

Rest for the Stressed

Today, we are not going to consider a “typical” Mother’s Day sermon... By that – I mean we are not going to focus on the character or responsibilities of the mother and the demanding role that she plays in the family... Too many moms leave church on Mother’s Day feeling even more stress and guilt than she did before she came... She already knows she could and should be and do better – and then she has Proverbs 31 thrown in her face – or some “super woman” example from the Scripture...

Rather – the desire today is to address what every mom – in fact what every dad, child, grandparent and single person experiences most every day – and that is *stress*... And the good news is – there is **Rest for the Stressed**...

Stress is defined as “physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension”. Some stress is necessary and even good... For example; a physical workout involves putting a strain on our muscles in order to make them stronger... But when we talk about “*stress*”, we are usually talking about excessive or negative mental or emotional strain or tension...

While “*stress*” is not specifically mentioned in the Bible – the Scriptures do speak to things such as *anxiety, worry, and trouble* – things we often associate with stress – and then the Bible gives us clear answers on how we should deal with those things.

God’s children have several places in God’s Word to which we can turn in a time of overwhelming stress:

The first “life-passage” I ever adopted is Proverbs 3:5-6...

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NASB)

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart

And do not lean on your own understanding.

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him,

And He will make your paths straight.

Leaning on “our own understanding” often means adopting the world’s ways of dealing with stress – things like alcohol or other drugs – or mindless entertainment... Instead, we are to trust God’s Word as our ultimate guide to a stress-reduced life...

And then there is –

Philippians 4:6-7 (NASB) “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The Lord tells us not to be anxious about anything, but rather to turn everything over to Him – and how do we do that?... It is called prayer... Surrendering our burdens and concerns to the Only Holy and Righteous God.

When we seek Him daily – that in itself will mitigate if not eliminate the stress in our lives.

Psalms 55:22 (NASB) “Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.”

“Your burden” in this passage is literally “what He has given you” – in other words it is whatever the One and Only Sovereign God has sent, or allowed to come into your life that has become a source of stress... What are we to do with that? “Cast” it “upon” Him!

As we do that – what is His promise?... “He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.”... What does that mean – that He will not allow the righteous – that is His children – “to be shaken”?... Some have suggested that a better word than “shaken” is that He will prevent His children from “tottering” – from teetering, wavering or staggering...

This seems to be very close to what the Holy Spirit led Peter to write in –

1 Peter 5:6-7 (NASB)

⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷ casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

Jesus offers peace to those who follow Him:

John 14:27 (NASB) “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

There is a passage that I believe we should give careful attention to if we are to ever experience rest in times of stress:

Look with me to –

Isaiah 40:27-31 (NASB)

²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel,

“My way is hidden from the LORD,

And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God”?

²⁸Do you not know? Have you not heard?

The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth

Does not become weary or tired.

His understanding is inscrutable.

²⁹He gives strength to the weary,

And to *him who* lacks might He increases power.

³⁰Though youths grow weary and tired,

And vigorous young men stumble badly,

³¹Yet those who wait for (*hope in*) the LORD

Will gain new strength;

They will mount up *with* wings like eagles,

They will run and not get tired,

They will walk and not become weary.

As we approach this passage – consider first that:

1. God is Aware

That is – God is fully aware of the stress you experience...

To a people tempted to be impatient, forgetful and of little faith Isaiah said:

²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD, And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God”?

Why do you think that way? Why make such a reckless charge?...

²⁸Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.

God is aware! He is aware of that which comes against His people from day to day!...

In low and dark times in our lives we can get to the point of thinking that God is not aware – or that He does not care!... We can get trapped in the thought that “God has forgotten me ... He has passed me by!”

But whatever our emotions and reactions may tell us, GOD IS THERE, AND AWARE.

(Not in handout) Psalm 103:14 (NASB) “For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust.”

Psalm 1:6a (NASB) “the LORD knows the way of the righteous...”

The Jews to whom Isaiah was writing were going through the darkest moments of their captivity in Babylon ... When we go through our times of turmoil, pain and frustration, we need to be reminded – and we need to be convicted of the truth that God is aware!... Our way is not hidden from the Lord!

