



Get Some Rest

Mother's Day

Psalm 127

David Sunday

May 8, 2016

Sometimes three of the most freeing words in the English language are when someone says to you, “Get some rest,” and they actually make it possible for you to do that—to get some rest. And dads, sons, and daughters, if you haven’t gotten anything yet for your mom or your wife for Mother’s Day, and you’re wondering what you could do for her, this is one thing you could do. You could help her get some rest this Mother’s Day. Because I don’t know of any job that’s more intensive—more 24-7, all hands on deck—and at times more exhausting than the job of a mother. We are so thankful for them.

Psalm 127 is written not just for moms, it’s written for all of us. It speaks to all the circumstances of our lives: our mortgages, our education, our security, our families. It addresses all the things we do from day to day—those things that can consume all our energy as we’re awake and even at times those things that can keep us awake at night. And at the heart of this Psalm is an exhortation to get some rest.

This Psalm was written by Solomon and is a song of ascent that the Israelites sang as they journeyed up the hill to Mount Zion in Jerusalem to worship the Lord during their pilgrimages there. As they made their way to Jerusalem, they would look back to their lives at home and think about what they were building there, their families and jobs. Reciting this Psalm, they would rejoice that the Lord is in control of and cares for every area of our lives. The Lord is sovereign over all of these things. This Psalm is written to help us approach our work in this world with a restful heart. It’s written to help us be restful, calm and happy in the political climate of our nation right now, because we know Someone Who is true.

It’s written to us as we’re facing burdens for our families and pressures in our vocations. It’s telling us that in the midst of all these things, it’s possible to have a truly restful heart. How do we do that?

Let’s look at three directions that I want us to draw out of this Psalm today.

Number one: realize what your restlessness reveals. Notice in verses one and two there's a word repeated three times. Do you see it there? It's the word, "vain." *"Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil."*

This word means, "empty, useless, poured down the drain, lost forever, worth nothing." What you're doing is not vain because you're not working hard enough; it's not because what you're working on is necessarily bad, like building a house, watching over a city, raising a family. These are all good endeavors. Our efforts are not even in vain because there's nothing in the end to show for your work. There is bread on the table, we see in verse two. But it's the bread of anxious toil. God says through Solomon, "This is in vain."

God is telling us through this Psalm that it's possible to work very hard on something that's very good, but get to the end of it all and wonder, "Was it worth it? Where did this lead me?" The Psalmist is telling us that we could succeed in a worldly sense, but in the end still fail.

The question that Solomon wants us to be asking right now is this: "Where is the Lord in all my endeavors? Is He at the center of it all? Am I depending on Him? What is it that I'm working so hard for? What's causing me to burn the candle at both ends, so to speak? Why am I so restless? Could it be that I've stopped depending on the Lord?"

Sometimes we can't sleep because of physical burdens. Oh, how we should sympathize with those who, because of a backache or migraines or some disease, are unable to get the rest they need at night. How long can we go tossing and turning in pain on our beds? How wearying that becomes. Or sometimes we sleep lightly because we're so excited about what's coming up the next day. Like, kids waiting for Christmas. Have you ever had one of those nights when you just can't wait? Maybe you're going on vacation and you can't wait to go, so you can hardly sleep the night before because you're so excited about it!

Sometimes we have a hard time sleeping because we're carrying a spiritual burden and our bed is drenched with tears. The Psalmist knew about that. Jesus sometimes

spent all night in prayer. The Apostle Paul, with his litany of trials that he endured for the advancement of the gospel in Corinthians, wrote about sleepless nights.

Sometimes we stay up all night because we're ministering to someone in need who's hurting. So in this world, there will be a sleepless night here and there. That's part of life. But if you are regularly burning the candle at both ends, restless about succeeding in your job, trying to make sure you're doing everything just right for your family, with responsibilities that seem so important and so weighty to you they are robbing you of sleep, God has something He wants to ask you through Solomon today. Do you think that everything depends on you? What are you laboring for, really? Is it going to be worth it in the end? Because you see, there are only two options here. Either what we're doing is of the Lord—with God in the midst of it—or it's pointless. There's no middle way. Either the Lord is in it, or it's pointless. And Solomon is calling us to recognize that sometimes our restlessness reveals our lack of dependence on the Lord.

Just think about it in this whole area of raising our children. There's an old Jewish proverb that says, "God could not be everywhere so He created mothers." Now, that might show up on a Hallmark card somewhere, but really isn't that awful to think? Isn't that blasphemous?

