

Mark 8: 34-38; "Finding Rest in Christian Discipleship", Sermon # 59 in the series - "Astonished at His Teaching", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on May 22nd, 2016, 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 obeying our Lord Jesus Christ. In every stage and state of our lives as a disciple, the Lord Jesus will meet with us in this house, and He will comfort us with His love for us as His followers. And He will also confront us with what His will is; what He would have us to do for Him in that particular room. So far we have looked at the Living room, the Kitchen, the Dining Room, and the Parlor of Discipleship. And we have seen that 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. The bedroom is on the second level of the house 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 may talk about them in later sermons. But this morning I want 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 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 1st 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 at appropriate times. Let's look into this truth a little. Let's look at spiritual rest first, 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 your 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 their own good works and their 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 perform this miracle of the New Birth. 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 even worse than 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, we should also realize that it is impossible for a person to come to the Father unless they believe in Christ; looking to Him, to find rest for their souls.

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 in verse 28: "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 Him 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 and His finished work of redemption is the bed which you may lie down upon, and find rest for your weary and troubled soul. 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; its 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 the law; rather, you are under grace. You believe in Him because you know that you shall find rest because He has promised it. You repent of your sins, because you know that in repenting that Jesus will give you grace that will take away the guilt and shame and grief of having dishonored God. Jesus alone can give you this grace which will breathe life and strength into your soul. He alone can 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." (End of quote) Let me ask: 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? Then you can pick up your own cross and you can become His disciple, if you have entered into His rest.

Now, the 2nd reason that a bedroom is essential to the disciple of Christ is that it is a life lived to God's good pleasure. 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 you spiritual pleasures in the place of worldly and sinful pleasures. And the Lord will test your heart 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 does command of us that He would 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 whether you see Him as the giver of every good and perfect gift. This includes obtaining a husband or a wife, and the pleasures of companionship, the closest of friendships, 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 of devotion in your life. He is the One who will give you a husband or a wife. “Wealth and riches are a gift from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.” (Proverbs 19: 14) And it is His expectation that you will not make that special person the supreme object of your devotion or affection. You will obviously greatly love the person whom you will marry, but God expects that your devotion to Him will mean that you will place Him above even that special person whom you will marry, if you do marry. So let us understand that it is important to God what pleasures 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 you should begin, as a disciple, is to realize that holding fellowship and communion in your heart with Christ, are intended by Him to bring to you something far better than what the World has to offer. It brings to you joy and peace in believing in Him. He gives you these pleasures out of the bounty of His goodness and faithfulness. He will reward you for abiding in Him. And He will be checking each day to see if your heart is in love with Him, or in love with the world more. Let’s start by thinking 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 choosing to be 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 over to 1st Corinthians Chapter 7, verse 1. “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 a pretty straight-forward injunction, 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. We need to ask: Why is it that God expects this? The World’s supposed wisdom does not recognize God and Christ in their sexuality. But God expects that a young person, or any single person of any age for that matter, to be pure and to maintain their virginity and to save themselves for marriage, because the greatest of His blessings is tied up in their 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 self-control and joy in the Lord, to live to Christ 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 their desires; that their sexuality could be brought under self-control in a holy sense. 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 we see that Paul was 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, but in terms of pleasing the Lord and pleasing your husband or wife. It takes time and effort and thought to please a husband or a wife. And if you are married, your interests are divided between your highest loyalty which is to Christ Himself, and your other great love, that person who is your husband or wife; that you might please them. In other words, in marriage you must please both Christ and your spouse, and you must pay attention to 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.

The apostle Paul is saying that from his perspective, it is decidedly preferable to be single. Which also means, in terms of our study, that there must be great and lasting pleasures in spiritual things which go beyond the physical and the sexual; even in this life; things which satisfy even more than the physical and sexual. If this is true, then we should be able to see why there won't 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 have children, and there will be no need to express ourselves in that holy way in marriage, because the type will have become the fulfillment, spiritually, in seeing Christ and being with Him forever. 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 be 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, as such, 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, how important it is to pursue the spiritual things of Christ, now, 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, the right thing to do in the sight of Christ who is 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 or husband. 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 them to the one whom you will give yourself to, in marriage. 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 you get to know that person, as time goes on, as you learn more about what they are like.

You both should know, and greatly desire that it should be so; that your friendship would be seen as is the most important thing in marriage. For it is in the context of holy friendship that true and holy love will be developed. It is a love that will be self-controlled in a gracious sense. This is what should 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 so you will come to see the wisdom in lovingly giving yourself to that person at the right time, after you have been married. And how useful you both can be to Christ during that time, because you chose sexual purity for Christ’s sake, whether you marry or whether you are single all your life.

