



Peninsula City Church

Songs for Life

Restlessness and Contentment

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Restlessness and Contentment

Introduction

Q. When was the last time that you had a persistent thirst that you just could not shake, it did not matter how much you drank?

Our bodies need water to function properly. For example, water helps to regulate the body temperature, lubricate your joints, and remove waste from the body. Adequate daily water intake is very important. Moreover, it is important to increase the usual water intake in the case of illness, exposure to hot temperatures, or when engaged in physical activities.

However, at times we can still get a thirst that we just can seem to quench it does not matter how much we drink. The following is a story is a story about one of those thirsts. It is taken from C.S. Lewis's *The Silver Chair* from *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

“Are you not thirsty?’ said the lion. ‘I’m dying of thirst,’ said Jill. ‘Then drink,’ said the lion. ‘May I, could I, would you mind going away while I do?’ said Jill. The lion answered this only by a look and very low growl. As Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realised that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience. The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic. ‘Will you promise not to, do anything to me, if I do come?’ said Jill. ‘I make no such promise,’ said the lion. Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer the lion. ‘Do you eat girls?’ she said. ‘I have swallowed up, consumed girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms,’ said the lion. It didn’t say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it. ‘I daren’t come and drink,’ said Jill. ‘Then you will die of thirst,’ said the Lion. ‘Oh dear!’ said Jill, coming another step nearer. ‘I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.’ The lion said, ‘There is no other stream.’”¹

This world is full of people who are thirsty. Yes, if we go to the stream we will be devoured, consumed by the God, but I would rather be consumed now, rather than after death.

1. Restlessness

Q. What do you do when you have a thirst for something that you still haven’t found in life or a certain situation, do you become restless?

In Psalm 42, the Psalmist wrote on the subject of what can be learnt from living from the source of restlessness. That is, it causes a persistent inner thirst that has no earthly treatment. So, the one who has this thirst needs to look elsewhere to have it satisfied. They can be in a state of complete restlessness until the thirst is quenched.

The matter of restlessness of the soul is a major focus in this Psalm, see vv2,4,5,7 and 11. They are concerned about the state of restlessness of their soul in this time of trial. This is a time of uneasiness or agitation where they can find no rest. Hence, it is rest with the suffix ‘-less,’ meaning ‘without’ or not ‘having,’ added to the word. Then by further adding the suffix ‘-ness,’ which means ‘a state’ or ‘condition’ to the word restlessness, we end up with the Psalmist being in the state of having no rest, but complete uneasiness.

¹ Lewis, C.S. *The Silver Chair*. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2000), 22-23.

Psalms 42 and 43 were originally composed as one psalm and later made into two. The prophetic singers of Korah's clan gave Israel a contemplative song for instruction regarding the Pure and Shining One in Psalm 42. Korah was the great-grandson of Levi. The sons of Korah were a family of Levitical singers. David chose them to preside over the music of the tabernacle tent on Mount Zion. The Psalm is an intermingling of the life forces of restlessness and contentment in life.

The literal Hebrew has "as the deer pants for streams of water." The metaphor of a hunted deer that can transfer into today's context. The deer is extremely thirsty, as it possibly runs from the hunter and enemy of its soul. It runs driven on by thirst and longs for the streams that flow down the Jordan. The Jordan flows from the peaks of distant Mount Hermon, from the land of Mount Mizar on the eastern ridge of Lebanon and south of Damascus, (v6). These mountains were considered to be sacred in the Hebrew culture carrying the cooling water into Israel. However, instead of this refreshingly cool and life-giving water, the drink of tears is salty and far from refreshing. This is not merely a natural thirst, but the supernatural thirst for the refreshingly cool and life-giving Living God, v2. It is a thirst that can only be quenched by God.

The Psalmist said that, "Day and night my tears have been my food, they keep falling and my heart keeps crying for Your help" (v3). The salt of the tear that they are shedding are not able to sustain them, in fact they are bitter to the taste. This fluid is lacking in a season of drought, not of a season of life. If we remember the opening line that the Psalmist used the metaphor of the deer. Well these are big eyes open full of big teardrops and watching for the hunter and taunter, and the keeper God. Even in the midst of grief the taunter comes and mocks over and over saying, "Where is this God of yours? Why doesn't He help you?" This is the nature of the enemy.

The Psalmist compares this metaphor to their soul or their deepest life within them. This is not a shallow longing, but something that takes the breath away. It is a pant and thirst for the refreshingly cool and life-giving Living God. The Psalmist said, "I speak over my heartbroken soul, 'Take courage! Remember...'" they take matters into hand and command their soul to take courage and remember that days of worshipping the Living God. Placing their soul on a historical event of the goodness and beauty of God.

