

(Morning Sermon PS 130)

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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 1 June 1919

Psalm 116 v 7

"Return unto thy rest O my soul for the Lord
hath dealt bountifully with thee"

I noticed two things this morning, first that there is a rest in the text, and I said a few things about that. In the second place I noticed the exhortation that the Psalmist addresses to his own soul - "Return unto thy rest O my soul" - and I made some remarks upon that.

The third thing I said I would notice is the reason which he gives for speaking thus to his own soul, namely: "For the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee". Of this divine bounty I would now speak and in the first place I should like to speak of the bounty as it is first of all and eternally in God. Bountiful dealings with a sinner on God's part are the result of an infinite bountifulness in Himself. His all-sufficiency is the foundation, the fountain of His bountiful dealings and it will be well for us if, by the help of God, we endeavour to look a little at God's all-sufficiency. His Name "I AM THAT I AM" expresses this. Self-existent, no parts, no additions, can God ever experience. If it were possible for something to be added to Him that He once had not, then He would be what He once was not. Our God is "I AM THAT I AM" - awful, blessed, sacred, sweet, sweet to faith. Eternal life, eternal wisdom, eternal omnipotence, eternal justice, eternal goodness are the Lords. But though men speak of divine perfections, it is strictly more proper, more correct to speak of God, not having perfections, not having attributes, but being One He is perfection. He is an attribute, He is One. And I am disposed to think that it will be a delight, a delightful occupation for the Church in eternity to contemplate the perfection of Him whom they will be with, will see and know even as they are known. Now we see in part, know in part. Then shall we see face to face and know even as we are known. Here we are children, little children, and we think as children and speak as children. When

through grace we grow a little, we put away childish things. O when we put away our mortality with all its limitations and all its sinfulness and all its blindness and see God, see the Redeemer, see His face, as is said: And they shall see His face"; look on His eternal brow, see His infinite plan, His everlasting covenant; see how, out of His own fulness He gave His only begotten Son, made Him the Head of the Church, and did eternally choose out of the mass of human nature, which He foresaw and decreed, to make a church, a bride. See the eternal Son assuming and for ever having our nature in union with His divine Person and therein having eternal life for us and eternal justification and eternal sanctification. See the Holy Ghost, the seven Spirits which are before the throne as that one great God who brooded upon the face of the waters and brought order out of confusion, and life and brightness and beauty and sufficiency out of nothing. See this God, be with this God, be in union with this Christ and be like this Christ - there will be no childish thinking then and no childish speaking. Then there will be no sin, no distance, no desertion, no - "I have sought Him, I found Him not" (S.of S 3 v 1) - no thirst, no hunger, no pain, no night, no enemy, no devil. This prospect if set before us by the Holy Ghost will make us long to be there, will make us long to lay down this poor body and enter into Paul's language: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Cor.5.1) O to be there, O to perceive the love that brought us there, the blood that cleansed our sins from us, the grace that quickened us, the power that preserved us, the wisdom that guided us, the nourishment that sustained us, the hand that protected and covered us; to see God, see these mercies and revel in them, to harp with harps of gold and wear a victor's crown, to cast it down at the footstool of Him to whom it and all the glory of it belong, this will bring us to know what here we cannot know much of - the sufficiency, the all sufficiency of God. He is sufficient for Himself and I would not like you to think that this is an empty speculation. If opened by the Spirit, it is a living, a lively and a welcome truth to a believing heart, that there can be no additions to God of anything. He is sufficient for Himself and one reason why it is not, at least to me, a vain and empty speculation is this, that while God is eternally sufficient for Himself, needing no creature to add to His perfection or yield Him any joy that He did not possess in

