms of Christian discipleship. A disciple of Jesus Christ is still a disciple whether they are awake or asleep, whether they are married or whether they are single. In every stage and state of our lives as a disciple, the Lord Jesus would meet with us in this house, and He would comfort us with His love for us as His followers. And He would also confront us with what His will is; what He would have us to do for Him in that particular room. The goal of all of our efforts as Christ's disciple is that we would be wise, and holy, and loving; both in relation to God and in relation to other people. If we are striving toward that goal day by day, then we are making progress in our Christian discipleship.

Now this morning I want you to think about your bedroom of Christian Discipleship. There are other rooms up here on the second floor, but they are not your room. They are the bedrooms of others in your family. And we will talk about them in later sermons. But this morning I would like to bring to your attention 3 reasons why a bedroom is absolutely necessary in living the Christian life of a Disciple. The 1st reason is that the life of a disciple of the Lord Jesus is a life of rest as well as a life of labor. The 2nd reason that a bedroom is essential to the disciple of Christ is that it is a life lived to God, and perhaps it will be a life lived with one close companion; a husband or a wife. And the 3rd reason why a bedroom is necessary for the Christian disciple is for the purpose of prayer. Let's enter this room now and think about what it means for us personally.

1st of all - The Life of a Christian Disciple is a life of rest as well as a life of labor.

To be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ does not mean that you have to attempt become a complete and total burnout in terms of laboring for Christ. It is true that 1 Corinthians 15: 58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." But this statement does not preclude a follower of Christ from seeking spiritual rest even while he labors, and seeking physical rest in appropriate amounts and appropriate times. Let's look into this truth a little. Let's look at spiritual rest, and then we will look at physical rest. You need to understand first of all, that in order to become a true disciple of Jesus Christ you must enter in to the rest that only Jesus Christ can give you. Turn with me to

Matthew Chapter 11, verse 20. "Then Jesus began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin!" "Woe to you, Bethsaida!" "For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." "But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you." "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." "But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." "At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes." "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the son except the Father." "Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." "For my yoke is easy and My burden is light." This is Jesus' call to discipleship. No one can know God unless the Son wills to reveal Him. The way that Jesus reveals the Father is through you coming to Him by faith. The gospel is that everyone would come to Him who is tired and weary of trying to merit favor with God by your own good works and your own good intentions. It is that you would believe that even as Jesus did miracles of old upon people's bodies which took away their diseases and their afflictions and cast out their demons, and raised them from the dead; that you would believe that He can and He will, save you from all your sins and give you a new heart when you come to Him.

Some people do not know that Jesus can do this miracle. Others think that they do not need it. The people of that day had seen the Lord Jesus do His miracles. The cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, had all seen Jesus' do His mighty works, and they did not repent. They didn't believe that anything needed to change in their hearts. Their judgment, Jesus states, would be worse than even Sodom, who had not seen these miracles; but who, because of their great sins, had been overthrown in a moment in fire and brimstone. The one who does not or will not see their need to believe in Jesus in this life will be overthrown in a moment at the Day of Judgment. Their punishment will be forevermore. But having said that it is impossible for a person to come to the Father unless they come to Him; and having praised the Father for hiding the things of salvation from those who think that they are wise enough as they are, or righteous enough by their own good works; Jesus simply says, "Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." This means that Jesus would have you repent of all of your dead works; all the works which you have tried to do to find God and to know God and to please God; and simply come to Jesus as you are; and you will find rest for your soul.

To be saved is to rest in what Jesus has done and what He will do for you; to give you grace to be saved from your sins, and to live the Christian life. You labor for Him from the vantage point of resting in Him. Christ is the bed which you lie down upon and which you rest upon. If you don't lie down and rest in Him, you will most certainly be burned out by the constant and particular demands of the Law upon you; insisting that you keep all the commandments in your own strength and by your own wisdom and by the determination of your will alone. But Jesus says that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. His commands are not burdensome when you have grace coming to you from Him. You are not under Law, even though you love it; you are under grace. You believe in Him because you know that you shall find rest. You repent of your sins, because you know that in repenting that you will find grace that will take away the guilt and shame and grief of having dishonored God. Jesus has, and He is, giving you this grace which will breathe life and strength into your soul, so as to make repentance sweet to your mind and heart; the keeping of His commandments, the same thing. Matthew Henry says, "The yoke of Christ's commands is an easy yoke; it is *Xrestos*, not only easy but gracious, so the word signifies; it is sweet and pleasant; there is nothing in it to gall the yielding neck, nothing to hurt us, but on the contrary, much to refresh us." "It is a yoke that is lined with love." Have you found rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you entered in to the rest that He has made for sinners such as yourself, that you might rest in His finished work of redemption? Do you boast in His righteousness? Do you glory in the cross? You can pick up your own cross and you can become a disciple, if you enter in to His rest. You can also stand up against your earthly and spiritual enemies because the rest that Jesus gives.

