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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 17 August 1930

MATTHEW 11 v 28

"Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy
laden and I will give you rest"

There are several striking points in this so beautiful chapter. The first is the demonstration which Christ gave in reply or response to the question which John had asked Him by two of his disciples. John was in prison, and it would seem that he had had no message, no visit from the Lord Jesus, and his own heart, and a tempting devil, caused him to question the clearest, the most wonderful evidences, and proofs which he had received concerning Him whose forerunner he was. You would think perhaps, some of you at least, that if you got the evidences which John got of Christ's Deity, and mission, and the intimacy with Him that John had, you would not doubt again, as too, who would not think that naturally. But if God be gone, if He withhold His influence, His bright inshining, O, what advantage will unbelief, and the devil take of that, and make you say, Did I get those things from heaven that I felt? Were the views I had of Him given to me? Were the sacred feelings I had wrought by the Spirit? And you might go in secret and say, Lord, was I deceived? Art Thou He? So you will need, therefore, demonstration. Christ did not immediately say, Yes, go and tell him I am the Messiah, the Man whom he saw, the Lamb of God whom he preached, but He wrought miracles. The blind received their sight, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, and the deaf heard; the dead were raised up, and the poor had the gospel preached to them. And He added, Blessed is he, though in prison, and in darkness, and lacking for some time intimation and visitations; blessed is he whose faith shall hold fast and keep him from being offended in Me, in My dispensation toward Him. Hold fast what you have got, O, believer. "Remember how thou hast received and heard and hold fast". But though the Lord Jesus sent no distinct message to John beyond what his disciples saw, yet when they had gone, He then spake of John. He did not let His servant go away, so to speak, without any testimony concerning him. "What went ye out for to see?"

If you be pleasing to God in some way, He will give a demonstration, a testimony concerning you. "They that honour Me I will honour" John honoured his Master, and his Master honoured him.

And the second point is this, that afterward Christ began to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done because they repented not. It is no little thing to hear the gospel. It is no little sin to reject Him who is the substance of the gospel. It is no light thing to turn away from Him who speaketh from heaven. O, dear hearers, ask God to make His word effectual in you, for if you are offended in it, and by it, you are not guiltless. He tells of the comparative lightness of the punishment that Sodom and Gomorrah shall experience. Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida, having privileges above Sodom and Gomorrah, should be punished accordingly. Woe to England for rejecting Him who gave the blessed Reformation, who gave the inspired Bible, who gave in the past a wondrous line of powerful ministers, and now what do we see? Exalted to heaven by privileges, and mercies, will not God debase us to hell in punishment? And should any of this congregation be found among those who despise, turn away from, and reject this blessed Lord Jesus Christ, they are not guiltless, and they wont go unpunished.

And the next very noticeable point, much to be remarked, is what Christ said to His Father - "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes". Jesus in the Covenant was subordinate to His Father. He only taught what He was commanded to teach, what He had been taught Himself in the Covenant. And in this, His subordinate position, He absolutely acquiesces in His Father's dealing with men, and men who had turned away from Him were judicially blinded by God. Very solemn reflection this should occasion in us. God grant it may. Wise and prudent in their own conceit, wiser these fools were than seven men who could render a reason. Be afraid of your own wisdom. Do not think you can find out God by searching, and beware of what today very much rules among men, who can say what God ought to be, and what He ought not to be, and what He should do, and what He should not do. If we be wise in our own conceit, God may make that wisdom foolishness, may drive our divining minds mad. He has done so in the past. Who can say what He will do

today, and in the future?

