

# Resting

August 17, 2013 at 6:43pm

Songs of the Spirit | Psalms for the Seasons of Life

*Resting (#6)*

Psalm 62.1-8; 91.1-2, 9-12; 121; 131; 23.1-2

8.18.13

**Psalm 62** *(For the choir director; according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.) My soul waits in silence for God only; From Him is my salvation. <sup>2</sup>He only is my rock and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken. <sup>3</sup>How long will you assail a man, That you may murder him, all of you, Like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence? <sup>4</sup>They have counseled only to thrust him down from his high position; They delight in falsehood; They bless with their mouth, But inwardly they curse. Selah. <sup>5</sup>My soul, wait in silence for God only, For my hope is from Him. <sup>6</sup>He only is my rock and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be shaken. <sup>7</sup>On God my salvation and my glory rest; The rock of my strength, my refuge is in God. <sup>8</sup>Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.*

**Psalm 91** *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. <sup>2</sup>I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" ...*

<sup>9</sup>For you have made the LORD, my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place. <sup>10</sup>No evil will befall you, Nor will any plague come near your tent. <sup>11</sup>For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways. <sup>12</sup>They will bear you up in their hands, That you do not strike your foot against a stone.

**Psalm 121** *(A Song of Ascents.) I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? <sup>2</sup>My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. <sup>3</sup>He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. <sup>4</sup>Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. <sup>5</sup>The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand. <sup>6</sup>The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night. <sup>7</sup>The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. <sup>8</sup>The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever.*

**Psalm 131** *(A Song of Ascents, of David.) O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; Nor do I involve myself in great matters, Or in things too difficult for me. <sup>2</sup>Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child rests against his mother, My soul is like a weaned child within me. <sup>3</sup>O Israel, hope in the LORD From this time forth and forever.*

**Psalm 23** *(A Psalm of David.) The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. <sup>2</sup>He makes me lie down in green pastures...*

This is our sixth week looking at The Book of Psalms. It's the longest book in the Bible, a collection of songs and prayers gathered over centuries. Someone has said it's the Old Testament put to poetry – the poetic summary of the OT. AND we've seen it as an inspired record of the spiritual

pilgrimage of God's people... And for all our individual uniqueness there are certain moments or seasons or rhythms or landmarks we all encounter in our walk with the God of Grace. The Psalms give voice to these universal seasons.

So, we looked at the initial season of longing – longing for the purpose of life and thirsty for something this world just can't provide. We looked at waiting and trembling and despairing (last week) and today, the rhythm or season of RESTING.

We live in a restless age and a time that does NOT encourage a prolonged concentration on anything. We live in the age of options and as Os Guinness wrote about the "smorgasbord factor" (see The Gravedigger File), as the options increase, commitment to any one option will simultaneously decrease. And so, blessed with innumerable options/choices in almost every area of life, we are apparently freer and yet less settled, less rooted, less content than ever before. How many television channels do we really need?

Is it possible (as we said a few weeks ago) that like a Great Blue Whale who doesn't want to be limited to the water and wants to be liberated to live where it wants, where it chooses...in the desert? ARE we also at risk of missing deep life/fulfillment because we won't give up our options?... Are we enslaved to freedom...and thus NOT free at all?

Let's look at this issue of settling down, of resting: 1) The Quest for Rest 2) Rest Revealed and 3) The Practice of Resting.

You think of how we are all on a quest for rest... we normally don't engrave on tombstones, "Party ON!" but rather "Rest In Peace" as if that were the thing we all want most. I think of all the movies and books and great plotlines about the longing for rest, a longing to be where I belong and where I can call home... The old tv show Cheers, "Where everybody knows your name..."

The 1990's movie Far and Away about the Irish kid who wants to come to America for ONE huge reason and that is...to have a piece of land he can call his own...a place called home...a place to belong and rest. And another great movie called Rabbit Proof Fence about Aboriginal children in Australia taken from home and relocated only to risk everything and make a 1500 mile trek...a quest to get home...where they belong and where they can be at rest. Grapes of Wrath(Steinbeck) Oliver Twist (Dickens) – the desire for rest...and belonging...and home.