Turn with me to Psalm 3 and you will see this. If you have trusted in Jesus for your salvation, there are many people who will be skeptical of your having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If you begin to tell people around you who are unbelievers in your family, or people who are your co-workers, that you have found Jesus to be your strength and your salvation; I assure you, that many of them will think that you have lost your mind. But it is not a vain thing to become a fool for Christ. "Lord," David says, "how they have increased who trouble me!" "Many are they who rise up against me." "Many are they who say of me, 'There is no help for him in God.'" "But you O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts my head." "I cried to the Lord with my voice and He heard me from His holy hill." "I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me." "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around." Now, we must ask ourselves; was it simply lying down and going to sleep for a few hours that helped him to have courage and strength against his enemies? Surely sleep is important; and it is important that you are not habitually and continually robbing your body of the sleep that it needs to be strong and alert each day. But there is something which is far greater which was at work here in David's life. "He lay down and slept because the Lord sustained him." Sometimes a disciple will not take the right view of what he is up against in life. It is not you, by yourself, that is called upon to face the day, to

face the people who are against you, and perhaps many of them together. It is you and Christ. David could lay down and sleep because He knew and believed that the Lord would sustain him. That kind of trust brings rest and peace both physically and spiritually. And when that person awakes and is trusting in Jesus, Christ by the Spirit, it brings to them the needed confidence that that the Lord will be their helper in everything. "Salvation belongs to the Lord", as it says in verse 8.

"Day by day and with each passing moment, strength I find to meet my trials here." "Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment; I've no cause for worry or for fear." "He who's heart is kind beyond all measure gives unto each day what He deems best." "Lovingly, it's part of pain and pleasure; mingling toil with peace and rest." "Every day the Lord Himself is near me with a special mercy for each hour; all my cares He fain would bear and cheer me, He whose name is Comforter and Power;. The protection of His child and treasure is a charge that on Himself He laid; as thy days, they shall be in measure, this the pledge to me He made." "Help me then in every tribulation so to trust Thy promises, O Lord, that I lose not faith's sweet consolation offered me within Thy holy word." "Help me Lord when toil and trouble meeting e'er to take, as from a Father's hand, one by one, the days, the moments fleeting, till I reach the Promised land."

Now Secondly - The 2nd reason that a bedroom is essential to the disciple of Christ is that it is a life lived to God's pleasure and to ours in relation to Him. And perhaps it will be a life lived with one close companion; a husband or a wife.

The life that is lived to God is a life in which Christ offers us spiritual pleasures in the place of worldly and sinful pleasures, and He will test our hearts in relation to them. It is not as though there are no physical bodily pleasures in the life of Christian Discipleship. And it is not as though we have a stingy God who believes that we should not enjoy life in relation to all that He has given to us. But He desires and He demands of us that He be the One and the only One in whom we find the supreme pleasure in our life. "You shall have no other gods before Me." "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." In regard to our salvation Paul says in Ephesians Chapter 1, verse 8, that "God causes His grace to abound toward us." The New American Standard says that He "lavished the riches of His grace upon us." But it is important to the Lord to know that you see Him as the giver of every good and perfect gift. This includes obtaining a husband or a wife, and the pleasures of the bedroom that come with marriage. Whether you ever get married or not, God still expects you to choose to make Him the supreme object in relation to all that He gives you and every person that He gives you. You are not to make another person the supreme object of your devotion or affection. You do love them, but your devotion to God is above even the one whom you will marry, if you do marry. So it is important to Him what pleasures that you pursue and how you pursue them. What you will choose to do in relation to spiritual pleasures and physical pleasures will determine, to a great degree, the progress that you will make as a disciple. It will have a great

deal to do with what kind of reward that you will have when you meet your Lord face to face.

