

May 18, 2008
“Rest and Strength”
2 Chron 15:15 NLT

All were happy about this covenant, for they had entered into it with all their hearts. Eagerly they sought after God, and they found him. And the LORD gave them rest from their enemies on every side.

2 Chron 16:9 NCV

The LORD searches all the earth for people who have given themselves completely to him. He wants to make them strong.

Anyone need rest today? Anyone need strength today? Maybe you feel like the old Jewish man in this story:

A journalist was assigned to the Jerusalem bureau of his newspaper. He gets an apartment overlooking the Wailing Wall. After several weeks he realizes that whenever he looks at the wall he sees an old Jewish man praying vigorously.

The journalist wondered whether there was a publishable story here. He goes down to the wall, introduces himself and says: "You come every day to the wall. What are you praying for?"

The old man replies: "What am I praying for? In the morning I pray for world peace, then I pray for the brotherhood of man. I go home, have a glass of tea, and I come back to the wall to pray for the eradication of illness and disease from the earth."

The journalist is taken by the old man's sincerity and persistence. "You mean you have been coming to the wall to pray every day for these things?"

The old man nods.

"How long have you been coming to the wall to pray for these things?"

The old man becomes reflective and then replies: "How long? Maybe twenty, twenty-five years."

The amazed journalist finally asks: "How does it feel to come and pray every day for over 20 years for these things?"

"How does it feel?" the old man replies. "It feels like I'm talking to a wall."

I don't want you to feel like your talking to a wall when you pray. Our text tells us: "Eagerly they sought after God, and they found him. And the LORD gave them rest."

Let's look at each aspect of this verse: The seeking, the finding by those who seek, and the rest and strength experience by those who find God.

1. The Seeking

All the people were happy about this covenant they entered. What was this covenant? It is found in 2 Chron 15:12 (NLT), "Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and soul." The covenant was to seek the Lord with all their heart and soul. They would turn from not seeking God to seeking God. They would turn from seeking God half-heartedly to seeking Him with all their heart and soul. They would worship the one true God. They would seek Him in prayer. They would seek Him in worship. And when you seek that kind of personal relationship with God, you don't have to force yourself to keep God's commandments, you will desire to keep His commandments and live like Jesus. Seeking God is not about trying to get it right in our lives, keeping all the rules. At the District Assembly the GS said, a man he knew used to say, "I think it's easier to get along with God, than you preachers make it out to be."

I am a read the instructions kind of guy. My dad was not. When I have to assemble something the first thing I do is take out the instructions, then I lay out all the pieces to make sure I have them all. My dad would leave the directions at the bottom of the box, as he tried to fit pieces into places they didn't go. We use to frustrate each other. I'd say let's get the instruction and he'd say, "don't need 'em!" This usually means that when I have to do something I usually do it alone, so I can follow the instructions. But, I have observed two people who both were not-look-at-the-instructions kind of people, assembling something. They worked well together and seemed to be having more fun, than I usually have doing a project by myself.

"...I don't think that getting us to live right is (God's) ultimate goal. His goal is to have a relationship with us.

We can try and put our lives together, even study the Bible diligently, and get so stuck in the instructions that we miss the whole point altogether. Making life work is not the only thing that is important. Doing it with someone else is just as important, and ultimately, knowing God is the point of the whole thing. Come to think of it, loving God with everything we have is the only instruction he really cares about."

- John Fischer

The interesting thing is that not only do we seek God, 2 Chron 16:9 (NCV) says, "The LORD searches all the earth for people who have given themselves completely to him." God is seeking a relationship with you. He is searching for those who have given themselves completely to Him. That is key. John 4:23 (NLT) "...true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for anyone who will worship him that way."

So, what is required in order to receive rest and strength from the Lord is that we seek Him with all our heart. That we seek Him in prayer and worship. That we pursue a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and devote ourselves completely to the Lordship of Christ. "To seek Him with the whole heart is to engage the whole self in the quest, and that is the only kind of seeking which has the certainty of success."

(Alexander Maclaren)

2. The Finding

I have pointed out that there are two seekers: The LORD searches all the earth for people who have given themselves completely to him...and eagerly we should seek after God. God is seeking for us more than we are seeking Him. A whole hearted seeker will not seek in vain. 2 Chron 15:15 says, "...Eagerly they sought after God, *and they found him.*"

The Bible says, "seek and you will find." If God is searching for those who have given themselves completely to Him and if you are eagerly seeking God with your whole heart there has to be success...you will find Him or be found by Him. Is there any thing in life that can make that claim, that if you seek it you will definitely find it? There is only one direction for your desires in which disappointment is an impossibility. In every other area we can only say seek and perhaps you will find. And when you find you may feel disappointed that it was not worth finding, or after finding it in awhile you will lose it, or not care about it. But, here is the assurance; seek God with your whole heart and you *will* find Him, and not be disappointed and not lose Him, He is yours for all eternity. Seek God with your whole heart and you will know God is real, you will know God exists, you will know His presence and find a personal relationship with a loving God. Seek God in prayer and worship and you will find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart, with all your being, if you desire Him more than anything else and are willing to trust Him completely for that is who he is searching for.

3. The Rest And Strength

The rest, peace, and strength we are talking about is a rest and strength within. Not necessarily without, there may still be all kinds of troubles without, but still there can be rest and strength within. We are not immune from conflict and hard times. Seeking God does not protect us from the hardships of this world. But finding God gives us rest within in the midst of them. It was Jesus who said, "In the world you will have trouble ...but in Me you will have peace." So we have two places we can live. One is in worry and fear in the world we experience through our senses. The other is the innermost self which is in Christ when we seek Him with all our heart. Ever use a thermos. You can put something hot in a thermos, coffee, hot chocolate, soup whatever and I don't know what those things are made of or what material are inside holding the liquid, I only know that no matter what it's like on the outside, no matter what the temperature or no matter what you throw at it, the inside stays safe and warm. I know you can find rest and strength within no matter what the world throws at you when you seek God with all your desire and have found Him and believe that He is good. There is a dept of rest and strength incapable of being broken no matter what hardship comes when the deepest love is satisfied in God, when our deepest longings have found fulfillment because we have sought and found Him. We seek and find God to be good, faithful, giving rest and making us strong and nothing can destroy that quietness of our hearts. The LORD searches all the earth, wherever you are He is there. He searches for people who have given themselves completely to him. He wants to make them strong. Ps 37:7 (AMP), "Be

still and rest in the Lord; wait for Him and patiently lean yourself upon Him.” Then even if there be temptations, changes, sorrows, to disturb the outer life, there will be rest and strength within.

Of course the ultimate rest is the eternal rest that is ours because of Jesus. In a sense our whole earthly life is seeking God, and the life hereafter is the true finding Him. That will be a much fuller experience of God than we will ever experience here; when all sorrow will vanish from our memory.

The LORD searches all the earth for people who have given themselves completely to him. He wants to make them strong. So, eagerly seek after God with all your heart, and you will find Him. And the LORD gives you rest.