

Roadmap to Rest – Part 2
Sermon – Pastor Joe Davis
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I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

*Thus says the Lord,
"Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths,
Where the good way is, and walk in it;
And you will find rest for your souls.*

How are you doing today with finding rest for your soul? Last week we began examining God's roadmap to rest found on the ancient paths of his holy Word, the Bible. And today we're going to continue studying that roadmap as we look diligently and actively back in time to find the good way, the good path that will lead us to true and lasting rest for our souls. Today's message is called, "Roadmap to Rest – Part 2." Last week we focused on the book of Joshua, verses 10 through 18, and today we're going to see what other passages of Scripture reveal about God's roadmap to rest.

I'll be honest and tell you that I need to follow this roadmap as much as anyone. The problems and challenges and busy-ness of life and being a pastor often lead me to a very unrestful place in my mind...a place where my mind never stops trying to solve a difficult problem or rehearsing conversations I'd like to have with challenging people or worrying about uncomfortable things God's calling me to do...a place where I'm trying to carry burdens only God can carry or trying to put the weight of changing people's hearts on myself and my own persuasive abilities...a place where I wake up in the middle of the night trying to solve a problem or worrying about something of which I'm afraid of facing. Have any of you ever been at un-restful places like these?

Well, as we turn our eyes to Scripture this morning in search of God's roadmap to rest, I want to again clarify what type of rest we're talking about here. As I told you last week, the rest God provides us doesn't come from lying on a beach towel sipping a margarita. His rest is not an escape from civilization to live a peaceful life alone out in the wilderness. His rest is not idle life where I sit around and

watch God do everything for me. Instead, God's rest is a rest for our souls that we can experience in the middle of intense battles. It's a rest we can experience as we're diligently working hard at our jobs; as we're sacrificially taking action to express God's love to other people; as we're working to resolve a difficult conflict; as we experience the death of a loved one; as we're living our daily lives and all that they entail.

God's rest is a rest where we find the peace that passes understanding in the most un-peaceful of circumstances. It's a rest where we can find quietness and joy and strength even in the middle of very difficult circumstances. We labeled it an active rest last week...a rest we experience as we actively know, love and obey God with the confidence that he is with us and fighting for us...and that ultimately the battle is his and we'll only experience victory as he brings it about.

To briefly review last week, we uncovered 5 key features on God's roadmap to rest from the book of Joshua:

- 1) Faith expressed in obedience to God and his Word is the path to the rest.
- 2) Doubt in the power of God expressed in discouraging ourselves and others from trusting God and following his Word, keeps us from finding God's rest.
- 3) Following God fully is the path to rest...not just knowing God is real and saying we believe in him, but actually following him in full obedience.
- 4) God's rest is found in community with God and other believers...it's found in the context of loving God and loving each other...and even at times through fighting a battle for other people with the strength God provides.
- 5) God's rest comes from unconditional surrender, full obedience, and relinquishing control to him...from giving up on self-reliance to rely on God in all things.

And we ended last week by learning from Moses that rest for our souls is something that only comes from God and flows out of living constantly in his presence. We will find our rest only in the presence of the Lord, as we live in moment-by-moment relationship with and dependence on him through Jesus

Christ, and allow his Spirit to give us everything we need to fulfill his purposes and calling...as we allow him into every area of our lives and let him transform us from the inside out through the power of his Word.

II. FIVE KEY FEATURES ON THE ROADMAP TO REST

So let's turn our eyes now to some other passages of Scripture that reveal some very significant features on the roadmap to rest. Scripture, as you may know, is full of references to rest and it's a consistent theme that occurs over and over again throughout the whole counsel of God's Word. You'll be glad to know that we're not going to look at all the references to rest in Scripture this morning, since that would involve spending the remainder of the day together! However, I do want to consider a few of the primary principles God shares with us in his Word about finding rest for our souls.

First of all, the path to rest for every person is only found through Jesus Christ and a dependent, connected relationship with him. In the beautiful words of Jesus Christ himself:

28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, 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 and My burden is light."