It appears at this time the Psalmist has not logical answer for what is happening to them. This is obvious when they say to God,

"You are my Mountain of Strength, so, how could You forget me? Why must I suffer this vile oppression of my enemies, these heartless tormentors who are out to kill me?"

It is in these dark confusing times that the faith of the believer can be tested. However, it is also at these times that their faith in God can grow. It is in these times that the heart will reveal its true colours whether it contains restlessness and contentment.

2. Contentment

Q. What does contentment look like to you?

To be content is a state or condition of being satisfied or calm. Then by adding the suffix '-ment' to 'content,' it expresses the means or result flowing from the action of being content. Hence, contentment boils over with being in a place of serenity, satisfaction and calming rest. Consequently, the Psalmist refers to being in this safe place of gratification and calming cure for the persistent inner thirst. This was their God who is described as being a waterfall that cascades of the soul.

⁷ "Deep need calls out to the deep at the noise of Your waterfalls of the kindness of Your love. Your waterfall of weeping sent waves over my soul, carrying me away, cascading over

me like a thundering downpour. ^{8a} All day long, You command Your promises of love to pour over me!” (v7-8a)

The Psalmist is carried away into God and as result,

“Through the night I sing His songs, for my prayer to God has become my life” (8b)

They are in a place of utter contentment, even though they suffer from,

^{9b} “...vile oppression of my enemies, these heartless tormentors who are out to kill me?” ^{10a} Their wounding words pierce my heart”

The reason for this is that they will,

^{5b} “Just keep hoping and waiting on God, your Saviour in whom is contentment. For no matter what, I will still sing with praise, for living before His face is my saving grace! ¹¹ Then I'll have plenty of reasons to be content and praise Him all over again. Yes, living before His face is my saving grace!” (vv5b,11b).

As the Psalmist walks through their struggles that may cost them their life taunts are really against God and not the Psalmist.

^{3b} “...my enemies mock me over and over saying, “Where is this God of yours? Why doesn't He help you?” ^{10b} Over and over while they say, ‘Where is this god of yours?’” (vv3b,10b).

Therefore, it is up to God to fight His battles and not the Psalmist. This is why they could declare,

“So I say to my soul, “Don't be discouraged, don't be disturbed and restless, for I know my God will break through for me” (v11a)

As God will make it quite clear that, He is right with His own children despite the taunts of “Where is this God of yours, why doesn't He help you?” Those who are taunting God have the opportunity to see Him, through those being taunted and to see Him bring deliverance of His children. The word that is used here is salvation or deliverance, that is yeshuw`ah from where we get the English Jesus. In other words, the Saviour will show Himself strong as He brings the breakthrough. We will all feel restless until the consummation of the kingdom of God, but we can find contentment until then by putting our security in Jesus.

Some Concluding Thoughts

Q. Are you in a place of restlessness due to life's challenges?

Or

Are you in a place of contentment, in the face of life's challenges?

It is important to realise that we will all sense restlessness in our spirit until the full coming of the kingdom of God. However, as Christ followers, we can still find contentment in the face of life's challenges up till then. This is done as the Psalmist has pointed out, by putting our reassurance and trust in the Saviour. That is, in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Does this mean that we will not have trials and be tested in our faith? Certainly not! But it does mean that we can find contentment for our souls.

As Christ followers, it is important to keep hoping and waiting on God, our Saviour in whom is our contentment. Determine, no matter what, you will still sing with praise, for living before His face is your saving grace! Letting your souls deep within you call out to the deep in God your Saviour. Let the noise of His waterfalls of the kindness of His love, drown out the taunts of the enemy, of those around you that mock and want to kill you. Let His waterfall of His waves roll over your soul,

carrying you away, cascading over you like a thundering downpour. Remember that, all day long, He commands His promises of love to pour over you.

Let me rewrite the first two verse of this Psalm as a reflection,

“I love to drink of You, O God, drinking deeply from the streams of pleasure flowing from Your presence. I desire more of You! My soul thirsts, pants, and longs for the Living God, and my thirst is only quenched in You. I need to come and see Your face oh God”

True Contentment (adapted for this message)²

By Deborah Ann

You are my portion, O Lord, You are all that I need, Your goodness fills me up when on You, I feed.

The measure of Your grace, fills me to the brim for, when I rest and trust Your sufficiency sets in.

With each day that I feast, deep down in my heart my joy becomes complete as eternal hope, You impart.

I find peace in each Word, and the promises You hold, they satisfy and keep my heart from growing cold.

The degree of my faith can be found in You Word on each page and the amount of my trust in Your power is my gauge.

You refresh me, You bring peace to my soul and I find true contentment knowing You are in control!

² “True Contentment.” <https://poetrybydeborahann.wordpress.com/tag/contentment/> (22nd April 2015).