God is aware.

2. God is Able

God is able to sustain you in the test of your stress...

²⁸“... Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.

²⁹ He gives strength to the weary,
And to *him who* lacks might He increases power.

Given that we are a people marred by sin, living in a fallen world, we can develop the attitude that God Himself suffers the same shortcomings we do... By that I mean, because we can be weak and ineffective – we project upon God that He can be weak and ineffective... Because we can get tired and want to quit – we act as though God gets tired and wants to quit... We couldn't be further from the truth!

The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired

God and His Attributes are far beyond our comprehension. It is simply unthinkable to refer to Him as weary or tired – especially in regard to promises that He makes!

We also need to acknowledge that God is not lacking understanding on His part – ever... His understanding is inscrutable – or immeasurable...

Not only does God NOT lack strength! He is the Supplier of it!

“²⁹ He gives strength to the weary, and to *him who* lacks might He increases power. ³⁰ Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly”

Age does not dictate fatigue... Even the young can become exhausted and weak – and some may even “stumble badly”

Adrian Rogers said that stress is – “that gap between the demands placed upon us and our ability to meet those demands... between the “*ought to's*” and the “*can'ts*”... between the list of opportunities and our inabilities... (I may be getting ahead of myself, but Dr. Rogers went on to say)... The gap of stress will be removed as He takes our nothingness and infuses it with His Almightyness when we learn to wait upon Him.”

Notice! The Creator ... does not become weary or tired!

God is aware of our stress

God is able for our rest

3. God is Available

That is – He is available, to renew our strength – to bring rest to our souls...

³¹ Yet those who wait for the LORD
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up *with* wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.

In faraway Babylon, there came the news of Cyrus' decree that the Jews were free to return home... When this news was heard by those who had been waiting for the LORD – certainly, their hearts soared to new heights – heights of joy!

Can you imagine the furry of rushing to prepare for the journey – the journey *home*?!

But, before arriving home, there would be a long trip from Babylon to Jerusalem... *Yet*, with trust in their God, they “would mount up with wings like eagles... run and not be tired... walk, and not become weary.”

From the moment of our conversion to Christ – to our eventual arrival at HOME – we are on a long journey that is filled with trials and tests that can overwhelm any of us – if we are relying on our own wisdom and strength...

Some of you have been through tests that you would not wish upon anyone – and you know – deep in your heart that God uses those times of testing to do a deep work in you for your good!

Romans 8:28 (NASB) “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.”

James 1:2-3 (NASB)

² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect (or - *mature*) and complete, lacking in nothing.

(Not in handout) 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB)

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Why do you know that it is good for us?... Because you that God is available, to renew the strength of those who wait for Him!

C.H. Spurgeon – “If the Lord Jehovah makes us wait, let us do so with our whole hearts; for blessed are all they that wait for Him. He is worth waiting for. The waiting itself is beneficial to us: it tries faith, exercises patience, trains submission, and endears the blessing when it comes. The Lord's people have always been a waiting people

If His renewal is conditional upon our “waiting for the LORD” – we need to understand just what does that phrase mean?...

We need to first understand the “waiting for the Lord” is not a passive thing!... It is not a state of mind where you are doing nothing – and ask for everything – and then wait for it to be handed to you!

That's not waiting for The LORD!... NO! That's more like pleading with Satan to discourage, devour, and destroy...

Listen – we are especially vulnerable to the enemy’s attacks when we are under stress... Our homes and families are more prone to arguments when we’re stressed... Our joy in the Lord can too easily wane when we are under stress...

So how can “waiting for the Lord” de-stress our stress?

In a different message on this subject, **Adrian Rogers** gave four practical things that this “waiting” involves. Let me quickly share them with you:

➤ Waiting for the Lord – involves **Longing for the Lord.**

Ps. 62:1 (NASB) “My soul waits in silence for God only; From Him is my salvation.”

Longing for Him simply means *desiring* Him... Do you desire God?

➤ Waiting means to **Listen to Him**

Pro. 8:34 (NASB) ““Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at my doorposts.