The first question we need to ask ourselves is this: Have we yoked ourselves up with Jesus Christ by coming to him for salvation, forgiveness and new life? You'll get nowhere on the path to rest for your soul until you repent of your sin, believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins on the cross and rose again, and invite him to be your personal Savior and Lord. Repent, believe and invite him to be your Savior and Lord. You won't be able to decipher or follow the roadmap to rest until you've been saved by Christ and brought to new life through him. He's the one and only doorway to rest for your soul.

But for most of you out there who have already come to new life in Christ, I would ask some more questions: Are you yoked up with Christ in your day-to-day living, allowing him to carry you and your burdens and give you everything you need? Are you allowing him to guide and direct all the choices you make? Are you

believing that he's with you at all times and will give you what you need as you seek it in him? Or are you trying to bear the burdens of life on your own? Are you still trying to walk in his ways by your own strength? Are you relying on yourself to resolve the problems in your life or the lives of others? That's a recipe for stress, not rest.

On the contrary, when we get in yoke with Jesus, connected with him and allowing him to lead and guide, move us forward, carry the weight and be responsible for the results, we find beautiful rest for our souls. Once again, that doesn't mean we sit back and take a siesta while he does all the work. After all, oxen that are in a yoke are yoked up for the purpose of movement and work. But it does mean that as we live in relationship with and dependence on Christ, he will carry the weight and be responsible for the results as we follow his lead and find our strength and power in him.

Secondly, there's no rest for our souls if we continue to live in sin. When we come to new life in Christ, God calls us to put on our new selves and by the power of his Spirit within us leave behind the old ways of sin that always lead to pain, disappointment, guilt, shame, broken relationships and ultimately death. And when we do sin, he calls us to deal with it honestly with him and others through repentance and confession, owning up to what we've done and asking for forgiveness from God and those we've harmed. There's no rest when we're living in sin and refusing to address it and deal with it God's way.

In the book of Micah, chapter 2, verses 8 through 10, the word of the Lord is being spoken against God's own people who were living in sin and oppressing other people with their greed and selfishness. The Lord says this through Micah the prophet in verse 10:

***8 "Recently My people have arisen as an enemy —
You strip the robe off the garment
From unsuspecting passers-by,
From those returned from war.
9 "The women of My people you evict,
Each one from her pleasant house.
From her children you take My splendor forever.
10 "Arise and go,***

***For this is no place of rest
Because of the uncleanness that brings on destruction,
A painful destruction.***

The uncleanness of God's people living in sin and refusing to repent and deal with it God's way was the reason why there was no rest in the land. **Arise and go.** This is how we need to relate to sin in our lives if we want to live in God's rest. We need to acknowledge our sin, repent of it, confess it to God and those we've harmed and then "arise and go," actively taking steps and making changes in order to keep it from happening again. Living in sin is never, ever, ever a place of rest!

Thirdly, the path to rest is found through a sincere and earnest seeking of the Lord. You may remember King Asa of Judah. He was one of the few Israelite kings who was described as doing "good and right in the sight of the Lord his God." Well, he did at least 3 key things that warranted this description: 1) He got rid of sinful practices in Judah; 2) He sought the Lord and commanded Judah to the same; and 3) He observed God's law and commandments and commanded Judah to do the same. That sounds like a very familiar pattern in Scripture, doesn't it? Repent of sin; seek the Lord; and walk in his ways. And both Asa and people from the tribe of Judah later testified to what God provided as they sought him earnestly, and you may have already guessed what it was. In 2 Chronicles 14, verse 7, Asa says this:

"...The land is still ours because we have sought the Lord our God; we have sought Him, and He has given us rest on every side."

Then in 2 Chronicles 15, verse 15, all of Judah rejoiced in this beautiful truth:

...they had sworn with their whole heart and had sought Him earnestly, and He let them find Him. So the Lord gave them rest on every side.

