

1. There are Times When it is Inappropriate to Rest

- a. Amos turns to Jerusalem and exhorts the leading men, the powerful people, of both Judah and Israel (mts of Samaria)
 - i. The text indicates that these were men of renown, known around the nation for their leadership: powerful political figures
 - ii. Same phrase as “chief men” chosen in Numbers 34:20ff
- b. There is an impropriety to being at ease at certain times
 - i. This is a complacency, a willful ignorance of the reality of a situation
 - ii. Like in war, the soldier that slumbers in his service, parties at his post, plays on patrol
 1. This is what the leaders were doing, rather than coming to God in repentant prayer for deliverance and transformation into righteousness, they were throwing lavish parties and wasting their lives in opulence
 2. all the while, the enemy was marching, having overthrowing the nations around them (Calneh the ancient city, Hamath the great city, Gath of giants)
 - iii. ILLUSTRATION: On December 25, 1776 the Hessian forces fighting for loyalists to the British government in Trenton, NJ were celebrating Christmas in festivity. The mercenaries for the British held their advantageous position for some time and due to the ice and snow of that bitter winter, Colonel Johann Rall, the commander in charge of the regiment, was playing cards with some officers. A local citizen, who was a loyalist to England, brought a message on a note to Rall, who, too busy in his cards, complacently stuck it in his coat pocket. The note stated that he had seen Washington’s forces gathering on this side of the Delaware River and were advancing on Trenton. Even when the muskets started firing to ward off Washington’s attack on Trenton, Rall was still playing cards. He took a musket ball later in the fight and died a couple of days later...the note was still in his pocket.
- c. There is also a proper time for ease, rest
 - i. Sabbath – the true Sabbath rest in the works of Christ (see Hebrews 4) – the rest of faith
 1. Matt 11:28-29 – “Come to Me...and I will give you rest.”
 - Even here there is yoke to take up, however. It is Christ’s yoke, but it implies carrying a burden
 2. Rev 14:13 – “Blessed are those who die in the LORD from now on...they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.”
 - There is a proper rest from laboring in and for the Lord
 - ii. The type of “rest” that is wrong is not the rest of trusting in the LORD, in the finished work of Christ, but rather the opposite: trusting in our own strength and a lack of concern over injustice that best be summarized as: INDIFFERENCE

2. The Danger is in Distracting Ourselves with Comfort

- a. Frolicking and Playing when the Lion roars
 - i. singing idle songs,
 1. while David wrote songs to honor and glorify and rejoice in His God, YHWH, so did these men sing to honor and glorify their god - their belly
 2. Makes me wonder about what we sing about? What stories do we tell?
 3. Song is powerful proclamation of our hearts, poetry in rhythm and melodic expression
 - ii. Partying while the enemy surrounds the city

1. Daniel 5 - Belshazzar partying while enemies surrounded him and killed him the same night
 2. Ecc 7:6 - laughter of fools is like crackling thorns being burned up
- b. To be Rejoicing When God's People are Falling is Catastrophically Selfish
- i. "Grief" is the word "made ill" or "made weak"
 1. They should have been sickened over the plight of slavery about to consume them, but instead they stuffed their bellies with rich and choice foods
 - ii. Joseph was "under crushing" like grain
 1. Israel was about to be threshed
 2. Crushed and husked by war and seige
 - iii. Why Joseph? not Jacob or Judah
 1. Being treated unjustly is the idea
 2. In fact, the preposition in the Hebrew "al" (upon) could be referring to a "yoke" (ol) which has the same letters, i.e. "are not sickened at the crushing yoke of Joseph"
 3. Recall Joseph's brothers' response to his slavery, no regard for Him, no concern, went about eating the goat that they killed in their deception of their father (and whatever happened to the money they made for selling him into slavery)
 - Similar to Jesus' frustration at the disciples falling asleep instead of "keeping watch in prayer" the night he was betrayed (Matt 26:38ff)
 - They foolishly did not grasp the suffering that He was to endure, they slumbered at their post, somewhat unconcerned for His plight
- c. This is really the difference between wisdom and foolishness
- i. The essence of wisdom is dealing with reality, what is Real and True
 1. Ultimately, the Grand Story of God – the Gospel
 2. Wisdom views all things through the eternal story of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ (God Glorified – Creation – Fall – Law – Christ – Redemption – Salvation – Sanctification – Glorification – Recreation – God glorified)
 - ii. The epitome of foolishness is ignoring what is real and true for the sake of the pleasure of the moment, or the perceived pleasure
 1. We like to adoringly call it "dreaming"
 - Not that there is anything wrong with aiming high or attempting great things
 - But there is a type of "dreaming" that ignores the reality of the situation
 - i. "Child, you can be anything that you want to be."
 - ii. "Follow your dreams and don't let anyone tell you that you cannot do it."
 1. Of course, part of this is good encouragement, but only when the "dreams" match the gifting of the child
 2. See American Idol fails
 3. James 3:1 – let not many of you become teachers
- d. The ultimate sin is that they trusted in their own strength and did not functionally entrust themselves and their plans to the LORD (v12-13)
- i. They trusted in their strongholds, their self-procured security
 1. Like Colonel Rall trusted in his secure position, the cold of the winter, the "safety" of the holiday
 2. They forgot their past redemption, and that it was by God's grace that they were in Zion to begin with!! They forgot it was by grace and started to act as if it was by their wisdom and their strength.
 3. This pride God hates (v8)