And then He declares that all things are delivered unto Him of His Father in His mediatorial capacity. His universal reign He here anticipates, saying later ere He ascended into heaven - "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth". Here all things had been given into His hand by His Father. He was to rule in heaven, and in the army of heaven and among the children of men, and none should stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou? But He also declares a mystery - No man knoweth the Father save the Son. "No man", says John, "hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." So here - "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father" - whose glorious, mysterious generation of His Son in the Godhead is a doctrine revealed, not to be understood by our reason, but to be believed - "neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son" - greater evidence or proof of the equality, and Sonship of the Lord Jesus, you wont find in the Bible than this - "and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him". Now this may not seem to have any connection with the text, but I think it has. A sinner, convinced soundly of his sins, of his total depravity, and his consequent hopelessness, and helplessness in himself; of his legal disability, and inability; whose mighty sins stand before him as mountains rising to heaven to keep God away from him, cannot think little of this, his condition; cannot conceive a hope concerning it, except there be one revealed to him who, in his judgement, and by his faith, is seen to be capable of taking so bad a case in hand. If we be not sinners in our own judgement, any Christ will do. But if we be hell-deserving sinners; if our judgement is consenting with the Scripture against us; if we believe that not only we deserve hell, but that we have a hell of sin in our nature; if we believe that the thought of all foolishness is sin; if we believe that to think God to be such a one as ourselves is sin; no little Christ will do. Only the very immediate Son of God incarnate will meet so evil a case. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" O, it were worth our while to expatiate, as much as possible, on the wondrous Person who issues this kind invitation. Who is He? The poor man whose eyes the Lord had opened answered the question - "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" - "Who is He Lord, that I might believe on Him?" "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man am?" asks Jesus of His disciples. Do you ever ask

the question? Is it a serious question with us who Jesus Christ is? Are we anxious to know whom He is because we have a case that only a Divine Person incarnate could undertake? A Surety who would be capable of standing in our place and stead, in precisely our place, and stead, no single thing in our case being omitted. It is a great question. Who is He? Whence came this Man Jesus? What is His nature? Is it sinless? What is His power? Is it infinite? What is His blood? Is it sufficient to undertake so bad a case? How do you stand with respect to the Lord Jesus? There is such a thing as a spiritual intelligence concerning Him. Faith will give you this. Faith will expand your mind with respect to Him. Faith will say, Go to heaven, and there you, by faith, by this blessed teaching of the Spirit, the vision He gives, there you will see the second Person in the adorable Trinity. And go to the Scriptures, and there you will see it is written - God spared not His Own Son. How He came to be a Man you are told in the Scriptures, namely that "in the fullness of time" - that is the time appointed - "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law", and that being made of a woman was foretold by Jeremiah, that is to say, God speaking by Jeremiah said that He would create a new thing in the earth, a woman should compass a man, and this is the Lord Jesus. Infinite love brought Him, gave Him wings to come from His throne to the cross. Infinite willingness brought Him and caused Him, the Man Christ Jesus, to say to His Father - "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" (Psalm 40 v 8). And the Scripture tells us what that will was concerning the Lord Jesus on earth, namely that He should lay down His life. The men who crucified Him were His murderers. To all intents and purposes they slew Him when they crucified Him, but He Himself tells us this - "No man taketh My life from Me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father". "Therefore doth My Father love Me because I lay down My life". He poured out His soul unto death; He gave Himself a ransom. He took the dying traitor's place; He received the cursed death of sinners. He died a voluntary, a vicarious, a loving, and obedient death. Now sinner, if you see this by the faith God gives, and if you feel your sins, if they be a load too heavy for you, if the guilt be too dreadful for you, if the workings of evil be too powerful for you, then when your eyes are turned to Him and your ears are opened to hear Him speak this kind word - "Come unto Me" - faith will

make you leap to Him. Ah, dear friends, it is a great thing to know Christ. A great thing to see Him; a great thing to hear Him,

O, the love that fills His heart
Sinner wipe away thy tears

and come to this blessed Lord Jesus. "Come unto Me". "I will give you rest". There is no rest on a sin-cursed earth. The whole surface of it - so to put it - is covered with briars, and thorns, and thistles; all born of sin. There is no rest here. "This is not your rest, it is polluted". You cannot rest in your family with regard to your soul, nor in your business, nor in yourself, and if you take your rags, your filthy rags - to use the word of the Gibeonites, the clouted garments - and try to make them into a robe to cover yourself with, nothing but failure will attend you. It is a great thing to believe that you can have no rest without Christ.

