

27 April 2014

## Be Still a while Pt 1

Today we begin a new topical study on *being still a while*. In this study we will cover three points; (1) when troubles come, be still a while and rest, and (2) when you want to know the will of the Lord stand, still a while, and (3) when receiving instruction from the word of God, stand still a while.

Let us add a little more detail to our points:-

### 1. When troubles come, be still a while and rest.

*Mk.6: 31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.*

In verse 7 the Lord Jesus sent out his disciples and gave them power over unclean spirits. And then in verse 22 the daughter of Herodias danced and pleased Herod who said "whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee." The damsel asked counsel of her mother, who asked for "the head of John the Baptist." And in verse 27 the king sent an executioner to behead John in prison. Then, when "his disciples heard of it, they came and took up the corpse, and laid it in a tomb" and went and told the Lord Jesus all things, "both what they had done and what they had taught" (verse 30). It was following this event that the Lord called them apart in a desert place and encouraged them to "rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." Why? Because a man needs to sit still awhile, rest, and "take some food for this is for your health" (Acts 27: 34), perhaps in a similar way that the Lord Jesus told His disciples to take some rest (see Matt.26: 45 & Mk.6: 31), perhaps because they had had no leisure.

It was no different for Elijah who was being hunted down by Jezebel and so fled for his life into the wilderness, and he sat down under a juniper tree and asked the Lord to take his life (see 1Kg.19: 1-4). And what revived Elijah? The resting, food and drink, and a touch from the angel of the Lord (verses 5-8).

It was no different for David who fled from the many that sought his life (Ps.3: 1), and he laid down and slept (see verse 5). And what, or in this case, who revived David? The Lord sustained him (verse 5).

These great men of God all needed to sit still a while after having gone through tribulation, and it is no different for believers today, especially those involved in the front-line daily warfare, and even more especially when they go through tribulation. They need to sit still a while, take some leisure, and something to eat, and spend time resting with their God.

Paul encouraged the church to run the race that they would obtain (see 1Cor.9: 29), which means that believers are to pace themselves, such that when they go through troubles they then take some time to be still a while and rest.

How many believers do you know that have gone into a task that the Lord has given them, and then when tribulation strikes they bail, or they come out all guns blazing and only last for 2 or 3 years?

I am not suggesting that we do not work hard, labour long (see 1Thes.2: 9), and put our whole heart and mind into the work we are given, but rather, that after we go through tribulation, we separate ourselves for a while, have some leisure time and something to eat, where we sit a while and rest, where we spend time with the Lord seeking His strength.

*It is similar* to a marathon runner who needs to stop for water during the course of his run, he needs to pace himself. *It is similar* to a soldier in the US army fighting in Afghanistan who goes over to the war zone - he needs to return for a break.

It is no different to spiritual soldiers in this spiritual warfare, believers who battle each today need to rest a while. So let us be aware of brethren in our midst that when we see them going through tribulation we encourage them to be still a while, rest and receive nourishment for their souls, just as Elijah did under the juniper tree.

## 2. When you want to know the will of the Lord stand still a while.

Num.9: 8 *And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you.*

Our point from this verse in Numbers is that when a believer wants to know the will of the Lord, he stands still a while. There are other examples in the Scriptures where believers wait a while to know the will of the Lord. They include:-

- i) Num.22: 19, where Balaam told Balak that for him to know the will of the Lord he would have to stay the night.
- ii) 2Sam.12: 15 & 16, where the Lord told Nathan that He would smite David's child that was conceived from his act of adultery, and for seven nights David fasted and laid before the Lord, beseeching Him not to kill the child. He may not have wanted to know the will of the Lord, but he clearly besought the Lord and he clearly stood still a while, and when the child died David did not need to know if the Lord would change His mind, so he stopped fasting and standing still before Him.
- iii) 1Kg.8: 22-54, where Solomon had been praying and asking the Lord to hear his prayer and forgive.
- iv) Dan.9: 2-20, where Daniel set his face before the Lord to seek by prayer and fasting, and supplication for Israel. For Daniel to do so, he need to have stood still a while, where he confessed his sin and the sin of his people and then made supplication before the Lord (verses 18 & 19). See also Dan.6: 10.
- v) Matt.14: 23, the Lord Jesus sent the multitude away so that He could go up to the mountain to pray, to commune with His Father. Although we can pray on the move, it would be reasonable to assume that if He went up the mountain to pray He took time to be still a while, and in Lk. 6: 12, it says He spent all night in prayer, which is even more likely that He stood still for a while as He communed with His Father. See also Mk.6. 46.