We sing, "It's Your breath in our lungs." We find ourselves praying, "We're dependent on You, God, for the very breath we breathe! You know everything. You see everything. You support everything. You're the One Who gives us strength. We are utterly dependent on You for everything we do." Oh God, deliver us from this arrogant pride of thinking, "By my good parenting I can take credit for the encouraging things I see in my kids! God, deliver me from this miserable unbelief that when I've blown it in my parenting, somehow I've ruined my kids' lives forever, and there's nothing more You can do with them, God, because I've blown it."

Neither one of these thought processes is true. We are absolutely dependent on a God of goodness and grace for everything we do: for our jobs, our security, the raising of our families. God wants us to know and to believe that everything our children need most can only come from Him! He's the One Who gives them new hearts. He's the One Who opens their eyes to the Word. He's the One Who leads and guides them in the way they should go. He's the One Who supports, provides, protects and nurtures them in His

goodness and grace. God wants us to trust Him for that. He wants to give us rest. He's reminding us today, "It doesn't all depend on you. In fact, nothing depends on you."

Is there anything in your life right now for which you're thinking, "I've got this. I can handle this." Is there any area of your life where you're living like a practical atheist, thinking, "I don't really need God?" God says, "Unless I build, you're laboring in vain. Unless I protect, the smartest nuclear arsenal system in the world could not keep you safe. Unless I raise your kids, you could stay up all night and all day working hard for your family, but it's all in vain. You need Me and you can trust Me. I'm active in your life. I care for you. I'm working for your family and for your good. Trust Me." That's what the Lord is saying.

What other alternative do you have? Vanity. Vanity. Emptiness. I like how an old commentator put it, really straight: "Those do sadly sin against God who ascribe their success or prosperity to human wit, power or perseverance." If you think you did it, that's a sin. Because, he says, "Man is a worm. Man is a fool. Man is a sinner." And Ray Ortlund (who had that quote on his blog) posted a picture of the Three Stooges right above it. As I read that I thought, "That's perfect. Isn't that the truth!" How we need the Lord! Realize that when you're restless it may reveal your heart is not depending on the Lord. You're living as if everything rests on you.

Secondly, remember that God's greatest blessings come through no effort of your own. Where did our salvation come from? "*He saves us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy*" (Titus 3:5). "*Even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast*" (Ephesians 2:5, 8).

The greatest gifts in our lives come through no effort of our own. Solomon is reminding us of that in the end of verse two: "*For he gives to his beloved sleep.*" We have to spend one third of our lives unconscious, blind, powerless, sleeping, or we're no good for the other two thirds of our time. Why did God make us that way? To remind us we are "frail children of dust and feeble as frail." But in Him we can trust and we don't find Him to fail. He makes us sleep at night to teach us that He can do more for us while

we're sleeping than we can do through all our anxious toil all day long! That's the God we serve.

I like the alternate translation to the end of verse two: "God gives to His beloved even while he is sleeping." He gives to us in our sleep. He's still giving; He's still caring for us. I ran across a precious insight in reading about this from Duane Litfin. The word beloved in verse two (He gives to His beloved sleep) is the word, *yadeed*, in Hebrew. Remember who Solomon's parents were? David and Bathsheba. Remember how his birth came about? One of the saddest stories in the Bible of the sin of a godly man. Yet, here's this woman now, married to King David, and a new son is born—Solomon.

The Lord comes to his parents through the prophet Nathan and says, "Because the Lord loves him, I want you to name him, Jedidiah (this is his nickname). Jedidiah means "the *yadeed* of YAWEH, the beloved of the Lord." So here's Solomon later in his life reflecting on the Lord's care for him. He's saying, "My life, my success, does not depend on my strength or my hard work. I am the beloved of YAWEH, and my success depends on Him Who gives to me even while I'm sleeping."

What do we think of first when we think of Solomon? What is the main attribute of his life that he's known for? Wisdom. How did he get that wisdom? Well, the Lord appeared to him in the night, in a dream while he was sleeping, and said to Solomon, "Ask whatever you will." And what he asked for was pleasing to the Lord because he asked for a wise and discerning heart so that he may know how to judge and govern God's people, distinguishing between right and wrong.