Now take, first of all, conscience. If conscience be quickened, if guilt be felt on it, it is a load, called a load of dead works - purging the conscience from dead works. A quickened conscience agrees with divine justice, and only that that satisfies divine justice can satisfy the quickened conscience. A quickened conscience has claims. It is God's friend in the soul; it is the sinner's friend though it is his plague as long as guilt is on it. O never brow-beat your consciences; listen to them. Let conscience do its office; when it accuses you do not contradict it. Well, take this conscience then, and it says, I can never rest till this guilt is removed. Can it be removed? A quickened heart, there is no rest for that. God is the great end, and the sinner born again believes that. The great end; a sinner has no rest apart from Him who here says, He will give rest. Take the will, that perverted faculty; it is like a drunken man. When you tell him he must not go this way, the forbidding only irritates him, and makes him more determined to go that way. God takes hold of this will and when He does that the sinner finds there is no rest for it. Its own volitions are no rest for it. Its determinations are no rest to it. Its rebellion is not a rest to it. Take the understanding and what can you rest in? Science - but suppose it be "science falsely so-called" - Science, can that satisfy, can that save an immortal soul? Speculations concerning

God, can they do the thing that you need? The whole mind must needs have something solid, abiding, sufficient. Who can answer this? Jesus Christ. Do you believe it? Were you ever brought face to face with God? Himself holy, unutterably, infinitely glorious; yourself unutterably vile, and polluted. Can this God and yourself meet in amity? Can He be a friend to you? Can you be His subject? Can you be His child? Now the Lord Jesus answers this great matter and says, "Come unto Me". O, restless sinner; O, legal sinner; O, troubled sinner; O, sin-burdened sinner; O, polluted sinner; O, sinner whose constant questionings about self, and all things in the world, then about God and His character, and His righteousness, and His holiness; O, come, says the Lord Jesus to Me. The emphasis is wonderful - "Come unto Me". This is not a legal religion, it is not a vocal religion; it is the religion of faith, the motion of faith, faith in the Lord Jesus. The Person of Christ is above all others. It is written of Him, said to Him - "Thou art fairer than the children of men. Grace is poured into Thy lips." That was in the Covenant, and now here He pours out of this grace in this text - "Come unto Me". O, the invitation, how wide in its extent, reaching every sinner in any part of the world who answers to the character, labouring, burdened. The fall brought exhaustion. Labour was no doubt a pleasure to an unfallen Adam, but labour, since the fall, has always been attended, more or less distinctly, by exhaustion, either physically, or mentally. Says a man, I cannot manage my sins. God never intended you to do so. You may cut off some excrecencies of sin, but you cannot manage sin. There is only one hand can take that and deal with it effectually. Moral reformation is not curing sin, is not saving a soul. It is not washing away pollution, it is not justifying the ungodly. "Come unto Me", by faith. Jesus is above sin, above unrest for sin, and by sin, above all guilt of sin, and so He says, extending His hand, as it were; looking to these poor people - He had some who feared and loved Him then - "Come unto Me". Faith goes to Him. Faith is a mysterious action; it moves after God, its Author. If you have faith in your hearts it will never rest away from God. That is the reason of unrest of the soul, the reason of the distress of the mind, when there is no God near you, in you. You may judge of faith, its nature, by this - whether you can be content away from God, and be content with God away from you. If you have faith, you must have Him. He may long keep you waiting, but He wont deny you. O believer, you