- ii. Look around and compare your strength and success to those cities? Are you stronger? Are you greater or wiser or more successful? (v2)
 - 1. How secure is your faith in yourself?
 - 2. Only as good as you are (see Rom 3:10 and Matt 19:17) – see wisdom/foolishness again
- iii. It was not only the fact that they trusted their strength, but the fact that they trusted it so much that they were at ease within it
 - 1. They did not fear the LORD for the they did not know the LORD
 - 2. They are living as if they are untouchable by anyone, including the Almighty, to the point that they would ignore Him and His Word

3. How Do We Distract Ourselves from Eternity?

- a. What distractions do we use to ignore the pressing truth of Christ's call to rest from our own self-trust and to take up His yoke: "Come to Me all you who are burdened, and I will give rest to you, for my yoke is light"?
 - i. To whom, or to what, do we functionally rest in?
 - ii. Are we at ease within our walls of tradition, schedule, play, wealth?
 - iii. Are we dealing with reality? Where are those who are being treated unjustly among us, and what are our feelings and actions toward them?
- b. What do we functionally trust in daily? In our relationships? In our workplaces? In our churches?
 - i. Am I taking my ease in the fact that I am honored, appreciated, revered?
 - ii. Are we listening to the Word of the LORD, heeding it completely for our joy and delight, or are we trusting in our tradition, routine, programs?
 - iii. What do we sing about? Or, more probably, what is the music that we plug into singing about?
 - 1. "Does this honor and glorify the One who redeemed me?"

4. God Cares About How We Live, So He Did Something Amazing!! 2 Peter 1:3-9

- a. God cares about how we live, so He has done something tremendous!!
 - i. The God that requires righteousness and breaks out like a lion against indifference is the same God in the NT as the OT
 - ii. But, here is where the gospel of Jesus Christ is truly Good News: What God has required, God has provided!!
 - 1. Positional Righteousness is imputed by faith in Jesus Christ, so that we stand before God as legally and positionally righteous (Rom 1:17; **1 Cor 1:30**; 2 Cor 5:21)
 - 2. Experiential Righteousness is being worked in us through the power of God so that we live righteous lives here and now
- b. We have been given ALL THINGS pertaining to LIFE and GODLINESS by the divine power of God according to His GRACE
 - i. Life is expounded as godliness
 - ii. We lack nothing that we need to truly live, that is to live godly lives
 - iii. We have been given the power to do this by the Power that is insurmountable: His Divine Power
- c. We have been given all these things THROUGH the knowledge of the One who called us toward His own glory and excellence
 - i. We grow in life and godliness through knowing Him, His glory, and His excellence
 - ii. "Be imitators of God, therefore, brethren, as dearly loved children" (Ephesians 5:1)
- d. By this knowledge of God He has granted us PRECIOUS and VERY GREAT PROMISES

- e. In these promises we become partakers of His divine nature
 - i. Further expounded as “escaping the corruption of the world”
 - 1. Which is caused by evil desires
 - ii. The corruption of the world, including us as a part of this world, or formerly of it, is caused by evil affections
 - iii. Therefore, the escape from the corruption is an escape from evil affections, which are eradicated as we grasp the gloriously precious and great promises through the knowledge of God’s glory and excellence.
 - iv. These are the “all things” – the gospel is the power of God for salvation, not only for future eternal salvation, but also for the here-and-now salvation from evil affections of the heart
- f. The command in v5 – “**So make every effort**, with diligent zeal, in your reliance upon Him **to add excellence** (the same attribute which belongs to God in v3)”
 - i. Live like Him – a thoroughly gospel principle
 - 1. Forgive as He has forgiven you in Christ (Eph 4:32)
 - 2. Have the attitude of humility which Christ has (Phil 2:3ff)
 - 3. Welcome one another, just as Christ welcomed us to the glory of God (Rom 15:7)
 - ii. Be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1)
 - iii. Our aim, empowered by the divine power of God, is not merely to be good people, but to be godly people
 - 1. Don’t let the enemy use the truth of God’s grace to lull you into a sense of ease and comfort that does not make great efforts to add excellence to your life
 - 2. God’s gracious acceptance of us in Christ is the foundation for great work, a tremendous zealous effort to battle injustice, to love fearsomely, to labor tremendously for the sake of the love of God and love for your neighbor
 - 3. Therefore, let us not be at ease within the walls, but always remember our redemption by God’s grace, so that we will never take this glorious salvation for granted
- g. When these qualities are added to faith, built upon our reliance upon Him, then were never unfruitful or ineffective (v8) in the knowledge of Christ
 - i. I WANT to BE FRUITFUL and EFFECTIVE!
 - ii. Then press toward excellence, knowledge, self-mastery, steadfast perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness with love
 - iii. When we forget these things we become blind, because we have forgotten our former redemption and are taking advantage of God’s grace, taking our ease in His blessings with indifference
 - 1. The blindness of indifference begins with a forgetfulness of the depth of God’s grace toward us in our redemption from sin
 - 2. Therefore, make every effort to remember the glory of the Cross, God propitiating God, so that you and I might pursue God’s glory with songs of thanksgiving.

CONCLUSION:

The leaders of Israel had forgotten their cleansing from former sins, instead clinging to their position as God’s people within God’s city. In this forgetfulness of God’s grace, they were drawn inward to self-trust, self-honor, and a deep indifference toward God and toward their oppression of their brothers. God desires that we remember the depth of His grace and respond in like manner: Christ substituted for us, so we humbly step in for others who are oppressed and enslaved. Therefore, let us pursue with zeal to add to our dependence upon Christ the Excellencies that are in the heart of God. He has promised His divine power to transform us through knowing Him by His great and precious promises so that you and I might become partakers in His divine nature. Amen.