In the same way, when we earnestly seek the Lord, he lets us find him and in his presence we find rest. I just read a psalm this week that re-iterates this call to earnestly seek the Lord and his presence. It's Psalm 105, verses 3b to 4, and it says this: ***"...let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice! Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!"*** And did you know that each of

those statements are followed with exclamation points? I'd say seeking the Lord earnestly and continually must be fairly important! Are you looking for rest? It's found in the earnest seeking of the Lord!

Fourthly, as we saw last week in Joshua, the path to rest is found in a full obedience to God's Word flowing out of our complete trust in him. Later in the book of Joshua, when God had finally given rest to the Israelites in the promised land, Joshua released the Reubenites, Gadites and half-tribe of Manasseh to return to their families on the east side of the Jordan River. But as he sent them off to enjoy rest in their new homeland, he gave them these instructions in Joshua 22, verse 5, for maintaining the rest God had given them:

"Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

Rest is found in knowing God's Word and putting it into practice, and this is only possible as we hold fast to him, trust him, and live fully surrendered as his servant.

And this leads us to the fifth key feature on God's roadmap to rest...the feature that tells us how it's possible to actually put God's Word into practice in our lives and choose his ways over the ways of the world. **The roadmap to rest tells us that in order to walk on the path to rest and stay on it we need a moment-by-moment dependence on God...a praying without ceasing as we trust in his power within us to give us what we need and enable us to put his Word into practice.**

David instilled this truth into his son, Solomon, as he prepared him to take over the kingdom. As recorded in 1 Chronicles 22, verses 11 through 13, he said to Solomon:

11 "Now, my son, the Lord be with you that you may be successful, and build the house of the Lord your God just as He has spoken concerning you. 12 "Only the Lord give you discretion and understanding, and give you charge over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the Lord your

God. 13 "Then you will prosper, if you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord commanded Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and courageous, do not fear nor be dismayed.

How would Solomon be able to keep the law and follow God's Word so that he could prosper...so that he could experience God's rest? He would only be able to do it through the active presence of the Lord giving him discretion and understanding. He would only be successful and enter God's rest by walking in constant dependence on him. And we see in 1 Kings 8, verses 56 to 58, that Solomon understood these truths his father had instilled in him. As Solomon took over the kingdom from his father, he began his reign with this prayer to Lord:

56 "Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant. 57 "May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us, 58 that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, which He commanded our fathers.

Solomon understood where rest comes from and asked the Lord to continue to provide that rest through his constant presence and active working in the lives of his people. And the same is true for us today: only through living connected with the presence of the Lord and seeking his work in our lives will we be able to walk in his ways and experience his rest. The path to rest is walked in constant dependence on God.

III. THE SECRET OF THE ROADMAP TO REST

As I begin to wrap up today, I want to share with you one more very important secret (perhaps the most important) to finding and staying on the path to rest in Christ, and it's found in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. This passage of Scripture contains a New Testament interpretation of why the Israelites who experienced the exodus from Egypt never found the rest God wanted to give them in the promised land, but instead wandered around in the wilderness for 40 years and even died there. What we find in Hebrews is that these Israelites missed out on

God's rest because of unbelief that was revealed by their disobedience and refusal to walk in his ways.

Hebrews 3, verses 12 to 19 say this:

12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, 15 while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME." 16 For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

The heart of the issue that kept them from experiencing God's rest was unbelief, and the evidence of that unbelief was disobedience and a refusal to walk in God's ways. They were not able to enter God's rest because of unbelief. In chapter 4, the writer of Hebrews goes on to say that ***"...the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest..."*** If you want to get on and stay on the path to rest, you need to approach God and his Word with simple belief that he is real and active and powerful and that his truth really works in your day-to-day life.

I've had recent experiences in witnessing first-hand how the truths of God's Word simply do not benefit those who refuse to believe they're true and that they really do work in real life. Take for instance how God's Word teaches us to deal with sin and being sinned against. God's Word teaches us that Christ died for sin and paid the penalty for it once and for all, and that Jesus through the gospel has provided the perfect way to be freed and forgiven of it at the moment of salvation, and to be freed and forgiven of it as we continue to encounter it in our own lives or the lives of others.

