

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
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Psalm 116 v 7

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

This Psalm opens beautifully as you who know the Lord would like to open your eyes in the morning, with praise in your hearts, with love to Him who has been so amazingly kind, so tender in His love, so faithful to His Word, His engagements. "I love the Lord". Happy the man who can say this. I love incarnate Deity. It is a grand thing to know Him, and it is a certain result of knowing Him that you love Him. He at once becomes the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely when He is known. Who is to be compared with Him, almighty to save, gracious, lovingly dying, graciously quickening by His Spirit, mercifully guiding and supporting by His providence, giving deliverances, hearing prayers, raising up friends, removing this support and that in order that His own arm may be our support. "I love the Lord". If He has come your way and met you as you were suffering the pains of hell, as you found trouble and sorrow, and the sorrows of death above all other sorrows, I say if He came your way and found you in that condition and heard your cry and delivered your soul, oh surely you would say, "I love the Lord". Great deliverances giveth He to His king, great deliverances giveth He to worms and bound up souls. Glory dwells in the land when He comes. Back looks are good if the back looks be on a bad state out of which you have been delivered. It is good indeed. You will never raise Ebenezers but with respect to some trouble, some danger out of which you were delivered. A Christ boasted of who has never done anything for the boasting person is an unknown Christ to that Person. You must have something to fit you for Him, something for Him to do for you, some trouble out of which He must deliver you if you are not to die in it. Some hell of sin, some sorrow for sin, curse of law, bondage of iniquity. Such and such things this gracious Saviour is suited for, comes to people in such and such states and so they know Him. Never boast of an unknown Christ. Better be in misery for bondage, doubt and fear till you come

to your death bed and then get deliverance than boast of things you do not know, of a person with whom you are unacquainted. "I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplication". And perhaps you have thought, this voice of mine what is it? The chattering of a crane or a swallow. This voice of mine, what is it? Why making a noise. "I mourn in my complaint and make a noise" Berridge is a good interpreter here. He says, of Christ,

He understands a sigh divine
And marks a secret groan

Do not be too particular about words in prayer. They may verily be without a heart. Better have a heart without words than words without a heart. Voice - the voice of the soul in unutterable groanings, unuttered desires, supplications going out of necessity, felt necessity. Men may chatter without felt need, but if they are pressed almost out of measure and despair of life and are pressed by some particular need, then supplication goes up to heaven. Troubles in your house, troubles in your person, troubles in your business and troubles with sin in your nature, these will cause you to supplicate. The absence of these and a profession of religion may leave you free to talk a great deal about God, but there is no union between that blessed One and you. A full supply needs an empty place, a fountain opened for sin needs men who are sinners, not righteous, and a robe of righteousness to be imputed needs men with filthy garments and conscious of their unjust state before God. And when you have been heard, what is one effect of an answered prayer? "Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." I have no doubt that every godly person here who has had some distinct answer to prayer, some distinct dealing of God with him, has found the substance of this resolution in his soul. Now I will call upon God as long as I live. I have got this blessing and I will take advantage of it. I will go to Him again and again and all my days. Take advantage of all the gales you get from the Spirit and the answers to prayer that come into your soul. He tells them a little of his experience. The sorrows of death, the gloomy anticipations of a deserved death, compassed me and in a sense shut out of my view all mercies. The pains of hell, the pains of a looked for punishment, a deserved punishment, the pains of the hell of sin in your nature,

pains of weakness in regard of that sin that is in you. The pains of heavy fears lest you should fall a prey to sin, lest you should miss that prize such numbers never seek, such numbers seek in vain. These pains - it is a very serious thing to miss them, a very solemn thing to miss these pains, for you will be sure to miss the deliverance.

"Then called I upon the Name of the Lord". No matter what the place was in which you were, what the outward condition you might have, you must, out of necessity and by grace call upon the Lord. "Then called I upon the Name of the Lord". And the Name of the Lord is Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. That Name has in it everything that the poor afflicted sinner can need and faith receives the knowledge of Him, the report of Him. "Then called I upon the Name of the Lord; O Lord I beseech Thee deliver my soul". God won't let you build on anything short of a revealed Christ if you belong to Him. You may have many sweet things, many good evidences, but He won't let you make a foundation of any of them nor of all of them put together. Deliverance, deliverance, deliverance, revelation of the Son of God and the forgiveness of your sins. How will you stand in the swellings of Jordan if you have not this blessing? What will become of you if you go out of the world with sin unpardoned? What will become of your religion? O but the Lord looks upon praying people mercifully and He forgives them, He forgives them. Forgiveness? Why it comes to malefactors doomed to die, to people who say they have no religion worth the having, who say they have no grace; they wish they had. Who cut themselves off, who look upon their nature as the foulest of all and upon their conduct, even if it be not before men, but only their heart, upon their conduct as the foulest of all conduct, and forgiveness came to those. They measure themselves sometimes by preaching and say that is no good to me. They measure themselves by evidences and say we have not got them. O but think of it God comes to those very people. Blessed be His Name some of us can say He came to us when we were in such and such a condition. An open wound, a sore running in the night and ceasing not. Then Jesus came. Happy man who can answer Erskine's question

Do'st mind the place, the spot of land
Where Jesus did thee meet?