eternal fulness, He should love to make a world and love a mass of beings, human beings, and give them to His beloved Son to be His bride. This is a stoop, a condescension beyond all our conception. Higher than heaven is from the earth so are God's thoughts higher than our thoughts and His ways than our ways. His love, O eternal love, fixed on man and expressed in the highest possible perfection in the gift of Christ. His love, ordering, mapping out before, in His own eternal mind, the path of every child of God, weighing in His wisdom the burden of every child of God, directing and commanding by His power every movement of every child of God and causing all to conduce to the growth in grace and the union of each soul to Jesus Christ in experience and bringing all to the issue that He decreed, namely His glory in them. This is love, and when you get a sight of it and a touch of it, then you will wonder at it. And this is His self sufficiency, and when you see the grace and feel a little of it that conquers sin, that casts out the love of the world, that separates from the world, that cuts a man off from himself, that brings him to quarrel with himself, to hate himself, to hate his own life that he may love it, to lose it that he might find it. Then you say this is God's self-sufficiency for nothing was done by the creature to add to it. And when you are the subject of that grace and also the subject of thousands of fears, fears which bring torment, fears as to an interest, fears of missing that prize such numbers never seek, such numbers seek in vain, and yet have visitations of His love, looks from His face so well-pleased, and come to wear grey hairs and look back on your fears and your troubles and His chastenings and dealings with you, then you say, this was all from Himself. It was all communication. Mine was all the receiving, receiving, receiving, and I made bad use of what He gave me, answering most to what is written in Ezekiel where all the riches God gave to her she poured out to heathens. Then He comes again and reconciles and forgives you and you then put your hand on your mouth and say: "I am to say no more; He is pacified toward me". You say: "This is Himself; this is His self-sufficiency". Sufficient was He for the work of redemption on earth, sufficient is He for the work of salvation in the heart, now that He is in heaven. Sufficient in providence to supply the wants of the Church and of the world. Sufficient is He to find us places when we need them and friends when we need them, to send supplies when we need them, to cause a failing barrel never to fail and an emptying cruse

never to run dry. This is a little of the self-sufficiency of God and to live on it, to live on Him that is to say, what an amazing mercy. O that our eyes were not so intently fixed on our emptiness always, though it is necessary to see it. O that our hearts were drawn by the cords of love and the bands of a man to this blessed God who is sufficient in Himself and sufficient for the Church.

I have said a poor word, but may the Lord by it direct your hearts to Himself.

Now out of this fulness God dealt bountifully with the Psalmist. He says: The Lord hath dealt bountifully with me, more bountifully than thou hast dealt with thyself, O sinner, as if he should say. More merciful has He been in His dealings and showing Himself gracious dealing in this way with thee, than thou hast been with thyself; more tender, more wonderful in grace than can be expressed.

Now let us come into Galeed and live here for a few minutes; come to self in the chapel, and live here for a few minutes. How many of us can say each to his and her own soul: "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee". I must confine my remarks to two or three particular points.

First of all has He not been very bountiful in showing to us the way of escape from the wrath to come and the door of entrance to His divine majesty, even the throne of grace. Take that as a point my friends. It is a great point. A way of escape from a deserved hell, a throne of grace open to a wretched sinner, an inviting God, a helping God, a teaching Spirit inditing prayer and showing us to whom to go with it and how to present it with hope of success. And this has gone on with some for a course of years, with others for a shorter period, but bountiful dealing it has been. When you have proudly turned away, He has not said - go your own way - but has sent afflictions after you to bring you back. When the pride of your heart has turned from the throne of grace, He has not said - I will shut and cover the face of My throne against you for ever - but has sent a kind intimation of His mercy and given you touches of His grace and attractions by Jesus Christ. That is bountiful dealing. We should prize the privilege of

prayer. We should bless God when we see there is a way of escape, and have a living hope that we are in that way. "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee" O my soul, many of us can say in this. We have said, some of us, we could not have lived through some trials but for the throne of grace. We could not have gone through some afflictions without the throne of grace. At the throne of grace we have obtained merciful answers, obtained promises, wrought righteousness. At the throne of grace there have been many sweet glimpses given to us of the favour and well-pleased face of God. Prayer has been made like a living spring in the heart, not a hard effort of the mind, but a living spring that again and again has sprung up, as it were, unasked, unsought, for the Lord has been within as a living fountain, a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. So note that down in your minds as one part of God's merciful, bountiful dealings with you in showing you the way of escape from the wrath to come and giving you a spirit of grace and of supplications.

