

## **Merciful Rest**

Running hard in the jungles of Venezuela or on the pampas of Argentina (or crazy lost anywhere in Europe) may sound fun but actually it is exhausting. And so I was upon returning home after a particularly arduous trip.

Annette and I took a few days off—no release; I increased my sleep each night—no release. Everything seemed hard and a hassle; even normal sources of connection and renewal seemed more a drain than a gift. I was approaching burn-out (the experts call it 'pre burn-out'), and it scared me.

I went back into counseling with a trusted Christian and began to see that my works for Jesus were overtaking my devotion to Him. Slowly, steadily, I was spending less time in His Presence and more time tending to the needs of my large family and the growing global family of 'Living Waters' ministers.

The Lord turned and looked at me the way He did Peter after the apostle's third denial. Like Peter, I wept bitterly. (Lk 22:62) I had made a vow to the Lord years earlier that nothing would come between us, that I would wake up every day and seek His face, regardless of other demands. I denied Him that. My works for Him had overtaken my devotion to Him.

I had to return to Him. That began a rather long process of exploring fresh ways to pray. I discovered contemplative prayer, the quiet prayer in which one simply rests in His Presence, calling to mind and heart only His unfailing love. In that way, God works His way in us, without a lot of words, as we seek only to rest in Him.

I spent anywhere from 30 minutes to 60 minutes each morning just gazing on His goodness. (Meditating on the cross and a few choice scriptures helped out here.)

To be honest, I was so tired that's all I could do—no interceding for the '10-40 window' or racing through the Old Testament for this haggard saint!

I re-entered the rest of what He had done for me. I fulfilled the exhortation 'to make every effort to enter the rest' (Heb. 4:9-11), and discovered there was a Sabbath rest for me. If I did not draw constantly from that merciful stream, then I risked 'falling into disobedience' (v.11).

That disobedience involved my works outpacing my devotion to Him, and could disqualify me from God's call—to grow in strength and wisdom as I keep digging ditches around the globe.

I found rest as I sent down my roots into this mercy stream. I could draw from it at the beginning of the day, and throughout the day, as I paused to consider what He had done for me.

He restored my soul. The water levels rose as I made the little daily effort to be still and receive His grace.

'He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me besides quiet waters;  
He restores my soul.' (PS 23: 2, 3)

'In repentance and rest is your salvation; in quietness and trust is your strength.'  
(Is. 30:15)

'As You have shown us mercy, O God, in the desert places of our lives, would You show mercy to the beleaguered state of marriage in the USA? As the Perry vs. Schw. case wends its way to the National Supreme Court, prepare for Yourself a victory. We shall render to Caesar what is Caesar's but we shall prayerfully fight for what is Yours, O God. Prepare the hearts of each justice, especially Justice Anthony Kennedy, to uphold marriage according to Your merciful design. Remember mercy, O God.'