The Lord said to Solomon, "Because you asked for discernment in administering justice, not for a long life or wealth or the death of your enemies, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart so that there will never be anyone like you." Then the Bible says this: "Solomon awoke and realized it had been a dream." God gave to His beloved even in his sleep. He gave him what he had asked for, what he needed.

Dear ones, if you are in Christ, you are accepted in the beloved, and you are beloved of the Lord, dearly loved, His precious possession. Remember your Savior Jesus sleeping in a boat during a storm as the wind and the waves rocked that boat? He's calmly trusting in His Heavenly Father. When He awakes and sees the anxiety on all His

disciples' faces, He speaks to that storm and the waves are stilled and the wind is hushed. They said, "Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey Him?" (Luke 8:22-25).

In Christ, you are beloved of God. He is providing for you, protecting you, pouring out grace and mercy on you all the time, even when you are sound asleep at night. Jesus reminds us even when we're sleeping, God's Kingdom is growing. Just like the farmer plants the seeds, goes to bed at night, wakes up in the morning and sees the crop growing, "This is what it's like for God's Kingdom!" Jesus said. God's Kingdom is growing while we are sleeping. So when we're investing in the Kingdom of God, when we are working in such a way that we're depending on the Lord, and we're looking to Him to be at the center of all we do, God wants us to know our labor is not in vain in Him. So we can take everything we're involved in right now, our work, our family, our investments, our securities, everything we're anxious about, and we can say, "I am your beloved, God, and I trust You to meet every need I have. I rest in You."

I love how Victor Hugo says it. "When you have accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake." He never sleeps nor slumbers. He's working for you as you're resting in Him.

Thirdly, raise your dependents with an attitude of dependence on the Lord. Now let's apply this to our parenting because that's what our Psalm does. There's a restless way to parent, and there's a restful way to parent. How do we do this most important job in the world in a restful way? This is our last directive and is found in verses three through five.

Verse three begins with the word, "Behold." Whenever you see this in the Bible God is saying, "Wake up, be alert, pay attention here, I've got something very important I want to tell you." Behold. God wants you to know that here is a work that will never be in vain if you're depending on Him. The raising of children is Kingdom work. God cares deeply about this work. If you are a father, mother, husband, wife—if you have children—God wants you to know this is your first tear of responsibility. This is the work that matters most in your life.

I take pastoring seriously and I'm glad I don't have to do it alone. There are many wonderful people here who serve the Lord together and partnership in the gospel. As important as the work of pastoring is, as important as the work we do in the church is, I

want you to know that I believe there is a more important priority for me than pastoring and that's Kate, Rebekah, Nate and Ruth. God's Word says, "If an elder doesn't know how to take care of his own household, how will he take care of the family of God?" (1 Timothy 3:4-5). This priority begins in our homes. If we pay careful attention what God is telling us here about our children, parenting can be a peaceful, joyous task. I know it has its pitfalls and perils. I know there's no one who can keep you awake at night like a child can because we care so much for them. But God doesn't want this wonderful, wonderful labor to be fraught with anxiety. He wants us to rest in Him. He tells us two things that we can really lay hold of here.

Number one: your children belong to the Lord. They are gifts of God to you. "*Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward*" (127:3). Did your children come about because of all your hard work? No. They are gifts of love that came from an act of love. We have a part to play in the conception of children, but the creation of a child in the womb of a mother is a wonderful, miraculous, masterpiece of God. No matter how that child came about, this is God's miraculous work in the womb. He is knitting together His handiwork (Psalm 139:13) this child is a gift from Him.

We need to hear this truth in a world that regards children as disposable, where people can say, "I can't wait until they're older so I can get my life back." If you're ever tempted to think this way, are you willing to let God's Word reshape your thinking? Moms and dads, your children—whether they're received through natural birth or through adoption—are a precious gift from God. They are created in His image. They are entrusted to you as a stewardship from Him, and He cares about them and watches over them and protects them more intimately and better than you do. They're from the Lord.

Do you treat your children as precious gifts from a wealthy Benefactor? Do we, church, treat the children of our church as precious gifts from a wealthy Benefactor? Because that's what they are. No one picks up the phone and says, "Oh no. Not another inheritance! I don't want that." That's who they are! A heritage from the Lord—a reward from Him.

