

**Jeremiah 50: 6 and 7; “Remember the Resting Place”, Sermon #58 in the series –
“Heart Lessons Learned for a Prophet and the People of God”, Delivered
by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 14th, 2021,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

This morning we will examine true and false religion from the vantage point of rest. Do you have rest for your soul? Do you value your rest in Christ so as to remember it? Do you remember your resting place so that your faith will be strong? Well, in order that your faith might be strengthened, I believe that there are 3 things from this text which you will need to remember each and every day of your life, until you reach eternal glory, if you would have strong faith.

1st of all – To remember your resting place will mean that you as a lost sheep will seek to find rest in relation to Christ, the Good Shepherd. 2nd – It will mean that you will remember that the Lord Christ is the habitation of righteousness, who continually covers you with His righteousness. And 3rd – It will mean that you will see the Lord as you’re your hope because He was the hope of others who have gone before you. Let us at this time seek the Lord Jesus, as you hear these words, and realize how truly gracious He is.

1st of all – To remember your resting place will mean that you as a lost sheep will seek to find rest in relation to Christ, the Good Shepherd.

Verse 6 says – “My people have been lost sheep.” “Their shepherds have led them astray; they have turned them away on the mountains.” “They have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place.” It truly is a sad thing to contemplate the consequences of believing in false gods, and in believing in what is false, in general. We live in a day when many people confidently say – One religion is as good as another. But you know, if you have read the Bible, that this is not so. It is very important who you listen to. Do you listen to unbelieving friends? Do you only believe that it is only your own evaluation of yourself that is the only thing that counts? No, if you would be saved, and confident in your obedience before God, you cannot listen to shepherds who will turn you out of the way, which God would have you to walk in.

The Bible plainly tells us that we are sheep who need a resting place; sheep who need a good shepherd to care for our souls. Isaiah 53: 6 – “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Now that is the truth of the matter concerning all mankind. We have all gone astray from God’s set path of righteousness; the path that we must be walking on, in order to be pleasing to Him. Sin is turning to your own way, instead of turning to God’s way. This is how we are born into the world. This is how each person is, until they can find the Good Shepherd, or rather that the Good Shepherd finds them. In order to be saved you must learn to see yourself in this way, as a lost sheep.

God sees you as a lost sheep outside of Christ. “My people have been lost sheep.” “Their shepherds have led them astray; they have turned them away on the mountains.” “They have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place.” So, not only had the people of that day turned away from God’s way, but there were also shepherds over them who were guilty of turning their sheep away on the mountains. The mountains were where the false gods were often worshipped in those times; the high places. The shepherds who are mentioned here were the prophets, the priests, and the kings of Israel. They were guilty of turning the sheep away on the mountains of idolatry.

What were the sins of these shepherds in particular? Well turn with me over to Ezekiel chapter 34, and I will show you. Verses 1-16 say – “And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves!’”

“Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?” “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.” “The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.” “So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.” “My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.” “Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, ‘says the Lord GOD, ‘surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock’ – therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD!”

“Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.’” “For thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out.’” “As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.” “And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.” “I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel.” “There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.” “I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,’ says the Lord GOD.” “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.”

Now, I hope that you can see that God had many objections to what these “shepherds” of Israel were doing. They were feeding themselves and not feeding the flocks. They would take the tithes that were given by the people, and then they would spend that money on themselves. They would not designate the money to feed the flock. This is all metaphorical language that is being used in this passage when it talks about flocks. The prophet is speaking about the people of Israel. They would not strengthen the weak, or do anything to help the sick, or bind up the brokenhearted, or bring back those who were outcasts, driven away. They would not seek the lost, but they would dominate them with force and cruelty. In other words, they were anything but good shepherds. They were not good spiritual or political leaders. And the prophets, many of them, were false prophets. They were wolves in sheep’s clothing. These supposed leaders were ravenous lions and bears to God’s people.

God’s chief complaint against the shepherds that He is addressing in Jeremiah 50 was that the people had become lost sheep because the shepherds had led them astray. Here in Ezekiel 34 it was that they did not feed the people, the sheep under their charge. Both of these things are very hurtful to people, spiritually speaking. Because these shepherds did not give them God’s word to live by, and did not encourage them to feed by faith upon it; the people were led astray to false worship. They would come to false conclusions about life and how to know God and they would fail to please Him in their worship and obedience. It was for this reason that God said that He was against the shepherds. God was saying that He was going to do something about this grievous situation. He was going to deliver His flock from their mouths so that they would no longer be food for them.

God the Father would send His only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus, so that He would be their resting place. It would be by His redemptive work, that those who believed, would be saved.

God was going to search for them, and seek them out, Himself. Verse 12 says – “As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep.” He would bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land. He would feed them with good pasture. And verse 15 says – “I will feed My flock and will lead them to rest.” That is, God would feed His sheep with the good food of His word through undershepherds who knew Him.

And by this means He would bring about a much better spiritual situation for all of His elect people. Christ would establish the foundation and begin to build His Church. His own dear Son would take upon Himself Human flesh and become the Great and Good Shepherd of Israel. Ezekiel 34: 23 – “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.” “And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them.” This is God’s promise of the resting place. This is His promise of sending Christ to do the work of His earthly ministry and be the Good Shepherd of the sheep among Israel, and to accomplish redemption.

