

Resisting A Rest

How Comfort Can Kill

June 4, 2023

Today we're gonna turn up the heat of our seat to get us to our feet! Because how comfortable we *feel* in life determines how urgently we'll *deal with* life. So: **What's holding you back?** What do you want to *do* with your life, where are you *missing* the mark, and most importantly, *why?*!



Well, since our best *insight* comes from *hindsight*, we can *learn a lot* about where we went wrong from those who've *lived a lot!* Like Bronnie Ware who worked in *hospice* for years and started *noticing* that, at the *end* of our lives, people had *five* common *regrets* about how they *lived* and when asked what they would do *differently*, she says people generally wish they had:



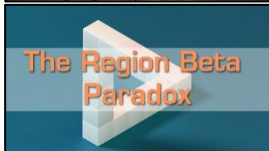
Lived a life true to themselves, – rather than the expectations of *others*.

Hadn't worked so hard – but focused more on *enjoying* life.

Expressed their true feelings – by not bottling up or *faking* how they felt.

Stayed in touch with friends – instead of slowly letting them *slip* away.

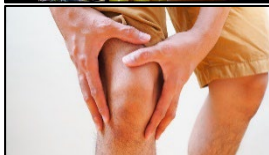
Let themselves be happier – by pursuing the *joys* of life over the *jobs*.



Any of *those* hit home with *you?* They do for *me!* And through the *Christian* lens, all *I* see are symptoms of sin! Cuz *that's* where we get the **apathy**, **dishonesty**, and **self-sufficiency** that leads to living a life of *these* regrets.



[Like Paul says] I do *not* do the good I *want* to do, but the *evil* I do *not* want to do – *this* I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do *not* want to do, it is no longer *I* who do it, but it is *sin* living in me that does it. - Romans 7:19-20 NIV



Sin *living* in us? *Yikes!* That just *sounds* creepy – like an alien *parasite* or conscious *cancer!* And if *it* is responsible for all the stuff we *don't* want to do, *why* don't we *kill* it? Well, part of the reason is an *awful* and *unfortunate* phenomenon called the **Region-Beta Paradox**.

To explain, picture *this*: when I was 23, I went to a local concert where a girl with a camera asked me to show my best *dance* move. And in an *attempt* to *impress*, I went for some maneuver *way* beyond my *ability* and something in my knee *snapped*. And since I needed my *friends* to help me *walk*, I was then kindly asked to *leave* by security. *But* – the next morning, I found I could *hobble* around if I just avoided *stairs* – so I did... for *nine months*. And to this day, I got one of those *knees* that aches a little *extra* whenever the *weather* is about to change.

But here's the hidden *tragedy*: **the pain was intense, but because I could still tolerate it, I never took it to a doctor for treatment** – unlike the time I *broke* my ankle, *couldn't* walk, and went straight to the doctor to get a cast. So in the *end*, my *trick* knee has caused *more* pain than a *shattered* ankle cuz **worse pain means better motivation to find a fix**. I actually would've been *better off* if the injury was *worse*, cuz I'd have been *forced* to deal with what was *wrong!*



That's the Region-Beta Paradox. It's when **we settle for a tolerable situation that prevents us from pursuing a better one**. It refers to the paradoxical idea that whatever is *familiar* and *comfortable*, even if it's not *desirable*, holds us back from embracing the *opportunities* and *challenges* that can lead to *growth*, *transformation*, and a more *meaningful* life.