Although there is no reference in the New Testament where the early church members stood still a while to know the will of the Lord, Paul spoke about praying night and day, which again indicates that they spent some time standing still to know the will of the Lord. And even in those examples where the Holy Ghost forbade them not to go somewhere, or where they assayed to go to Bithynia yet the Spirit bade them not, it is also possible in the process of discerning the Spirit, knowing the will of the Lord, that they stood still a while.

Yes we can all pray in the car, the train, the bus. or during any activity that we are involved in, but if we are truly seeking the will of the Lord, and we come to Him in lowliness, and we come to Him in prayer, then we would generally do so on our knees, which is a sign of a willingness to submit and worship (see Ps.95: 6). In the Old Testament, the likes of Solomon kneeled and spread his hands out to heaven (see 1Kg.8: 54). Hence kneeling in prayer is perhaps a sign that the believer is willing to submit his will to the Lord's will, which would be an ideal posture for coming to God and asking to know His will. In addition, when a believer kneels before the Lord he is "still" a while, and so again, being on our knees is the ideal posture for those who seek to know the will of their God. The Lord will still hear our prayers if we are in a plane, boat or tram, or jogging up a hill, but when we stop a while in a quiet place as the Lord Jesus did, when we kneel down as the apostles did (Acts 21: 5), we show with our body that we desire to know the will of our God, with our heart, mind and body.

Let us encourage each other to come before the Lord when we seek his will, to stand still a while and perhaps our minds will be less cluttered with the things of this world, and more inclined to hear the Lord and discern His will.

## 3. When receiving instruction from the word of God, stand still a while.

1Sam.9: 27 *And] as they were going down to the end of the city; Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.*

See also; 1Sam.12: 7.

This point follows on from our previous point, because as well as prayer, the other device believers use to know the will of the Lord, is His Holy Scriptures. And just as there is benefit in standing still a while when we pray, it will not surprise you that there is a similar benefit, and examples in Scriptures, of standing still a while to receive instruction from the word of God.

As was the case with prayer, so is the case with reading the word of God, you can do so on a plane, on a boat, or a train, but if you are coming to the book to know the will of the Lord, to receive instruction on what God wants from you, then your heart, mind, body and soul will be in a better place to receive His instruction if you “stand thou still a while”. When Israel were gathered together before Ezra the scribe, to hear the word of the Lord, they came and stood (Neh.8: 7) at the gate, they came “and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law” (verse 3). They could hardly have been attentive if they were all walking about with the word on their iPads, or with their own copy, and they would have been less attentive if they were all talking. And so it would have been for Saul - when Samuel desired him to show him the word of the Lord, he asked him to stand still a while, so he could be more attentive to the words. It is no different today when the preacher is preaching and people are walking by on the street, it is seldom that any will hear all that is being said if they keep walking, but if the Holy Spirit of God convicts someone of their sin, as they walk by, and they stop to ask a question, or desire to know more of the gospel, then they will generally come up and stand still a while, and the preacher has an opportunity to show the lost man the word of the Lord, and they are more attentive to the words.

It is no different in a church meeting when the teacher/preacher is sharing what the Lord has laid on his heart from the Scriptures, to those who have come to hear, they will generally all be sitting still, but if a young mum gets up to attend to the needs of a noisy young one, it can often disrupt the meeting and those who were listening perhaps miss some instruction during the goings on, Hence, for the benefit to all, it may be useful for the mums with young children to be in a separate room with the message coming through on speaker, because it enables others to stand still, to listen and be attentive to the words of the Lord.

Here is a couple of ways to prove the benefit of this point in our daily walk with the Lord:-

- i) Take your Bible and sit in front of the TV while there is movie on and the volume is up for everyone to hear, and try and read the Scriptures for instruction. You may be sitting still, but your mind cannot be still while there are other activities drawing your attention away.
- ii) Take your Bible to a Rugby game with all that yelling and screaming and clapping, or to a concert by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, and try and read the Scriptures for instruction in the midst of all these other activities. You may be sitting still, but your mind cannot be still while there are other activities drawing your attention away.

Let us remember on our journey with the Lord, as we seek to know His will, as we seek Him in prayer and in the Scriptures, that we stand still a while, such that our hearts and our mind have an opportunity to be free from the burdens of this world, and are open to receiving instruction by the Holy spirit.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our first study on *being still a while* we have covered three points:- (1) when troubles come, be still a while and rest, and (2) when you want to know the will of the Lord stand, still a while, and (3) when receiving instruction from the word of God, stand still a while.