You know, all of this is applicable to us Gentiles as well, those of us who have been brought into the flock of God by faith in Christ. In John chapter 17, verse 20, Jesus says – “I do not pray for these alone (meaning elect Jews in Israel), but also those who will believe in me through their word; that they all may be one, as You Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” So all who believe in Christ will find in Him their resting place. But having found it, they will still need to remember it continually. This is shown to be true by our remembering a very important verse in Psalm 119, verse 176. It says – “I have gone astray like a lost sheep seek Your servant, for I do not forget your commandments.”

Now, when you hear these words, it ought to tell you something. You are one of Christ’s sheep if you have believed in Him. You are His servant in righteousness. But that doesn’t mean that your obedience is always perfect. In fact, sometimes you may wander. Sometimes you may be drawn away by selfish or sinful desires which may take you away from the path of righteousness for a time. After you have indulged yourself in sin for a bit, if you are a true Christian, you realize that where you are, is not where God wants you to be, in terms of your obedience. And so you pray, confessing your sin, and you ask that the Lord would seek you.

The reason that we know that this is a believer, is because a believer, even when they wander, even when they fall into sin, will not forget God’s commandments. They will want to come back and do them. They delight in the law of God according to their inward man. But they see another law in their members warring against the law of their mind and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin in their members; that is, their flesh, the remnants of sin in their heart. They need strength to come back. They need help in being brought back. They pray and ask the Lord to seek for them to bring them back. They say – “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ my Lord.”

2nd – To remember your rest means that you will see the Lord Jesus Christ as the habitation of righteousness.

The people of our text in Jeremiah 50 it says, had sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice (or righteousness), in their forgetting Him as their resting place in regard to His being their righteousness. The people had forgotten their rest, but what did that mean to them? It is translated “resting place” in the King James, the NASB, and the New King James translations. It is translated “fold” in the ESV. Well, the resting place for them as the Old Testament people of God was in Canaan, the promised land. In Deuteronomy chapter 12, verses 5-9, God says to the children of Israel – “But you shall seek the Lord at the place which the Lord your God will chose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.” “There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your

hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of our herd and of your flock.” “There also you and your households shall eat before the Lord your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you.” “You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes; for you have as yet come to the resting place and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you.”

This was the rest for them, the good land which the Lord was bringing them into; that is, their inheritance as a people. Their rest was the place where God would bring them geographically, and He would dwell with them there, spiritually speaking, and He would bless them, and be their God if they obeyed Him and kept His covenant and testimonies. He Himself would dwell with them and be among them, and He would bring them all of the covenantal blessings of the Old Covenant to them. But the spiritual substance would only be found by them in their believing in the promises of God to them, concerning the future Christ, their promised Messiah. This land, this inheritance, was typical of Christ and the great blessings which He would bring in His laying down His life for sinners of all generations who would put their faith in Him.

People under the law were not saved by the law, but by their faith in the promise of God concerning Christ, the coming Messiah, and what He would come to do and to bring to them – that is making atonement for them so that they could know the reality of spiritual blessings, even then, by faith. Canaan is called Immanuel’s land in Isaiah chapter 8. In Hebrews chapter 3, entering God’s rest is another term which expresses the truth that rest for your soul is what God gives to you, the believer, when you place your faith in Christ and His finished work of righteousness and sufferings.

Hebrews 4: 1-3 – “Therefore, since a promise remains of entering his rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.” “For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.” “For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: ‘So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest, although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.’” And verse 10 – “For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.” This leads me to ask whether you see Christ as your righteousness? This verse 7 of our text calls Him the habitation of righteousness.

In God is perfect righteousness, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Christ is perfect righteousness as a Man and our Mediator. And He has fulfilled all righteousness on behalf of every believer. Let me ask – Do you by faith look upon yourself as covered in a spiritual robe of the perfect righteousness of Christ? Do you see that it is the remembrance that you are wearing this robe, which is what you must have, in order to fight and win the spiritual battles which the Lord calls you to fight in. If you have forgotten that Christ is your resting place, how will you gird on the armor of God? How will you put on the belt of truth? How will you take up the shield of faith? How will you put on the breastplate of righteousness?

All of this is done very deliberately when you meet with the Lord in the secret place of prayer, and when you come to know through having fellowship and communion with Him, that you are going to do battle with His enemies and yours and by His strength overcome. We do not have this hymn in the Trinity Hymnal, but I think it should have been put in there. “We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender!” “We go not forth alone against the foe; strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender, we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go; strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender, we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go.” “Yes, in Thy name, O captain of salvation!” “In Thy dear name, all other names above: Jesus our righteousness, our sure foundation, our Prince of glory, and our King of love.”

Yes, there is a war against your flesh, which I was just speaking about in the last point. There is also a warfare that you will be continually fighting, against the world, and the Devil as well. So what was the problem with the Jews in our text? It was the same problem which they

have often had in their nation's history. A description of the problem is found in Romans chapter 10, verses 1-4. Let me read it for you. "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation." "For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." "For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Now, we need to take notice of this, for it is not simply a problem which many of the Jews have had in their long history. It is also sometimes a problem for Christians who are not well-taught doctrinally, as well. They do not remember their resting place.