know I am speaking the truth; when you are at all lively in your spirit, exercised toward God, you cannot be happy away from Him, and the cry of your soul to Him is, when He is absent - "O when wilt Thou come unto Me," There is no substitute for Him. Riches - O, they may make to themselves wings and fly away, and if they affect our hearts unduly we are idolators. Pleasures, family, rest - all the things that you may be blessed with, and lawfully blessed with, if they are kept within bounds - but none of these do good. Nothing can be a substitute for the Lord Jesus. I want to put something in His place by nature, but He does not allow me to do so. So there is coming to Him. Now if faith is in exercise going to Him, it will express itself by prayer. Faith and prayer always go hand in hand. One good man tells us in the Psalms what he did about prayer - "I give myself unto prayer". Rutherford translates it - "I am prayer". It was his breath. Faith says, O I cannot rest away from God. It was so with the Psalmist. "The sparrow" says he "hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, ^{even} on Thine altars" - That is Calvin's translation - "On Thine altars". (Psalm 84 v 3). Looking, as it were, with envious eye on these creatures, he said, O, they get their rest, they have their home; Lord, let me find my rest in Thyself. Does that answer your heart? Prayer is the sinner dealing with God. Prayer is asking for the things you feel your need of. Prayer is approaching with adoration Almighty God in Jesus. Prayer is confession of sin. Prayer is making a request for mercy. Prayer is what the publican had. Prayer is what the Psalmist had when he said - "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow", and God answered that by saying "Come unto Me", and "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1 v 18). O, sinner, there will come a day when there will be a wondrous contact between your soul and Jesus Christ. If you have faith you will go to Him. Devils wont keep you away, sin wont keep you away, guilt wont keep you away. A prodigal life in your spirit, by which you are brought to beggary, wont keep you away. "A people near unto Him" must be a realised word. Reasoning wont keep you away; reasoning on your unprofitableness and your wickedness, wont keep you away. How striking is the word in this particular. "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly

polluted?" (Jeremiah 3 v 1). Would not such immorality pollute a land? Yet, said the Lord - "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers". What then? Does He say, Now I will never receive you? Does He say, I will have nothing more to do with you? No. Return unto Me. O, what would be immoral among men, God, as it were, puts aside, and says "Come unto Me", return to Me. And after accusing His people in that way, He says - "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth". (Jeremiah 1 v 4). It is an astonishing word. O, I have stood before it with regard to my own case with amazement. Confessing all the guilt, the sin charged there, to think that and to hear and to feel, that God says - Return to Me. And wilt thou, O prodigal, O unthankful creature, who has had commerce with false gods, "Wilt not thou" - you will put the emphasis where you feel it - "Wilt not thou from this time" - that I speak to thee and convince thee of thy sin, and thy waywardness - "Wilt not thou from this time cry unto Me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth". And how sorry you will be that ever you turned away from that divine and merciful guide. So prayer is coming. And how many of us have come to Him in the streets of Brighton, mentally asking forgiveness. Have come to Him on our beds, crying, O Lord, come; O, Lord help me to come. This is coming to Christ. And I will say this, at this point, not only is faith encouraged, not only is prayer made, but love is in the matter. O sometimes a sinner - distant it may be from His Lord - does say - "I love Thy charming Name, 'tis music to my ear". Well Toplady comes low, and he says - "A wisher for Christ is a lover of Christ". And the truth of this you will see if you consider what man is; that "the carnal mind is enmity against God". If you consider that a man can only wish for Christ who realises who Christ is, then you will see the truth of the word - "A wisher for Christ is a lover of Christ".

Now this promise - "I will give you rest". There is no rest elsewhere. What is the rest? First it is the rest of His precious blood. This is the life of the soul, this is the rest of the conscience, of the heart, of the will, of the understanding. Every faculty is, as it were, permeated when the precious blood of Christ is applied. O, it pervades, it is a pervasive word, the precious blood of Christ. Says Peter - "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain

conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ" When a man gets that on his conscience he knows he is saved. He knows he is saved. When I got that as a young man, I knew it was well with me. I said, as I put my head on my pillow that night, Now it would be as easy for me to die as it is to lay my head on this pillow. The blood of Christ is a rest. O, it is a rest. Rest for time, rest for a death-bed, rest for eternity. God pleased with the sinner, the sinner pleased with God. God embracing the sinner, and the sinner embracing God. It is impossible to convey by words the sweet relief of this. Even as the terrible nature of sin can never be fully expressed, so this can never be properly, adequately expressed; the rest of it. All the unrestful thoughts, and the terrible meditations; all the forebodings of evil, all the for-views of the Judgement Seat, and all the trembling of the mind, these, these removed, and the sinner says, I know it is well. I know it is well. Do not speculate about forgiveness; do not speculate about forgiveness. See this; it is in the Scripture; pray for it to be given to you - the forgiveness of your sins.