Where we begin as a disciple is to realize that the joy and peace which comes to us from Christ when we live by faith in Him; His grace and His truth, and His presence with us; are intended to bring to us something far better than what the World has to offer. He gives these pleasures to us out of the bounty of His goodness and faithfulness. But He gives them us each day to see if our hearts are in love with Him or with the world. In Ecclesiastes Chapter 2, and verse 25, Solomon says "For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment without Him?" (NASB) In the Bedroom of Christian Discipleship the pleasures that we will be focusing on will be related to being single or being married. Let start out and think for a little while about being single. I think that sometimes we who are married tend to pity those who are single by choice, because they seem to be missing out on so much; not having a husband or wife; not having that close companionship and the sexual relationship and pleasure which God has designed for marriage. But let me strongly assert to you this morning that this being single, even some persons being single for life, is not a second-class citizen status in God's mind. It is not some inferior position in Christ's kingdom. And perhaps, when I show this to you from the Scriptures, you will come to see it as it should be seen, and you will have a better view of God's purposes in permitting some people to be single for life.

Turn with me to 1st Corinthians Chapter 6, verse 12. I want to talk to you about the problem of sexual immorality. The Corinth of Paul's day was a very immoral city. To be immoral and to act in a sexually immoral way was so commonplace among them, that in other places, engaging in sexual immorality was called "playing the Corinthian". And a woman who was called "a Corinthian woman" was thought of as a whore. So when Paul came preaching to them the gospel and a new church was formed in that place, those who before their conversion, who used to be immoral, came to realize that the things that they had practiced sexually before were wrong. And they repented of them. They did not practice them any more. But they still had a lot of questions about what was right in relation to being single and being married. They wrote him a letter and they asked him some of these questions. And Paul says here in verse 12 - "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful, or profitable." "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them." "Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." This then, my friends, is the principle which is first in the Bedroom of Christian discipleship. It is that in Christ all things are lawful for you in regard to foods. They are all clean because of Christ's having fulfilled the Law. But just because all foods are clean does not mean that you can extend that principle of truth to your relationships with persons of the opposite sex, or even the same sex. Sensuality, fornication, adultery, and homosexuality are sins. The desire to have food on a regular basis is not. The body in regard to things done sexually, is not to be seen by the disciple of Christ as having the same kind of appetite as it does for food.

The appetite for food is regular and it will motivate us to seek to be satisfied a number of times in a day. But the appetite for sexual things is not to be addressed by indulging it like the need that we have for food. Not all things are lawful and not all things are profitable. Not all things are clean when it comes to sex.

This is why Paul goes on to say in verse 15, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?" "Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?" "Certainly not!" "Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her?" "For the two, He says, shall become one flesh." "But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him." "Flee sexual immorality." "Every other sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body." "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" "For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Here we find some very important truth for the Christian disciple. In marriage the two become one flesh in the sight of God; but as Christians they are married to Christ. Because they have believed in Christ and they have given themselves to Him, they are one spirit with Him. So your responsibility as a believer in regard to sexual activity is to glorify God in your body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Christ is in you and you are not your own; your body is not your own to do with it as you please sexually. Everything that you will do sexually is intended to be done having Christ with you and the special person with you; your husband or wife. This is how a Christian is seen as clean in God's sight in relation to their sexuality. They take every sexual desire captive to the obedience and purity of Christ in their spirit. And they exercise a careful self-control in their mind in relation to the desires of their mind and body being fulfilled in the right way. When sexual desires come to mind, they consciously and definitely refer them to Christ who is with them by His Spirit. They are put to death in His Holy presence if they are sinful. And the greater and more important relationship with Christ is cultivated in this holy way. The Christian should be saying to himself or herself – I have been given my body and my sexuality by God. I will turn my eyes away from beholding vanity. I will deliberately not cultivate the legitimate sexual desires which God has given to me except, and until, I am married. I will save myself for the person that God will give to me.

This is confirmed by verse 1 of Chapter 7. "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman." "But because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." You see, this is God's perfect plan and will for the Christian. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." A single young man is not to touch a woman. That is pretty straight-forward is it not? And yet many young people want to make it complicated. They believe that it is alright to kiss and to touch each other in sexual ways when God has said that they should save this for marriage. Why is this; that God expects this? The World's supposed wisdom does not recognize God and Christ in their sexuality. God

expects a young person or any single person of any age for that matter, to be pure and to maintain their virginity if they have it, because the greatest of His blessings is tied up in our sexuality, in relation to His commands. Marriage was designed by God to be a picture of Christ and the Church in their spiritual relationship with each other. Those who have a gift of singleness have seen spiritually that this is how they can glorify God better, by remaining single. Those who do have the gift of grace to have the self-control and joy in the Lord; to live to Him alone, and not to live in the bonds of holy matrimony with a husband or wife; they believe that their relationship with Christ as their spiritual husband is strong enough that they can glorify God better by remaining single.