It's a term coined by *Stumbling on Happiness* author, Dan Gilbert, who has observed the behavior *across the board* in humans. For example, if we're *unhappy* with our job but *not* experiencing *intense* stress, we likely *won't* look for a new one cuz it's '*good enough*'. In relationships, we may *not* feel the need to make positive *changes* cuz they could *jeopardize* our '*comfort zone*'. And in our health, we'll often *ignore* a plethora of pains because they're *more tolerable* than the exhausting *effort* of discovering what's *wrong* and then obeying the doctor's *orders*. And **in the exact same way, we see it at work spiritually, when we learn to live with sin** while *it's killing* us *softly*, by *slowly* but *surely* keeping us *comfortable* enough to *not* make the one *big* – but potentially *painful* change that could save our life; following Jesus. Cuz Jesus, Himself *warns* us of the pain on *His* path:



Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. - Matthew 10:34 NIV



I have come to bring fire on the earth ... Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. - Luke 12:49, 51 NIV

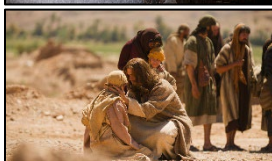
Sheesh, that makes it tough. Sure, we all *want* to live a life without *regret*, but *swords*, *fire*, and *division* make the *tolerable* pain of *apathy*, *dishonesty*, or *self-sufficiency* sound better! Except that:

[Jesus *also* said] I have come that they may have *life*, and have it to the *full*. - John 10:10 NIV

And *there's* the rub; the ultimate *promise* of Jesus *is* your ultimate *life* lived – *but* to take the steps to walk away from our *comfort zone*, we have to *expect* and *embrace* the idea that **things might have to get worse before they get better!** So, are *you* ready to weather some storms? You *sure*? Cuz when something starts *rocking* our boat, even *disciples* can *miss* the boat. Like the time:



A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, *sleeping* on a cushion. [And *only then*, when they were at their wits' end and couldn't tolerate the waves *anymore*, *then*] The disciples woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to His disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other [the key question that gets us to re-think the way we live life:], "Who is this?" – Mark 4:37-41 NIV



Once we start walking with Jesus, we can begin to believe we've moved *past* all our pain, problems, and panic – but **that's not just misguided, it's almost entirely backward!** Cuz the Great Physician is not about temporary *relief*, He's about real *rehabilitation*. And that hurts more than we think.



The Christian life *isn't* comfortable, but it *is* valuable. Because it is lovingly *designed* to rock our boat with *challenges* and *opportunities* that lead us to *identify* and *overcome* all the ongoing aches and pains that we let hold us back. Y'see, **we actually need storms** to reveal our spiritual *weakness* and *where* we're living in conflict with *God, others,* and our true *self*. Cuz *before* things *blow up*, our lives can be full of a low-level *frustration, irritation,* and *depression* that slowly grows into our new *normal*. And as we follow the path of *least resistance*, we slip into the **trance of the tolerable** and start avoiding the *effort* and *anxiety* of '*better*' to keep the *rest* and *comfort* of '*normal*'. We'll settle for *slightly* choppy seas rather than paddling for shore because we worry that rocking the boat could make *more* waves. And we blankly look past the fact that **avoiding affliction leaves us lost at sea**.

But at some point, something *will* snap us out of it – because even if we ignore all the chronic aches and pains, we *can't* look past what gives all of our worries their *real feel*; **death**.

And thank the Lord for death! Because **we need something to shake us, wake us, and make us choose to change**. And it has to be too *big* to ignore for it to *shock* us *all* to the core. So if we *won't* invite God on board to rock our boat, He's got *death* as the last resort to snap us back to *life*. Because Jesus isn't *just* the One who *calms* the *storms*, He also storms the *calm* to kill the comfort that grows our *apathy, dishonesty,* and *self-sufficiency*.

The *bottom line* is this: **God loves us too much to let us live with the sin that smothers our soul**. So He'll do *whatever* it takes to get *you* to *Him*, regardless of how hard He has to rock your boat! And that *shouldn't* surprise us – cuz He already warned us in His Word how He's willing to work:

For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves ... They reel to and fro ... and are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, [because that's what it might take to break the trance of the tolerable] and He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. [and] Then they are glad because they are quiet ... and they will understand the lovingkindness of the Lord. [Because the bad weather drove them closer to a good God] – Psalm 107: 25, 27-30, 43 NKJ

You get that? He can stir up a storm just to settle it down – all so we can see why *we* need who *He* is! Cuz He is *both Doctor* and *Dad*; and therefore 100% committed to a loving cure for whatever it is in us that can kills His kids! So if we won't bring the pain to Him for treatment, a *bigger* pain might be the best and most loving prescription available.