The second thing God wants us to see here is that our children are resources to be cultivated for Him. They are gifts from Him and resources to be cultivated for Him. We see this in verses four and five:

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children of one's youth.
Blessed is the man
who fills his quiver with them!
He shall not be put to shame
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Arrows—that's what your kids are. Arrows need to be sharpened and cut and shaped which takes some work. Derek Kidner says, "It's typical of God's gifts that first they are liabilities, or at least responsibilities, before they become obvious assets. The greater the promise, the more likely these sons will be a handful before they are a quiver full." Take heart moms who feel like you've got a handful right now. They are a resource to be sharpened for God!

What do arrows do? They need to be aimed and they need to be released. They need to be sent forth. Our children aren't there for us to control and keep. They're there for us to nourish and send out prepared. Sometimes we struggle with that sending part, the releasing part. It's not easy. Jim Elliot, who was sent to Ecuador to be a missionary and who died before he turned 30 years old at the hands of those he went to serve, felt some pressure from his parents to stay in the US. He wrote these words to them:

Grieve not then if your sons seem to desert you. Remember how the Psalmist described children? He said they're a heritage from the Lord and that every man should be happy who has his quiver full of them. And what is a quiver full of but arrows? And what are arrows for but to shoot? So with the strong arms of prayer, draw the bowstring back and let the arrows fly—all of them, straight at the enemies' hosts.

Raise your kids to do strategic battle against the forces of evil. Raise them with a Kingdom purpose. Remember, they're God's children and God is calling you to get them ready for service in His Kingdom, whatever that might look like. Moms, God wants you to know your work is not a waste. The world might say, "You should be ashamed of yourself, staying at home, taking care of these kids when you could be out there in the

world making money and doing so many good things.” Proverbs 31 tells us there are many, many good things that a mother can do in the world, but nothing matters as much as what she does in her home. And nothing honors her husband more than the precious investment she makes in the raising of their children for the glory of God.

Your labor is not something to be ashamed of, Mom. You make your husband proud. And this Psalm ends on that note: *“He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.”* Because of his children. Because of how God has reared them and what God is doing through them. Knowing these truths, knowing that it all comes from God and we’re dependent on Him for everything, knowing this wisdom isn’t enough, is it? Blessed are we if we do these things; if we apply these things.

Solomon knew of this wisdom, but sadly, he didn’t always apply it and his life was filled with the ruin from failing to apply it. Nonetheless, this Psalm is to us an abiding wisdom that is clothed with power if we look through Solomon to the One Who is greater than Solomon—our Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

What did Jesus say? “I am the vine; you are the branches. Abide in Me. Depend on Me. Rely on Me. For apart from Me you can do nothing. But in Me,” Jesus said, “you will bear much fruit. Your labor is not in vain” (John 15; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

That’s the good news for us today. Hold on to that, moms. Abide in Jesus. He is your wisdom from God. He is your righteousness. He is your sanctification. He is your redemption. Trust in Him. Boast in Him. He will make you fruitful in the good work you do.

Let’s pray together.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for our moms today. We thank you for our children, our families. What a great earthly treasure You’ve given us! Thank you, Lord! We pray for moms in Christ today that they would know there is no condemnation for them in Jesus Christ. We pray for them, Lord, that they would know they’re not condemned by their messy home; they’re not condemned because they don’t feel a desire to homeschool right now; they’re not condemned because of their sins; they’re not condemned (even if they feel like it) when they read about other parents who seem to be doing so well on Facebook; they’re not condemned because they’re frustrated having to

clean up another mess or because they took their kids to McDonalds instead of feeding them from Whole Foods.

We pray, Lord, that moms would know they're not condemned because their child threw a tantrum out in public and angry people are glaring at them. Help moms to know, Lord, that though they may feel tired, though they may feel like they need a break, even from their kids, though they may feel weary and worn, they are accepted in the Beloved, that you give them rest, You renew their strength, and You give to them even while they're sleeping.

Lord, we bring our children to You. Hear the cry of our hearts, Lord. More than anything, we want You to be in the middle of our homes. We want You to be building our families. More than anything we want them to love You, God, to know You, to serve You, to be used for You in this world. We want them to be like sharpened arrows that we send out, so that in future generations Your name will be praised through them. God, for those kids who seem far from you right now, bring them home. Bring them home to Your heart. Grant the desires of our hearts, Lord, that they may be one with Christ. And Lord, when it's all said and done, we say to you, "All that You've accomplished You have done for us." It's Your work. "Any fruit we harvest is a gift from Your hands." So You, Lord, are the One Who should receive all the glory for the great things You've done. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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