



OCEAN DEVOTIONAL

ISAIAH 57:20-21

“But those who still reject me are like the restless sea, which is never still but continually churns up mud and dirt. There is no peace for the wicked,’ says my God” (NLT).

EXPERIENCE

There is an irony that so many vacationers seek their rest at the ocean’s edge—a place filled with restless activity. For those with eyes to see beyond all the lounging bodies on the beach, the seashore is an overly active place. The ocean is always roaring, never ceasing to beat the sand with its waves. There is not a moment’s quiet. The frothing waters leave behind foam as evidence of their constant churning. Even beneath the waves there is no peace—the undertow and rip currents are always on the move. Over the course of 24 hours, the tide unrelentingly waxes and wanes. Above the ocean, the wind is endlessly blowing, sometimes it is a gentle breeze but other times it’s big gusts that kick up sand along the ocean’s edge, stinging as it hits skin. It appears impossible for seagulls to ever be content,

and the sandpipers look frantic as they flitter this way and that across the beach attempting to avoid the waves. The ocean does not seem peaceful!

CONTEMPLATION

I cannot help but wonder, if we could see the hearts of those at the beach would we find souls at rest? From the outside, all the relaxation appears to point toward inner calm, but is all the restless activity of the water, the wind, and the birds a parable of an unseen inner restlessness? In his *Confessions*, St. Augustine famously wrote about God: “Thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee.”¹ The only vacationers at the ocean who are truly at peace, are those seeking rest vertically. If you are like me, there are strong temptations to search for peace on the horizontal plane of earthly comforts, especially during beach vacations. Good food, lots of sunshine, adequate sleep, and other earthly pleasures allure this stubborn heart away from its greatest need—communion with the Lord Christ!

I wish I could say that on beach vacations my heart was as restful as my body. Motoring my mind down can take quite a while as I seek to “Be still and know” that God is God (Psalm 46:3,10). Granted, I tend towards playfulness more than tranquility when I am at the beach. Yet, I annually seek a seven-day respite from the go, go, go lifestyle that is my regular weekly routine. My mind and heart are often more resistant to stillness than my body.

¹ <https://ccl.org/ccl/augustine/confessions.iv.html>

Thank God for the ocean, its waters incessantly remind this forgetful soul where not to seek its rest. As I stare across the tumultuous waves and whitecaps, their effervescent upward motion direct my heart heavenward—their endless eruptions paradoxically encourage stillness and inspire me to whisper abundant praises. Worship, time in the Word, and prayer walks along the ocean's edge are what is most needed to calm restless souls. Gorging ourselves on God's Word, devouring copious amounts of truth, pouring out praise and thanksgiving, and conversation about the Lord, these are the means of quieting the inner rustlings. It is good to welcome any moments to linger over time with God during beach vacations.

What is your mind and heart churning on this week, this weekend, today? Consider where you feel the stirring up of the mud and dirt of guilt, shame, or fear. Repent and confess your need for peace in Christ. Remember that ceasing from outward striving and activity is a false peace, if it is not the result of resting in the accomplished work of Christ on the cross and in his resurrection from the grave. With each wave that laps the seashore, remember that if you are in Christ Jesus, he has washed away your sins. There is no true peace for the wicked at the beach, but believers can find genuine rest for their restless souls in the truth of the gospel.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, this soul will be restless until it finds its rest in you. Just as you told the storm waters to "be still", calm the troubled waters of my heart. Bring stillness and rest where there is tumult. Help me to know in the deepest recesses of my inner being what you declared from the cross, "It is finished!". You accomplished all that was

necessary to reconcile sinners to yourself. Your amends-making death is more than sufficient to restore right relationship between me and you. Your peace flows from abiding and delighting in your love. Thank you, Lord! Might I find solace in these truths today, tomorrow, and this whole week. In Christ's name. Amen.

CONFIRMATION

I was commenting to my wife about the restlessness of the ocean, and it was she who alerted me to this pertinent passage in Isaiah 57. I suppose I should not be surprised, but I still marvel every time the Scriptures mirror my own meditative contemplations. There are myriad, dare I say an ocean, of meditative associations between the sea and God. The Bible mentions the sea many times. However, the Ancient Israelites were not a seafaring people and the biggest body of water they would have known was the Mediterranean Sea. They would not have had any conception of the existence or the enormity of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Nonetheless, the meditative connections and conclusions are similar for those at the shores of saltwater seas or oceans.

We observe the association of restlessness with the ocean/sea not only in Isaiah 57:20-21 where Isaiah specifically uses the word "restless". Psalms 46, 65, and 89 use words like rage, foam, surge, and roar to describe these tumultuous waters. The connection between human hearts and restless ocean waters is made both in Isaiah 57 and Psalm 46. Indeed, these passages point us to seek rest, peace, stillness nowhere else but God.



Charles Spurgeon

Sermon #2886 "Restless! Peaceless!"

"The first reason then, why the wicked man's heart is like the troubled sea is because there are evil passions within it which will not let it rest. The next reason is, because the wicked man is agitated by the memory of his old sins. Suppose him to have been for some years, engaged in an evil course—in dishonesty or unchastity, he cannot, even if he tries, forget his sins. They have burnt themselves into his very soul, and what is even worse than the memory of sin, I suppose that you know how every sin breeds other sins, so that every time you sin, you have a still greater tendency to commit more sin. . . .

Beside all this, the ungodly man is like the sea for restlessness, because like the sea, he is governed by a greater power than his own. The sea feels the force of the moon, and is agitated and stirred by the mysterious agency of the winds, and the wicked man is under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air. If, for a while, he would be at rest, Satan will not permit him to be in peace. . . .

I do not wonder that a wicked man cannot rest, because such a man is out of gear with the entire universe of God. Lift up your eyes to yonder starry orbs, and remember there is not one of them disobedient to the law of its Maker. The comet, which was thought to be eccentric, obeys in all respects its great Creator's will. Everything that you can see, from the tiny atom of dust that is borne along by the wind, up to the huge Atlantic billow in which the leviathan feels at home, is under the power of the divine law. From the archangel before the throne of God, down to the midge that dances in the

summer sunbeam, everything is obedient to the Lord of all, except the wicked man, and he says, "I will not obey Him." Well, as he is out of gear with all the rest of the universe, is it any wonder that he is restless as the waves of the sea, and that there is no peace for him?"²

² <https://www.spurgeongems.org/sermon/chs2886.pdf>