My friends, it is great to say it. He met some of us. Some of us can go to the place where He met us, where He forgave us. I can go to the room in my mind and do, when He came to me in that room and put my sins away and they were not common sins. Away - when He put my sins away. Despair not, the dying Lamb is fitted for you who are guilty and lost. The dying Lamb has all the graces, and all the beauty and all the evidences in His own hand to give to you and when He gives you forgiveness He will give you everything else. "I called upon the Name of the Lord." Go on; the devil will stop you if he can, guilt will stop you if it can, but as well as you can put your bad case before God and the day will come when He will say "I even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions as a thick cloud and as a cloud thy sin." And that will be enough for you for the moment. Then you will say "Gracious is the Lord, yea our God is merciful". The Lord preserveth the simple who have one mind and an eye to look to Him without looking also or attempting also to look at themselves.

"I was brought low and He helped me". Kept me from sinking into black despair, helped me to pray, helped me to confess and confess and confess my sins. Do not pass that help by. Do not say it is nothing. If you get help in prayer it is a great thing.

Then he comes to the text - "Return unto thy rest, "constantly come to this rest, constantly turn to this. When you are disposed to go away, return to this. When matters arise that drive you hither and thither, return to this rest. When sin comes afresh, when you enter into Paul's experience as expressed in the seventh of Romans, return to this rest, as he did. He came to it. "I thank God". My conflict is severe, my defeats shame me, my weakness grows upon me; there is a law in my members and I cannot erradicate it; it sticks to me but I thank God through Jesus Christ I have got hope of victory and He will give it to me. Yea I have it now in the hand of my faith. Friends, God will shut up to Himself if He loves you. His Spirit will do it. He will cry death on your own life, weakness on your own strength, folly on your own wisdom, and then when you despair of life He will deliver you again and again. He will help you to say to your soul, "Return unto thy rest". O restless mind, here is the place of security and satisfaction. O wandering affections, here is the centre, the only true centre. No matter how eccentric you become, from time to time,

here is your true centre, this rest of God. What a mercy to have a resting place. The resting place is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There is no other rest for any living soul. There is no other place for the sole of your foot. Only here will you find a solid rest for time and eternity. Only here will you find your soul in the experience that is in the prophet Isaiah "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee. It is a great peace that. Nothing for the time disturbs it and therefore it is perfect. Nothing enters into it to in the least distress the mind. It is perfect for the time in your experience, as it is perfect in itself, in the Lord.

There is this rest to which we say to our souls "Return" in some very particular regards. First with respect to our sins that are always busy. "When I would do good evil is present with me". It is a painful life to live but only in the measure in which we know that life can we appreciate the rest of this blessed man of God in our text. The Apostle, to whom I have just referred as relating his experience in the seventh of Romans, found this rest. It was not a rest in the absence of sin, not in the silence of sin, nor in the constant defeat of sin. It was a rest with regard to sin as it was moving, working, deceiving and overcoming. A rest that made him love His Lord and cleave to Him. Now you, blessed with grace, have this conflict - I have it - more or less a daily conflict and perhaps in some it shows itself in the absence of the power of God, a grievous absence, and probably there never was a day in the Church of God since the Reformation, so dark and confused and dead as today. That is my judgment as far as my reading of the history of the church goes and as far as my observation goes and as far as my experience goes. But when you get tired, tired in your spirit, worn down and almost worn out with the constant presence of sin and the painful absence of the mighty help of God, and say perhaps am I to live like this the rest of my days, then some of His mercies will come up and you will find an argument arising in your heart out of the recollection of His mercies. Here the Psalmist had had deliverance. Now he says, I will go to the Lord again and lean on that arm again on which I leant and by which I got victory in the past. Do you follow this? Here is a resting place for a man who is daily more or less troubled about and troubled by sin in his members; perceiving a law in his members

warring against the law of his mind and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members. Our positions help sin where grace does not prevent. Our circumstances seem much to help it. Here is a sin that irritates an impatient man; here is a circumstance that attracts a covetous man. Here is another thing that attracts a person who is naturally unclean. Here is something that attracts an idolatrous disposition. The very circumstances in which we are placed by God seem, at times, to awaken and attract, and allure us and bring sin up in our minds and we are carried away. And where can you rest? Go to your experience, you won't rest there, because the old enemy may say, can you prove that is right? God lets the enemy say that in order to bring you off from resting on even what the Lord has done in your soul. He is jealous and if you think more of His gift than Himself while He won't withdraw the gift, He will hide it from your view. Depend upon it you will never really rest short of Himself. He won't let you. O, but the sweetness of resting in the Lord. I think that the Apostle's heart must have been greatly enlarged and his joy swelling in his spirit at that time when he said "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord". "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin." He thanked God, he rested here. It is a sweet rest. It is resting in the promise of Christ - "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace." It does not say, sin won't trouble you; it shall not have dominion over you. And he gives a great reason in the same chapter where he says - God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which you have been delivered. You have been put into the gospel, you have been brought to know the Son of God, you have been brought to some gracious acquaintance with Him, and I thank God on your behalf. You were the servants of sin, you were slaves chained to sin like a slave chained to the mast but now you have obeyed through grace that blessed doctrine into which, as molten metal, you were run and that puts you into the shape of Christ and now, says that same gracious Christ - sin in you won't lightly give up, but it shall not have dominion over you. Ah professor, if you live under the dominion of sin, dominion never broken, and you die in that you will be in hell through eternity. But if you are plagued with sin, if sin is your burden, grief and shame and if you are enabled at times to enter into a serious conflict with it, calling