I shared with you Jesus' path to freedom and forgiveness from sin a few weeks ago. It's really quite simple: It begins with truth and honesty about the sin that's been committed. It progresses with repentance... the person who committed the sin owning it, accepting that it was wrong, and expressing a commitment to change. It moves on to confession...the person who committed the sin admitting it to God and to the person sinned against and asking for forgiveness. And the beautiful result God can bring through this process is real forgiveness, restored relationship and full healing over time as we entrust ourselves to our faithful God who has fully forgiven us for our own horrific wrongs and teaches us to do the same for others.

And even if we're the one who did the sinning against someone and that person refuses to grant forgiveness after we've repented and confessed and done our very best to make things right, we can still be at peace and move on knowing we've done all that we can and that God has forgiven us. We can pray for them and continue to show God's love to them at every opportunity. Honesty, repentance and confession is God's path to forgiveness, freedom and restored relationship. According to God's Word this is how we are called to deal with sin in our lives with God and with others and it's the only way that works. But do you believe that today or does it sound too simplistic? Is this how you deal with sin in your life? Is this how you encourage others to deal with sin in their lives?

The world will tell you to hide your sin, keep it a secret and never admit you did it. It will tell you to be angry against those who've sinned against you, try to make them pay for what they've done, and end the relationship forever. The world's holds no hope for true healing and restored relationship and provides no healthy way to release the bitterness and pain inside. The world's way leads to brokenness and dysfunctional relationships. The world's way misses God's path to rest, peace and healthy relationships, scoffing in unbelief at God's simple recipe for dealing with sin and claiming it will never work.

Jesus Christ was sinned against a lot during his 30 some years of walking on this earth. He was slandered continually. False witnesses were brought against him to lie and misquote things that he had said. An angry mob tried to push him off a cliff because they didn't like truths he had said about them and their town. People tried to stone him though he was speaking things that were perfectly true and God-honoring. One of his 12 hand-picked disciples betrayed him with a kiss.

He was tortured and beaten and mocked. He had nails pounded through his hands and feet and was crucified naked on a cross. If anyone had a reason to view himself as a victim and hold anger and bitterness inside and seek to punish those who had treated him unjustly, it was Jesus. If anyone had the power to pour out justice and wrath and anger on the abusers, it was Jesus. Yet even in the middle of the horrendous suffering he endured, he simply said, "Father, forgive them."

My friends, if we want to experience and live in God's rest, we must approach him and his Word with simple belief that he is real and that the principles and truths in his Word really work and can be put into practice by the power of his Spirit. If we don't, we'll be guaranteed to miss out on the rest he wants to give us. Let's not let what God said to the Israelites before he sent them into exile ever be said of us.

Listen to God's words in Isaiah 30, verse 15:

For thus the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has said: "In repentance and rest you will be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength." But you were not willing...

Those are some haunting words, aren't they? ***But you were not willing...*** Can that be said of you today? Let's be willing, shall we?...willing to believe those powerful and life-changing words of our God: ***"In repentance and rest you will be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength."*** Let's live lives of simple belief and trust in our God, a true belief that is evidenced by actually putting God's Word into practice in our lives by the power of the Spirit within us. Let's be like Joshua, believing in and acting on the powerful Word of God with strength and courage.

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has

been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:12-16).

Make sure you're in yoke with Jesus and allow him to carry the load and lead you on. Repent of any sin in your life and take steps to leave it behind by God's power. Earnestly seek him through prayer and study of his Word. Enjoy his constant presence with you and learn to depend on him in all things as you talk to and listen to him continuously. And finally, simply believe God's Word and put it into practice in your life by the power of the Holy Spirit. That's the roadmap to rest for your soul found on the ancient paths of God's Holy Word.