The problem develops when a person has a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. They are more concerned with establishing their own righteousness in the sight of God than they are in submitting to God's righteousness. They do not understand that a person must subject themselves to the righteousness of God, and not think so highly of their own righteousness, both in regard to their being saved, and in regard to living the Christian life to God's glory. You who are Christians have come to know that there is a great deal of difference between faith in Christ's work, and faith in your own work. Or at least you should know this. I would have you remember your resting place.

Remember, if you will, that at some point, some faithful shepherd of God's people preached to you the gospel, and he showed you the truth of how you could enter into rest; that is, that how you would find rest for your soul. It would be by believing in what Christ did, rather than in your own works, for salvation. But this problem of focusing too much on your own righteousness, can keep coming up, as you go about to live the Christian life. Some Christians believe that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints means that they focus on their own righteousness and their own strength when they persevere in righteousness and holiness. They see it as a matter of their activity and obedience as though obedience is somehow their own, separated from the imputation of Christ's righteousness, to all that they do.

Some brethren do not see the need for the imputation of righteousness. They believe in pardon, but they do not understand the need for imputation. This is why some brethren can believe in the doctrine of sinless perfection in this life. They do not understand their need to be clothed with the imputed righteousness of Christ as they live their life for God. They view their obedience, not in terms of how God sees them, but rather in relation to how they see themselves keeping the commandments of God. Their evaluation is for the most part, in relation to whether they are keeping any given command outwardly, not how they glorify God in the keeping of that commandment.

It is not as though they neglect their heart, or fail to watch over it. It is simply that they do not understand the nature of the flesh in the life of a Christian; that flesh which resides as a "law" in them. That flesh whose power is broken, but which is still very present in the sincere believer, all through their life. It is because of the many failings in the believer's heart and mind, to think righteously, and then to speak righteously, and then to do righteously, in the perfect way that God is glorified in those words, and actions; to completely and perfectly obey God from the all of the right motives, this is the reason that the imputation of righteousness is absolutely essential to the Christian's knowing where their rest lies. Their rest lies in believing that Christ righteousness is being imputed to them, and in that imputation is their complete victory against the accusations of the Devil, their overcoming the world, and their putting to death sin in their heart.

God's justice is satisfied fully in Christ. It was Christ's coming in the likeness of sinful flesh, and on account of sin, your sin, He condemned sin in His flesh, by His perfect obedience. This being accomplished both in His perfect life and in His sacrificial death on the cross, then the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us, both by imputation, and by our actually

learning to obey God in the power of His Spirit, because of His precious grace giving us strength. But our evaluation of ourselves as having kept any given commandment of God is not enough to say that we have reached sinless perfection. The Lord knows that we have not. But we are seen as complete in Christ, and we are perfect in the sense of growing in wisdom and maturity to see our complete need of Christ's help by His Spirit to keep His commandments. If you love Me, keep My commandments, says Jesus. That is our Resting place. And we should remember it.

3rd – To remember your resting place will mean that you will see the Lord as your hope because He was the hope of others who have gone before you.

Verse 7 says – “All who found them have devoured them and their adversaries said, ‘We have not offended, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice, the Lord, the hope of their fathers.’” The Jews of that day, many of them, were going to be devoured by the judgment of God brought against them by their adversaries. Those coming against them would feel justified in this because the Jews had sinned against the Lord, the God who is the habitation of justice and righteousness. They had sinned against the Lord who was the hope of their fathers. How important it is that each of us remember that God Himself is the one who we hope in continually, especially when judgments are coming upon our nation.

You see, the rest that people who are outside of Christ often think of, is a false rest. It is an earthly rest. They rest in what they personally think might be true, and not in the promises of God's holy word. And because this is so, they come to find out the hard way that the gods that they worship have no life. They have no ability to give them anything that will avail for the agitation which sin continually brings to their hearts. They cannot find peace, they cannot find rest. They come to have no hope because really they have been seeking to find their rest in earthly prosperity, and earthly satisfactions. Being a righteous and holy person is not high on their agenda.

If they are a professed Christian their rest comes without any real assurance of knowing God. They know little of waiting upon God and hoping in Him continually. Psalm 71, verses 14-18 say this: “But I will hope continually, and will praise You yet more and more.” “My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits.” “I will go in the strength of the Lord God I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.” “O God you have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works.” “Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.”

But when you remember your Rest, when you think about the word of God, and all of the promises of Christ, which are yea and amen in Him, you begin to sing in your heart – “Jesus, I am resting, in the joy of what Thou art, I am finding out the greatness of Thy loving heart.” You remember the rest which you have found in Christ, or which can find in Christ, then you will value that truth above all things. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free, and you will be free indeed! Hymns that you had heard sung now began to make sense to you. “My faith has found a resting place, not in device, nor creed.” “I trust the ever living One, His wounds for me shall plead.” “I need no other argument, I need no other plea; it is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me.”