



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – September 25, 2021

The Lord be with you.

Are you getting enough sleep? I asked that because the Center for Disease Control warns that many Americans are not getting enough sleep. In fact, the CDC calls a sleep problem, they call it a public health epidemic.

When I was in seminary, a fellow student went to a much beloved professor to talk with him about the student's spiritual problem. They talked for a while, and then the professor said to the student, he said, what you need is to go home and get a good night of sleep. I think the professor was wise in knowing that not getting enough sleep, not only hurts us physically, mentally, emotionally, but not getting enough sleep can become a spiritual problem.

Now, I speak to you as one who once bragged about burning the candle at both ends, but no more, as I have learned the importance, the spiritual importance of sleep. I wanna share with you a brief scripture that helps me get good sleep, and I pray that it might help you to... I'm looking at Psalm 127, that is a psalm by King Solomon. He's a wise man who got quite a lot done and a lot of good sleep along the way.

Psalm 127, I read the first few verses. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain, unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go to late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil for He gives sleep to his beloved.

Now, in the psalm, Solomon says that God is a builder and God is a guard. Unless the Lord builds a house, unless the Lord guard a city, he says, it's vain. It's useless. And then Solomon adds these words, He says, it is in vain that you rise up early and go to bed late, eating the bread of anxious toil. Now, Solomon, he is not speaking against getting up early or staying up late. Then read the Book of Proverbs, and you see the Solomon praises hard work. He warns against the laziness. Rather Solomon here is warning against doing our work without looking to God for His blessing, he's warning against doing our work without total reliance upon God, because without that, Solomon calls it eating the bread of anxious toil. It makes for a lot of worry, a lot of stress, if we work without looking to God for His blessing, Unless the Lord builds a house, unless the Lord guards a city, it's for nothing for, Solomon adds, for the Lord gives sleep to his beloved. You and I, we need to think of sleep as a gift from God, because God builds God guards... And so we can sleep. I like what it says in Psalm 121-4, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper. You see, God works the night shift.



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Now, the Bible's radical way of looking at sleep and looking at work is seen in the way that ancient Hebrews thought about time. For the ancient Hebrews, the time begins at sunset, right about the time that you and I are shutting down for the day, stopping our work. The day begins at sunset as God goes to work, we might think the day beginning when our alarm goes off in the morning and we were off the work of the school. No, the day begins in the evening when we sleep. When we rest, God works, he builds, he guards, He blesses, He provides. Many Bible translators say that instead of translating this verse as God gives sleep to his beloved, it would be better to translate it as God gives to his beloved in sleep. You might find that in the margin of your Bible, God gives to his beloved in sleep, you see while we are sleeping, trusting our work to God, God builds, He guards, He provides, He blesses.

Keep in mind, it is a psalm by Solomon. Did you know? Did you know that beloved of the Lord, the Hebrew Jedediah, beloved of the Lord, that was God's nickname for Solomon. You find it there in second Samuel chapter 12:25, as God called Solomon, Beloved of the Lord. And so when Solomon says in this verse that God gives to his beloved in sleep, Solomon is talking about something that he's learned by experience, that God does give to his beloved in sleep. It's grace un-merited favor. Compared this with First Kings, 5:4 that says, The Lord gave King Solomon rest on every side, and there was no adversity or disaster. Salomon had learned something about going to bed at night and sleeping, knowing that God builds God guards, God blesses.

I'm thinking that Solomon learned this from his father, David. Why just listen to David in Psalm 3, verse 5. I lie down in sleep. I wake again, for the Lord sustains me, and David again in Psalm, 4:8, I will both lie down and sleep in peace for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety.

I pray for you that you receive God's gift of sleep, and then you sleep good tonight, knowing that God builds, God guards, God blesses, that God gives even in our sleep. So as we like to say at our house, sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening, until next time.