And it's a huge theme in the Bible... the OT is largely about a pilgrim people looking for home...for where they belong and where they can rest, "every person under his own vine and his own fig tree" (Mic 4.4; 1 Kings 4.25; Zec 3.10; Ezek34.28-29 et al)

And after last week's sermon on despair, we might speculate a bit about what happens when we don't get the rest that we need – rest disorders. The idea is that a person comes through some spiritual crisis, some deep distress... and what's next? What might prevent the rhythm change... or what could obstruct the new season of rest from dawning?

Well, a person could just stay in despair. She doesn't meet the God of my salvation and doesn't walk with God through the despair. She may adopt it as her persona... And there's no rest in that.

Or the person may "manage the crisis" and not really deal with the deeper things in his character that this season of despair and crisis brought to the surface. You can imagine Job if he had a tube of Neosporin™... and someone came along and said, "Ah...no use in thinking and overthinking this thing! Let's just get these wounds bandaged up here and move on with life!" And most of the time a good crisis gets wasted when we don't use the despair and deep distress to invite God to not only fix the cause of the crisis (the sickness or unemployment or breakup) – we waste the crisis when we don't invite God INTO our lives through the cracks that this crisis exposed in us.

And that too...managing the crisis...simply fixing the problem and not wrestling through it with God (like Job did) that often leads to renewed self-confidence and NOT a deeper experience of God and a new sense of rest.

Another rest disorder is to find temporary and limited rest in something other than God. Francis Schaeffer talked about "false integration points". A person comes to rely on wine or shopping or pornography or gambling or food... all the things that promise relief at a spiritual level but can't really deliver. These are Jeremiah's "broken cisterns and wells that can't hold water" that we read about last week. These too are NOT true and lasting sources of rest...hobbies and vices and diversions and detours can't contain us...and they eventually become addictive and they enslave us – we have to support the habit because the habit never supports us!

Another rest disorder is perpetual restlessness... just moving on from one person, place or thing to another. It's another example of the smorgasbord factor – we have despair and a deep sense of loss or guilt or hurt or anxiety or dread... but we flit from one flower to another rather than really face this gaping hole. Busy-ness becomes a way to stay numb and becomes a substitute for rest.

In some sense... the "no rest" thing is a misnomer because everyone seeks rest in something. It's never that we just chuck it...we all seek out some point of integration (Schaeffer) something to give us a sense of what God made us for, a sense of deep belonging and fulfillment and significance. People may give up some destructive habit but they always put something else in its place. We are irrevocably spiritual and religious – everyone is seeking rest in something.

And then we come to these Psalms (soooo different from last week's Psalms 22-44-88) and so full of fullness and promise. The pictures of resting found in these Psalms have to do with a deep sense of QUIETUDE and COMPOSURE that comes after a period of struggle and crisis and despairing in one's own resources. This season of resting is the reorientation we spoke of a few weeks back. The crisis is NOT simply managed but is actually used by God's Spirit to make some change for good in my character. Hebrews 12 says "it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace". That's what's pictured in these Psalms.

The 131<sup>st</sup> pictures a kind of wrestling match between a nursing mother and her child who is now getting too old to nurse. And because the child is very much accustomed to this source of comfort and she can't figure out why it's being withheld...there's confusion and struggle and despair...But eventually the mother wins out and the child rests...against her mother. The child is vanquished in love. And David writes, "I have composed and silenced my soul in this way...I have rest."

As I started to say at the start...there's an unfolding theology of rest in the Old Testament, rest revealed. And this people, promised a land, a home and safety... as they think about God and picture the rest that He is to them...they use these great pictures of resting places. The images are of towers and walls and fortresses and refuge. They use the idea of dwelling and being on solid ground not vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy. "He who dwells in the shadow of the Most High will abide/remain in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust'"

God will provide salvation and hope and strength and help and safekeeping and protection. All these words are used in these amazing poems. But more than only providing these sources of rest and refuge, GOD WILL BE THEREFUGE... "My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust" God Himself will BE the dwelling place and the place to stand and to belong and to rest. We rest ON Him as a child rests on her mother – He is our rock and dwelling place.