There is rest in His righteousness - "This is the Name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS". It was a beautiful experience of Joshua, was it not, standing clothed with filthy garments; an accusing devil. Ah, but there was there, a Mediator, who put the devil out of court, so to put it, and then would have Joshua clothed with change of raiment. When you lose your own rags, and when you feelingly renounce them, and denounce them, you are not far from justification. Justification - a legal sentence. I have put away thy sin; I have put away thy filthy rags. I am thy righteousness. And then you may sing with good Bunyan - "My righteousness is in heaven". And it is on my soul too, apprehended by faith, put on by faith. Then what acceptance, access, comfortable knowledge, comforting words spoken to your heart by the Holy Spirit - "Come unto Me".

There is rest in your circumstances, rest in the will of God, that goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush. Circumstances which - looked at, as they stand alone, as they are felt; afflicting, emptying, weakening, confusing - may seem just to be like the anger of God. But the very same circumstances, viewed in the light of the Spirit's teaching, in the light of God's chastening love, O what a

different aspect. And then a sinner says, I can rest in God's will. "What he wills is best". And it leads a man to God. "Is any among you afflicted, let him pray". Let him pray the prayer of faith, let him call upon God which is coming to Christ. Let him cast his burden on the Lord who will sustain him. Let him leave his reasoning will that will never bring him peace, but just rest on God's holy will. Ah and how wonderfully sweet it is when your will lies straight and in unison with the will of God; when you say, I would not have it otherwise if I might. Well, it is a great thing to really rest in the Lord Jesus.

Rest in His love. God rests in it, and when the rest of God and a poor coming sinner for rest meet, then says the sinner, I can rest here. Love orders all things, love speaks rebukes, love sends the cross, love forbids a rest in this world that the soul might find rest in God, and in Him alone.

Rest in His wisdom. Can He make a mistake? Faith says, No. All things were ordered well in the covenant.

Rest in His power. "Faithful is He who hath called you, who also will do it". "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it?" (Numbers 23 v 19). You may wait a long time for an answer, but you will get it. God, giving a promise to you, pledges Himself to you. Every promise that God gives to a sinner is like God pledging Himself to that sinner, and the Apostle Paul by inspiration pledges God to His people - "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" Rest in His power. O, but this difficulty. Well, there are no difficulties with God. There are no contingencies with God. No peradventures or perhapses with Him. "I am the Lord". That is the warrant of faith, and faith goes to Him and says sometimes, Thou didst say. Ah, can you put Him to it - if one may express it so with reverence - can you put Him to it? Did you ever say humbly, perhaps tremblingly, yet believingly, Lord Thou didst speak to my soul. There is not a weak believer in the world who, in his state, and with respect to a word God has given him, is not firmer than heaven and earth for "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away unfulfilled". O, hang about this

gracious Saviour - "I will give you rest".

"I will give you rest" with respect to eternity. A long time may be before some of you, but if you be God's, if you be redeemed, if you be born again

Safety on earth (as Toplady puts it)

Safety on earth and after death

The plenitude of heaven

you have. Secured - you may not feel secure, but this secures you. "I will give you rest". "If I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Dear friends, we have a wonderful Christ, a faithful Christ, a loving Christ, an omnipotent Christ, a full Christ. All that is needed, all that can be asked, and more than can be asked, this Lord Jesus has. And He has all His gifts for sinners; He has them all for sinners. In our hymnbook we have it:

Christ has blessings to impart
Grace to save thee from thy fears
O the love that fills His heart
Sinner wipe away thy tears

AMEN.