

The Strength

by

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For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you shall be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength." But you were not willing - Isaiah 30:15 (NASB)

Like most Monday mornings, I was busy. The busy cycle in my week, like most of you, begins on Monday. Did it start in our school days after coming off a weekend when we had a test with a lot of homework to face? Is this where the guilt/dread/adrenalin rush began to create the busy tempo for the rest of the week? Did this Monday dread carry over into our early working career, and is still with us? I always felt like my life would spin out of control if I didn't get things in gear on Mondays. Even to this day, I am challenged with facing a busy day on Mondays, and if I do not have one, my instinct is to look for a way to make it busy. Now don't psychoanalyze me. Ask yourself the question if it is the same with you. If it is not true for you, you are a rare bird.

The reason I share this perspective that I've grown up with is to say most emphatically that there are more important things that might need to be placed before our normal operating procedures in our life, and if we hope to journey to a deeper walk with Christ, this is an area He will challenge us in. The battle to put Him first and to seek Him first will require of us to embrace new priorities in life, and this will likely challenge our comfort zones. We will have to put our insecurities and our habits aside to go and seek Him at these times. But the great news is this: When we make it a priority to respond to His call to come alongside and be with Him, the benefits we garner from it makes us ask why we had taken so long to respond. This was the case for me last Monday. Let me explain:

As I said, Mondays are busy. But Monday of last week my King summoned me to get alone with Him, and I had to put the other stuff aside and go be with Him. Now you might ask, "How did He summon you? How did you know it was Him calling to you?" That is hard to explain. I will simply say that I was missing something. I didn't feel as connected to Him as I normally do. There was no crisis or fear or such that I was dealing with. These things normally drive us to our knees or to desperate prayers. There were none of those things. I just knew that I was missing something that was needed in my life. It was kind of a thirst or hunger for spiritual food that I wasn't getting, and I sensed that He summoned me to give it to me. When I responded in obedience and went for that sacred fellowship with Him, it was unclear why I needed to go other than what I've already said. But after that day, I realized how weak with hunger for fellowship with Him my life had

become, and how needy I was for what He gave me.

When I got the King's invitation, I altered my day and agenda, packed a folding chair, my lunch, water, coffee, Bible, journal and drove an hour away to Roaring River State Park. It was a beautiful fall day. The colors are starting to unfold in the Ozarks. So the refreshment began early as I allowed His creation to minister to me by simply soaking in its beauty. Even the drive out became a decompression time for me and by the time I arrived, I was ready for worship.

Too often I have used these half-day prayer times as a catch up for needed intercessory prayer, heart pounding confession, repentance, requests for help, but as well, a time of seeking God's perspective and wisdom for big decisions I must make. Too often these times had become a labor of prayer rather than a re-connecting and realignment with Jesus. *It had become my work toward God rather than allowing His work toward me to be enjoyed.* This day would be different.

As I settled into my chair overlooking a trout laden stream, I did my customary setup with Bible, journal and pen. I began to get ready for my normal process, but then felt the Lord say to me, "Put them down," meaning my Bible and journal. I thought maybe I was being led to spend some time in the "Grace Room" for preparation, which I hope you know what I am referring to? So I obeyed. I leaned back in the chair and took a long breath of air. I had been so intent in "getting to my setup" I hadn't noticed much of the surrounding beauty. This pause caused me to take it in. I mean really take it in for hours. In fact, I took it in the whole time I was there. That was all I did. I have come to understand when I take something from my mind to my heart, it creates a sort of thrill in those moments. Maybe revelation, transition, and a special awareness are words that come to mind. It is hard to explain. Maybe that is what John in Revelations was referring to when he said that he was *in the Spirit?* (Revelations 1:10) Maybe, like me, he was simply walking on the Island of Patmos and looking at the beauty of God's creation. He was simply taking it in and it was going to his heart. He had no agenda but to be in that time with the Spirit of God. But, maybe it was because he was "*in the Spirit*" that he could hear and see that which was spoken and shown to him? This is what happened for me, and this is where I'm headed with you.

Too often we neglect going to a place where we can really take in God's ministry to us, for we are so intent on proving something to Him, or to our self. We don't take the time for we think we are too busy. If we go, we think we need an agenda, a justified cause. If we do not have a critical situation to pray about or to seek God's wisdom in, we can think of no reason to stop our busy lifestyle to get alone to a place that has no structure or purpose but to allow God to minister to us. We think it would be a waste of time and we have no time to waste. But think about those reasons, and consider what we are missing? The King of Kings, our Savior, our Comforter has invited us to come be with Him, to spend time with Him, and our answer is, "I'm too busy." I don't think I have to go any further with that question, for most people get it right away what is wrong with

the answer or even the reason used. If our life is that busy, we need this time with Him most of all, for we will be missing Him and what He is capable of doing in our life. When we are the busiest and the most stressed in making decisions and such, we need to get alone with Him in a setting such as this the most. But more than having this crisis motivation as our reason, is our understanding that our life could very well have stepped around a crisis before we faced it if we had made it a regular part of our life to spend time alone with God where He could minister to us and prepare us.

"In quietness and trust is your strength" are words in the above passage that stand out to me. How can quietness and trust give me strength? It is because what is being referenced is God's strength, a hidden strength that goes to the core of our being. And it is in our *quietness and trust*, that time of quieting our self before the Lord, that time of simply taking in God and the beauty of His creation that He comes to minister to us, and He infuses His strength into us. If we do not make this a priority in our life, we could very well be missing the strength for living our life that God wants to give us, and I cannot see sound reasoning if we think our life doesn't need God's strength.

Last Monday became the first of a continuation plan for me. I know without a doubt, my King compelled me to come to Him for He helped me understand that I was missing something He wanted to give to me. He also let me know that there will be more waiting for me when I return. Plans are underway for my next time to meet with Him. It is being put on my calendar. It is an appointment with my King to meet with Him beside a trout laden stream, and to simply enjoy Him. Want to join me?