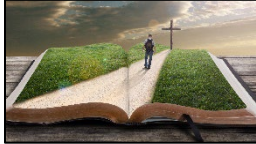


So sorry, not sorry – *sometimes* **Jesus has to make outer waves so He can calm our inner storms** because that's when we're willing to re-think how we handle all of life's ups and downs. Just *look back* at the most pivotal moments in *your* life and you'll likely see, **deep change usually comes when a crisis hits home**. Because *that's* when the opportunity most forcefully and effectively presents itself. But it's also where we can grow to know God as our Doctor Dad when we start to see that **the love we need most is the love we want least**.

And **sometimes the Lord's love feels like the opposite of love**, but that's only because we can't see everything *He* sees. But we *can* trust the process by remembering: **we're not here to avoid pain but to respond to it**. Because, behind the very *real pain* He *allows*, is an even *more real love*. Who do you think *brought* the storm that Jesus *calmed* that *revealed* His authority to His disciples? *They needed* the storm so they would *have to see* the depth of *His* power and authority.



So, blessed *indeed* are God's *poor, hungry, and hurting* kids, since they're ready to see how *deep* their Dad's reach can really *go*! Cuz **after enduring an affliction, our humbled heart is more motivated** to make the *change* and find our *fix*. I mean, at *that point*, why would we *waste* our pain? That was the hard part of discipline, so now, why *not* take Jesus up on His offer to:



Come to Me, all you who are **[already]** *weary* and burdened, and I will give you rest. - Matthew 11:28 NIV



But by *this* time, we should know that *big or small*, when we finally take our *aches and pains* to the Great *Physician*, **the Doctor's orders aren't going to make things easier, but they will make them better!** And we'll finally find that *real rest* we've been *trying* to attain. Cuz *nobody* but Jesus has *actually experienced* what God's got waiting – which is why the *NT* says:



[There **remains**] a rest for the people of *God*. - Hebrews 4:9 NKJ

So what is that rest? Well, y'know how Bruce is big on the *Bible* being a puzzle that draws us in to *engage* as a big game of *seek* and *find*? Well, a big part of that perspective comes from when Isaiah asks God how He'll teach us, and He says through *His Word* stored in *our* heart, but:

Precept *must* be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, **[Cuz He aligns the pieces we need in our time of need]** here a little, there a little. ... **[And get this:] This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest, and [So, "Come to Me, all you who are weary ... and I will give you rest."]** ... yet they would not hear. – Isaiah 28:10-12 NKJ

So, pick up a Bible cuz it turns out **real rest comes from a heart full of God's Word, not your worry**. Just imagine if the disciples had the OT explanation *we* read in *their* heart when their NT storm began to start; they'd have *connected* the dots, seen the *purpose* in their peril, and been able to *trust* the *process* – the way *Jesus* was able to *sleep* through the squall!

Because **we can't have rest outside until we have rest inside**. And we can't have rest *inside* until we start storing up His Word in our heart to let the Lord do whatever it takes for us to make the change. Which can be hard because asking God for a fix – means we'll *get* one – *and fixing* things is a *disruptive* process! But remember, **we gotta make waves to swim to shore**. And we gotta trade *tolerable* for *treatment*, even if it means letting His *Word* shake us and wake us, to make us *better*.

Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that *rest*. - Hebrews 4:11 NIV

So **what's holding you back? Comfort**. Because to live a fulfilled life without *regrets*, we should be ready to look the Book that can humble our heart and kill our comfort right in the face and say, **"Bring the pain!"** Because you know that you've tried the *rest*, but *you* – you want the *BEST!*