

The Paradox of Pain & Rest

Sarah Walton



rest

Although pain in this life may hinder us from physical rest, there's a deeper rest that can be found within it.

The pain that robs us of earthly rest can become the very vessel God uses to lead us to a mysterious and deeper experience of what rest in Jesus really looks like. It can untether us from this world one strand at a time until we experience a freedom and rest that can only be found beyond this world.

What is true rest?

Spiritual rest is to abide.

Abiding = *to accept and act in accordance with.*

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28–30

True rest means to abide in Christ.

Psalm 131:1–2

“My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.”

Once a child has been weaned and grows in maturity, rather than only crying out for what the mother can physically provide, he learns to run toward and rest contently in his mother's strong and trustworthy presence.

Abiding in Christ must always begin with surrender to and acceptance of his will for our life—even when it looks very different from our own. Even if it means living with a level of pain that may have no earthly end.

How is it possible for pain and rest to occur
at the same time?

*Finding contentment and peace by abiding in God's
plan and presence, rather than our circumstances or
how we feel.

Section Two

Seven Ways to Practically Experience Rest in Seasons of Pain

1. Allow yourself to grieve what's been lost and the life you long for.

Job 3:20–26

“Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure, who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave? Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? For sighing has become my daily food; my groans pour out like water. What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.”

Psalms 34:18

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

2. Continue to pray for God's answers in the pursuit of healing or help, but trust his will above your own.

Pray:

"Lord, you know my frame, and I desperately long for relief. But if you choose not to change my circumstances, then change me instead. Help me rest in the hope of your promises and presence, even if my circumstances appear hopeless."

3. Apply the gospel to what pain has robbed you of.

Vaneetha Risner

“When we see families that seem to have everything going for them, we want their life. But when we see someone being upheld and sustained in brokenness, we want their God.”

4. Be aware of the temptations that come with pain that can rob you of true rest.

- treating those around us in hurtful ways because of our pain
- numbing our pain through unhealthy outlets
- becoming cynical and bitter toward God or to those around us who don't suffer like we do
- expecting others to meet needs that only Christ can

4. Be aware of the temptations that come with pain that can rob us of true rest. (Cont.)

- grumbling because life just feels unfair
- turning our pain into an idol
- an unwillingness to accept our limitations

2 Corinthians 1:8–11

"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many."

5. Ask the Lord to help you live faithfully in this season of life—rather than simply waiting for it to end.

Psalm 51:16–17

“You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.”

In this season of life, worship might simply look like resting in your identity in Christ, rather than what you can do for him.

David Powlison

"Fatigue (or illness, or the pain of this world) forces you to wrestle with how much your life still counts even when what you do, how much you do, and how often you do it are greatly reduced. God is more interested in who you are in Christ than what you do for him. God can redeem your fatigue, illness, or pain to teach you his endurance, perseverance, and long-suffering."

2 Corinthians 12:8–10

“Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

6. Remember that God's economy is far different than the world's.

Revelation 21:3–5

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’”

7. Find rest in the comfort of Christ.

Joni Eareckson Tada

"If my poor soul had not suffered the bruising and battering of a harsh disability, I would not know half the measure of God's sustaining grace. If my pain had not robbed me of sleep, how could I empathize with the One who had nowhere to lay his head? Had my wheelchair not confined, separating me from normal pleasures, how could I know the boundless freedom and joy in Christ, my highest treasure? I bear up under an unyielding chronic condition that is always deteriorating, always getting worse with age. But I shoulder every new discouragement, knowing that each pain stretches my soul's capacity for more grace. More of Jesus."