And another bountiful dealing is this, that God has given us tokens for good in stormy times. His covenant not to drown the earth again is set in a stormy sky. In a day of rain it is seen. "I do set My bow in the clouds". Genesis 9 v 13. And the glory of the Lord, as seen by Ezekiel, was like the bow in the cloud in the day of rain. Now my friends, have you not had this? Cannot some of you say that of His infinite bounty when you have been in a storm and the enemy has said - There is no help in God for you - and you have looked and looked round you and seen only black and angry clouds full of rain threatening to empty themselves upon the earth and drown you. In such times have you not seen the bow, the covenant of grace, the Lord Jesus. Said Ezekiel - So was the glory of the appearance of them all, as the appearance of a man above the throne, as the bow in the cloud in the day of rain. "Show me" says the Psalmist "a token for good". Let me see by precious faith that Christ, that bow in the cloud, that covenant of God with my soul in Christ, that will say in my heart - no more drowning. Storms there may be and many of them and wild, rain and very much of it, and many threatenings, but no more drowning. This is the bow, this that glorious sight that the Spirit gave of the Lord Jesus. And a wonderful thing it is and very bountiful, very good and gracious of God of His free love to come down to a poor wretch and turn his eyes another way

to Jesus and His blood and to say to Him - "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee". Isaiah 54 v 7 and 9. This is the Lord's bountiful dealing. If you have seen the bow by faith you will go to heaven; you will go on dry land. It is a great thing therefore to have this bountiful dealing to record in your spirit, to have had a revelation of Jesus Christ to your soul, and to have felt that you could and did, at that moment, rest your soul secure on that Person you thus saw.

A bountiful dealing with the soul is an answer to prayer. Now I may, in saying this, catch some of you who are very apt to cut yourselves off, for if you speak honestly, you will have to say that you have had some answer to prayer at some time. You have won some sweet access to God and have obtained some answer. Sweet this, and how bountiful, how bountiful of God to answer a worm, to say "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt", to have held out the golden sceptre to you, to have given you a degree of liberty which has amazed you; a feeling of access, of nearness, of boldness that you have even said

Lord, I cannot let Thee go
Till a blessing Thou bestow
Do not turn away Thy face
Mine's an urgent pressing case

There are three sorts of answers that God gives to His children. An answer as to their salvation, an answer respecting the tempter, an answer in providence, and I venture to say that these three things wherein answers have been obtained are of a nature very wonderfully to establish the soul and move it to say to itself: "O silly, O wandering, foolish soul, why have you forsaken the fountain of living waters? Why have you gone in the way of Egypt? Why have you attempted to drink the waters of Sihor? O silly, O guilty, O faithless soul, why have you left the blessed God of all grace for vanity and done that which is reprov'd by Jeremiah, by the Lord Himself: "For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain

of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. (Jeremiah 2 v 13). We must, some of us, thus expostulate with our own souls and exhort our souls to return to rest, the only rest. Return unto thy rest, the rest God gave and which you forsook. The rest that cost the dear Redeemer blood and wounds and smart, but which you have treated too lightly. The rest that the Spirit wrought in you, which you have done despite to in some ways. "Return unto thy rest for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee", in answers to prayer.

People who have valuables are apt to put them in safes for safety and O what valuables have some of us here. What valuables we have. No rubies can be compared, no millions can be counted by the side of the valuables that God has given to us. We shall leave a good deal behind us when we die but we shall leave none of these things. As we grow in grace we leave a good many things behind us, childish things, childish thoughts and childish ways, but there are some things we do not leave behind us. We do not leave answers to prayer, operations of the Spirit. We forget them sometimes. "My people have forgotten Me days without number" (Jeremiah 2 v 32). "They have forgotten their restingplace" (Jeremiah 50 v 6). And when we are brought back by the Spirit, then we say to our souls, "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee". Therefore "Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake" (Psalm 115 v 1)

There is another bountiful dealing which some have had and which others want and crave. I mean a blessed earnest of the Spirit. You may look on an estate large and valuable and not be able to say one blade of grass in that estate belongs to me. You may say I do not know the owner except by report. But you may, by faith, look on the land which is very far off and the beauty and the glory and the blessedness and the unchangeableness of that land because of the presence of Him who is its light and its temple and its glory. And you may say of Him and it, they both belong to my Friend, and I have had an earnest of that. Is not that bountiful dealing? Did ever Jesus Christ say: "Where I am, there shall also My servant be". Did He ever tell you that He had gone to prepare a place for you? What an earnest He gave of that when He said that to His disciples. It was like a part of it.