Look over at verse 7 of Chapter 7. “For I wish that all men were even as I myself.” “But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.” “But to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry.” “For it is better to marry than to burn.” (That is to burn with passion, as our translation has added the words.) Here Paul wishes that every Christian had the gift of singleness. Christ would certainly be enough for them. They would not be continually plagued with sexual thoughts and desires; for by the grace that was given to them they would be able to pursue Christ and holy things; Christ and His kingdom and glory; Christ and good works in relation to the church and others. This is a very great gift. But not all have this kind of gift or self-control to overcome all the desires; that their sexuality would be fulfilled. Look further down at 1 Corinthians 7: 25. “Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy.” “I suppose that this is good because of the present distress—that it is good for a man to remain as he is: Are you bound to a wife?” “Do not seek to be loosed.” “Are you loosed from a wife?” “Do not seek a wife.” “But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.” “Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.” Here Paul is concerned for believers marrying during that time of distress. The distress that he is referring to is the distress that came to that whole region during the years leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, and also the severe times of persecution that believers passed through while the gospel of Christ and the Kingdom of Christ were first beginning to be preached and churches formed. There was much opposition. Persecution is often more difficult to bear if you are married because you have the welfare of your spouse and children to think about besides your own. Paul explains this in verse 32. “But I want you to be without care.” “He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please his wife.” “There is a difference between a wife and a virgin.” “The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit.” “But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband.” “And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.” But notice how Paul talks not in terms of fear, here, but in terms of pleasing the Lord and

pleasing your husband or wife. It takes time and effort and thought to please both. And if you are married your interests are divided between your greatest and highest love and loyalty, which is to Christ; and your other great love, that person who is the love of your life; that you might please them. In other words, in marriage you must please both, and both by sorting out your priorities of time and strength. In both you have a great and abiding interest for as long as you live. As good as that is; as right as that is for a married person, the single person has the decided advantage in serving the Lord.

And Paul is saying that from his perspective, this is decidedly preferable; to be single. Which also means that there must be pleasures in spiritual things which go beyond the physical and the sexual, even in this life; and which satisfy even more than the physical and sexual. If this is not true, then why will there not be marriage in heaven? For there will not be marriage in heaven. In that day, Jesus says, there will not be marrying and giving in marriage, but we shall be like the angels in the sense of our sexuality. There will not be any need for it. There will be no need to make babies, and there will be no need to express ourselves in that holy way in marriage, because the type has become the fulfillment spiritually in seeing Christ. Because of that, there will be something actually far more exciting and enjoyable. We will have bodies; glorified bodies, but the spiritual pleasures in relation to what we are doing with those glorified bodies will far outstrip the physical pleasures which we convey to our husband or wife sexually, now in this life. Something much, much greater and satisfying is coming. It is a world without any mixture of sin with the righteousness. All will perfectly holy, and as it says in Psalm 16, verse 13 - "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." We are Christ's Bride, as the Church of Jesus Christ, and we will know such great and holy spiritual intimacy with Him that we will be eagerly caught up with Him for all of eternity. It will not be boring in the World to come. It will be soul-ravishing in the most holy sense of that term.

If this is the case, my brethren, how important it is to pursue the spiritual things of Christ while here upon the earth. Whether we are married or unmarried, to bring every thought, every desire to Jesus and ask, "Is this right?" "Is what I am doing with my spirit and my body in terms of my sexuality, right in the sight of God and Christ who are always with me? You have nothing to be ashamed of if you realize that all that you are thinking about sexually is in relation to your wife. You have nothing to be ashamed about in terms of your sexual hopes and desires if they do not involve your imagining yourself with many people and many partners. You instead, are saving all those thoughts and desires to express to the one whom you will give yourself in marriage to. And as a single person, who is thinking about the person that you will eventually marry, there is no need to touch that person physically and sexually before marriage. Just because you are thinking about the possibility of marriage does not give you the license, either in dating or in courtship to touch them. You needn't act like a married couple physically, before marriage, while you are courting or dating. You might change your mind as your get to know that person as

time goes on and you learn more about what they are like. You both should know, and greatly desire that it should be so; that it is your companionship which is the most important thing in marriage. That is where true holy love will be developed. It is a love that will always be self controlled in a gracious sense. This is what should and will be cultivated during that time before marriage if you are wise. There is no guilt in spending time cultivating the interests of the mind and heart in relation to Jesus. If you have the Lord Jesus there is enough grace to satisfy the soul and control the body until you marry and to lovingly give yourself at the right time in marriage. And how useful you can be to Him because you chose this for Christ's sake, whether you marry or whether you are single all your life.