Charles H. Brent (1862-1929 – was an early 20th C. missionary to the Philippians...) – “A man must not stop listening any more than praying when he rises from his knees. No one questions the need of times of formal address to God, but few admit in any practical way the need of quiet waiting upon God, gazing into His face, feeling for His hand, listening for His voice.”

➤ Waiting means to **Look to Him**

Ps. 104:27 – speaks of the animals...

Ps. 104:27 (NASB) “They all wait for You, to give them their food in due season (Lit. *its appointed time*).

➤ Finally – waiting for the Lord means to **Live for Him**

Pro. 27:18 (NKJV) “Whoever keeps (*protects, or tends*) the fig tree will eat its fruit; So he who waits on his master will be honored.”

What does it mean to “live for Him”?... Simply live a life *servicing Him!* Our life is wrapped up in Him!

Warren Wiersbe – “God knows how we feel and what we fear, and He is adequate to meet our every need. We can never obey God in our own strength, but we can always trust Him to provide the strength we need... If we trust ourselves, we will faint and fall; but if we wait on the Lord by faith, we will receive strength for the journey. The word ‘wait’ does not suggest that we sit around and do nothing. It means ‘to hope,’ to look to God for all that we need (Is 26:3; 30:15). This involves meditating on His character and His promises, praying, and seeking to glorify Him.”

That's what it means to “wait for the LORD”. And the prophet testifies: “those who wait for the LORD, will gain new strength; they will mount up *with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.*”

Let's not miss the imagery in the poetic expression:

Storms caused Eagles to fly higher – see further – fly faster... that's ELEVATION!

Opportunities call for us to “run” ... that's EXCELLERATION!

And the climax – which is seen in the Hebrew poetry Isiah was writing – is really saving “the best for last” – “Walk and not become weary” – that is DETERMINATION!

We serve God by flying in the hard times, running in the happy times, and walking day by day in the regular everyday areas of life.

The victorious Christian life is “walking day by day”...

As the New Testament would put it –

Ephesians 6:10-11 (NASB)

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

In order for this exchange to take place – that is His strength for our stress, we must wait upon the Lord...

God is available, for those who wait on Him. And this *availability* was clearly and completely made evident by our Savior when He said –

Matthew 11:28-30 (NASB)

²⁸ “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden (Or *all who work to exhaustion*), and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy (Or *comfortable, or pleasant*) and My burden is light.”

So, we look back today to a passage God gave to His people in the days of Isaiah and Hezekiah – when they were burdened with the anticipation of exile – and captivity in the hostile land of Babylon... And the Holy Spirit through Isaiah gave a word of encouragement for them and for us – that –

God is Aware of Our Stress
He is Able to Provide Rest
and He is Present with us in the Test!

Listen – there is only one place you can find the healing your soul so desperately needs – and that is in the Lord Jesus!...

Questions to consider for Community Groups:

- What are the most common “stressors” we face?
- Is being “stressed” sin? Why, or why not?
- If God is “Aware”, and does not immediately relieve the stress His children are facing – what does that say about God? Why does He not immediately intervene to relieve us of the stressors?
- What passage of Scripture, offered in the message, encourages you when you are in a season of stress? What truth in that passage do you run to most often?
- What does “waiting for (*or*, on) the Lord” (Is. 40:31) mean? How does this term misunderstood, and why?
- What are your thoughts about the following quotes?
 - **C.H. Spurgeon** – “If the Lord Jehovah makes us wait, let us do so with our whole hearts; for blessed are all they that wait for Him. He is worth waiting for. The waiting itself is beneficial to us: it tries faith, exercises patience, trains submission, and endears the blessing when it comes. The Lord's people have always been a waiting people.”
 - **Warren Wiersbe** – “God knows how we feel and what we fear, and He is adequate to meet our every need. We can never obey God in our own strength, but we can always trust Him to provide the strength we need... If we trust ourselves, we will faint and fall; but if we wait on the Lord by faith, we will receive strength for the journey. The word ‘wait’ does not suggest that we sit around and do nothing. It means ‘to hope,’ to look to God for all that we need (Is 26:3; 30:15). This involves meditating on His character and His promises, praying, and seeking to glorify Him.”