When you get a word from the Holy Ghost, you get an earnest of your inheritance. When you get a sense of God's love, you get an earnest of your inheritance. When you get a visit from Christ and a touch of His greatness and mercy and salvation, you get an earnest. It is part of the whole, not something different from what is to come. What is to come is greater but this is of that very same inheritance, the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. Why I think sometimes people are a great deal richer than they know, I mean the poor people of God; a great deal better off than they can realise. Think of a man going about with a promise of God in his soul, an earnest of the inheritance; of a poor sinner, troubled and afflicted in many ways, and yet God has given him tokens for good, and given him some sweet sense of an interest. O how rich that sinner is. He may well say to his soul - "Do go back to thy rest". One writes, and it is quite true for us to sing who have been blessed - "I am rich to all the intents of bliss since Thou O God art mine". You cannot be poor while Christ is rich, and this is a thing belonging to the experience of the saints sooner or later; they get the earnest of the Spirit. You know the connection of that beautiful word "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing" (that is for heaven) "is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit". (2 Corinthians 5 v 4 and 5). O poor sinner, how rich you are having this. Sometimes this is given, the sealing of the Spirit, a distinct operation, after faith. "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1 v 13). "After that ye believed". "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me". After that ye believed in Christ, in His efficacious death, in His precious righteousness, in His infinite mercy; believed that He is that glorious high throne from the beginning that is the place of your sanctuary; believed that it is true that He said "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out". And after you believed that such a wretch as you might venture to pray and venture to plead the blood which He shed. After that; it may be a long time after; God is a sovereign in this; but after that ye believed. Come poor sinner with all your doubts and fears, are you not a believer when it is expressed as I have just expressed it. Then this is to come that is bounty, infinite bounty; this is to follow one day. "Ye were sealed with

that Holy Spirit of promise". I have sometimes tried to express it thus, and some of you may remember, that the Lord's work in the soul may be likened to the writing of a letter or a paper. You go on writing, get interruptions, but still proceed from time to time. Or one proceeds writing and after a while there comes a stop and the letter is signed, the signature is added. So is God's work. He writes and writes lessons on the heart. He writes convictions, then mercies. By troubles He makes impressions and writes characters, and by the Holy Spirit He leads and teaches the soul how to pray, through whom to pray, what merit to plead, what argument to use. He goes on in this work and sometimes the soul thinks there will be no end, no blessed end. There comes a day when that same blessed Spirit comes and as it were closes that chapter, that paper, that writing and puts His own signature or seal to it, lets you know the whole of it, much of which you doubt, all of which you doubt sometimes, the whole of it was His work; all but the sin. He shows you that your despair He used to lead you to magnify that work, your confusion He used to lead you to cry mightily for mercy, that your guilt He made use of as you felt it to turn your eyes to the Son of God and to plead before the Father what the Son of God had done. And now He comes as it were and puts such an impression, such a seal on your soul that you say "Why I have been a fool. I have thought that this was not God's work. I have thought that was only excitement. I thought that access was just my own matter and I moved in it myself. I thought my convictions were only natural and answers to prayer and good times in hearing or in secret, I thought again and again I could not hold one of them as being of God. And now I see, because my misty sight has been cleared by this that now has come to me, that it was all God's blessed work. How bountiful, O how bountiful is this dealing of God with a poor sinner. Some of you may say, we should like the seal. You will get it if you belong to God and if you can beg and pray and wait and beg and pray and wait, it will come to you. "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee".

Bountiful too in providence, supplying needs, needs which, at times, seemed too great even to be supplied. "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with Thee" Bountifully in affliction. Bountifully He has sent it, sent it, that is, for good, to work good. And O the bounty of grace, the fulness of grace in sanctifying affliction, in delivering from affliction. And these things make up (O how many I

have to leave out) make up a part of the bountiful dealings of God with some of us.

Now in conclusion I would say is not all this bountifulness an incentive, a reason, why we should say to our souls as the Psalmist said to His soul: "Return unto thy rest". Why art thou weary and why so discontented? Why so fretful about thy lot in providence? Why so anxious to change thy way here and there in providence since the Lord hath been so bountiful and so kind? There is no rest in that, there is no rest in this. There is no rest in the creature, no rest in self, no rest in any kind, tender providence. The only rest is in God Himself, and does it not reprove our coldness, does it not reprove our wandering? May the Lord help us to regard the matter properly and say to our souls with the grace and diligence bestowed upon us: "Return unto thy rest O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee".

AMEN.