God is not only promising a land and a home to His people in the OT but HE IS THAT HOME, that dwelling place. And so...it is truly amazing when Jesus Christ comes and says to His disciples, "Dwell in ME...I am the True Vine and you are the branches; he who REMAINS in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." (Joh 15.5)

He will dwell with us – the very Heart of God will become one with us– become Human – and will Tabernacle among us, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us"...And the Bible ends with the completion of this idea, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them" (Rev 21.3)

God will dwell among us and His people will dwell in Him. Jesus Christ will say, I am the home you QUEST for "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Mat 11.28)

And all that these song-writers wrote about is seen so much more clearly than they dreamed when Jesus Christ shows up and invites us to dwell in Him. The seeds of the Psalms come to full flower in the writings of the NT. Over and over you read of our being "in Christ". He is our dwelling.

He stands in our place and becomes our representative. When He lived this beautiful and holy life – I was IN Him! And His life is credited to me. When He suffered the penalty of justice that sin deserved; when He was punished I WAS IN HIM and it was, in the sight of God, as if I were punished. I will never be punished because HE HAS ALREADY PAID THE PRICE and I was in Him. He is the dwelling place, he is the home I long for, the safety, the refuge, the hiding place, the vine and fig tree

under which I sit in shalom...in peace and security and salvation. I am home and I am at rest...if I am IN Christ.

Psalm 62.7, "On God my salvation and my glory rest" and as I see that fulfilled in Jesus Christ I can rest knowing that He is my glory, my new reputation before God is NOT what I have done or failed to do – I am depending, am resting on the reputation of Jesus Christ. He has given an answer for MY life. I hide behind Him!

See, resting is basically synonymous with believing. It means to give up confidence in one foundation and be planted or established on another. That's what our parents in the Lord meant when they said to believe in Jesus Christ means to "rest and receive". It's not that we do something for God and he repays us. It's that we STOP doing! We rest, we come to dwell, to abide, to settle into Jesus Christ.

When we rest on and receive Jesus Christ, when we BELIEVE we are saying, "I am NOT a perfect person... in fact I'm more sinful than I even know...but HE IS MY DEFENSE...my refuge...my reputation...my hope and MY HOME.

Now to practice this begins and continues as we get NOT only an understanding of it but also a sense of it on our heart. God's Spirit makes it alive to us. It takes on a vividness and a sweetness...and you'll find yourself relieved and with this sense of joy and composure and awe.

And as we go on...as we return regularly to this place of rest and belief, we want a deeper and deeper sense of it. It often comes in the midst of struggle and despair and opposition – like in that first section, Ps. 62.3-4 –an encounter with real hostility...and he comes out with a deeper TASTE of peace and rest.

It also comes as we pray. Notice there's prayer of deep silence here, "My soul be silent before the LORD alone...wait in silence for God only" AND there's prayer of effusive confession, v.8 "Pour out your heart before Him..." Prayer is one key way that rest becomes experience.

And this ongoing sense...this new vividness is often experienced with others. We dwell in a Body as organs and parts of the Body deeply connected to one another. That's why we want everyone in a home group to connect with other parts of the Body where, under Jesus Christ we DWELL together.

This dwelling in Christ and together is the environment where we are meant to thrive as human beings and as believers. And as we do we face opposition...from the world...from our own selfishness and from spiritual forces of evil. The 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm was quoted by the devil to Jesus Christ in the Temptation. He wants to misquote the passage to keep us like him...restless and prowling about (1 Peter 5.8) rather than settled and at home in Jesus Christ who defeated evil for us.

It's a restless age with corporate Attention Deficit Disorder and we need to sit...silence ourselves and let these outrageously rich promises soak into us.

We need, as Hebrews 4 says in that paradoxical way, to be “diligent to enter that rest” (Heb 4.11). We need to use our week wisely and the Sabbath to deliberately rest in Jesus Christ, to sit and soak in these promises. As we break our normal routines and use this day to restock the shelves of our souls, these promises, IN JESUS CHRIST do actually fuel us and work this kind of composure and quiet confidence that God wants us to have.

We start getting confident – even when we face the tough stuff of life– when God lays us down...we get this sense that whatever God brings my way will not really hurt the real me. I am here in a difficult spot but somehow I sense the Shepherd is near and that this hospital room is actually a green pasture.

We sometimes find ourselves in great turmoil and opposition but with a Center... a dwelling place of quiet and of rock-solid resolve saying, “I will not be shaken...I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" (Psa 91.2)

“Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will **dwell** in the house of the LORD forever.”