Now 3rd – We need to see that the Bedroom of Christian Discipleship exists because of a Christian’s need of private and secret prayer.

Dear Christian, do you pray upon your bed, speaking to God about all the issues of your life? Turn with me to Psalm 4. Here we have the prayer of David, a man after God’s own heart. We hear him praying and crying out to God – “Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness!” “You have relieved me in my distress; have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.” Let us pause here, and set the stage for what we will read in the next few verses. God is the God of your righteousness. He is the One who has given you grace through your Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the One who works all good; all right dispositions, all righteous attitudes, all inclinations and motivations within you to do goods works, and thus be pleasing to Him. He is the One who will relieve you in your distress as you come into the many difficult situations of your life; especially with people, and especially in regard to people in your immediate family, or among your relatives. I am thinking about those people that bring distress to your heart and mind and soul. It is the better part of wisdom on the part of a disciple to learn to pray, and to learn to pray the words of verse 1. “Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.” Timothy Dwight says, “Mercy is the exercise of God’s good will towards those who have not merited it, and especially towards those who have merited anger and punishment.” (End of quote) Let us always remember that God’s having mercy on us is not because of anything we have done, but solely because of what Christ has done, being our substitute for our sins. David knew that God was the God of his righteousness, and God was the God who had shown him mercy. But here he would beg further mercy, and beg an audience with God for his prayers. A disciple of the Lord Jesus must be doing the same thing. Do not rest on what you have done, or accomplished before, in your following the Lord Jesus. But I hope that you will understand that God would have you to pray to Him for further and larger blessings, and greater measures of grace.

This is very necessary for every disciple; to learn to pray; as there are so many people in the world who will turn your glory to shame and God’s glory to shame, also, if they can. Verse 2 says,

“How long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame?” “How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood?” “Selah”. This is definitely something that we need to pause and to think about. It is amazing how many people love worthless things and seek to believe lies about the meaning of life; and, about the Christians that they know. David reminds himself of this, and would even tell those who were seeking his life that they were doing so. Remember when David was being chased by Saul? Why were Saul and his men chasing David and seeking his life? It was because Saul was envious of the praise which David had received after he slew the Philistine, and thought that David would end up King over Israel because he was so well loved by the people. David was chased around in the wilderness and when he had a chance given to him by God to speak to Saul about the unrighteousness that he was doing; he did so. In 1st Samuel 24, verse 11 he says: “Moreover, my father, see?” “Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand!” “For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you.” “Yet you hunt my life to take it.” “Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you.” “But my hand shall not be against you.” This is the purpose of a righteous man’s being godly. It is so that they can show forth the fact that God is holy; God is sovereign, and God is for the believer. God will give him all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. God will deliver him from every evil work, and bring him safely to His heavenly kingdom. People around us need to know why we do the things that we do. We should not be afraid to tell them. “But know that the Lord has set apart for Himself him who is godly; the Lord will hear when I call to Him.”

Then David addresses his own heart in the presence of God. And here is where the bedroom of Christian discipleship comes in. Verse 4 – “Be angry, and do not sin.” “Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.” “Selah.” “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.” This is what the Christian disciple should do; this is how he should act, when people around him are trying to bring him down; from his being a godly person, and living in a godly way. He should be angry with a righteous anger, but he should not sin. The anger of man will not accomplish the righteousness of God. David’s problem was compounded by the fact that Saul was the man in authority; he was the king of Israel. He was angry, but he did not sin, and take matters into his own hands to overthrow the authority that God had put in place. He was angry, but he did not sin. How could he come to the place where he was so spiritually strong? It was that he “meditated within his heart upon his bed, and he was still.” “He offered the sacrifices of righteousness and put his trust in the Lord.” In other words, he prayed upon his bed and dealt with any sinful anger that he might have had there. He would not take his own revenge. He would not take matters into his own hands, in terms of justice. He would trust in the sovereignty of the Lord; that the Lord would protect him, and keep him from being killed by Saul.

Let me ask you, my friends, whether you have had these kind of experiences in the Bedroom of Christian discipleship? Do you meditate within your heart on your bed? Are you still praying to Him; knowing that He is with you and for you in all the situations in which you are putting your trust in Him? Do you praise Him even in the awkward situations of life? You know; it is good thing to learn to do this if you have not. When you learn this holy discipline of praying on your bed, you will have the confidence that you will need when the unbelieving people around you are saying, “Who will show us any good?” You will simply be upon your bed in the night praying, and saying, “Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.” And you will be able also to say, when you see how He undertakes for you: “You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased.” Your pleasures and your rest will be truly established more than any worldly person’s sense of rest and peace are established by a good harvest crop. You will be able to rest at night, and you will be able to sleep sweetly because your conscience is clear in relation to God and men. “I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety.” This is the bedroom of Christian discipleship.