upon the name of the Lord for help, then you will find this rest again and again will be enjoyed by you. Here I rest, you may say; here I anticipate a deliverance one day; here I look for the Lord's mercy to help me, to bring me honourably through these dreadful things and deliver me from all iniquity in His own time. That is a good life, that is a real rest. You may rest on the oath of God in Christ, the promise of God in Christ, the strength of God in Christ, the love of God in Christ, the blood of Christ, and righteousness of Christ. This will again and again constitute the resting place for the sole of your foot and you won't want to wander.

Return unto thy rest O my soul with regard to your ignorance. That is to say, do not look for any increase in a gracious knowledge of God but in and through Jesus Christ. You may weary yourself for very vanity in wrongly seeking knowledge of God. Can I wrongly seek knowledge of God? one says. Yes, you can. You may seek it in books, books which it is proper for you to read, if your view of Him and of your intention in reading them be right, but if you say, now I will get acquainted with this doctrine, I will understand that, and I will get into some knowledge of theology, well you may do it, you may attain your end, but you won't attain salvation that way. You won't attain an increase of gracious experience that way. You won't get clothed with humility in that way and you won't find rest to your soul in that way. No, it comes by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. May the Holy Ghost have that prominence in our affections and desires that the Lord Jesus gives Him in the promise - "He shall glorify Me for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you". That prominence that Paul gives to Him in the Corinthians, where he tells us of the different administrations that the saints of the Most High are the subjects of, but One Lord is the author of them all, that is the Holy Ghost. The Lord preserveth the simple. When a man comes into some experience of his ignorance, sometimes after reading the Scriptures for a while, he closes the Book saying I cannot read, I cannot learn, and then the Teacher, being the Holy Ghost in that man's heart, he will begin to cry like this - "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law". "That which I see not teach Thou me". He may reflect as Job did when in the presence of God he said - I have uttered that I understood not. I will say no more; I will put my hand on my mouth; I will say no more; teach me Lord. And he is afraid

of taking a step in religion without the Holy Ghost. At a time like this his cry is for revelation of the Son of God, for an increase of grace in his heart, for some further teaching and manifestation of God to his soul and here is his point of rest. The only teacher that can teach him effectually is the Spirit. On Him I will wait, the Spirit of Christ. He rests here. As he is brought to rest on the atonement of Christ, so he is brought to rest in the gracious work of the Holy Ghost to make him more and more deeply and richly acquainted with the mystery of godliness.

And here I shall name, once again - I have more than once lately named it to you - a matter that is of great importance to me in these days, namely a saving acquaintance with the Trinity. O this mystery, I do not understand it, I never expect to understand it. I believe it, I think I believe it. I believe that the Apostle John in his Epistle says that which is to be known. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." And if you walk in the light of God's mercy manifested in the Person and work of Christ, then you do walk in the light. You see yourself in your lost condition; you see yourself in your saved condition. You see yourself as being cut off from God by the Fall and by your own sin, and you see yourself as united to God in the Lord Jesus and you walk with Him. These things don't always follow immediately as I have named them but they do follow really and in time. An undone man is put right sooner or later; a man sensible of distance from God is brought near to Him sooner or later, and there he rests. Whenever he comes here he rests in the Lord. He says to his soul, disposed to wander, return, come to this place, come to this blessed teacher, this Lord Jesus and His good Spirit. Come to the Father, for the Father is in His Son and you cannot see the Son really without seeing the Father. Come to this resting place. Rest for time, rest in your conflicts, rest in your sense of ignorance, rest here on the blessed God of all grace. Return unto thy rest.

Return unto thy rest in regard of troubles. distracting troubles, depressing dejecting troubles. In perplexing troubles. What can you do with them, what can you do with them? Handle them, look at them, regard them, regard them as in themselves evils,

and what then? You are afraid of judgment. Regard them as affecting your person or your family and what can you do with them? You are afraid. Regard them as affecting your mind and disposition and probably prospectively you regard them as affecting your position, and what then? No rest. And if you regard them in the dim light of temptation you will probably say these things are sent for evil and not good. There is no rest in your thoughts about them. There is no rest in your meditations concerning them. You come to confess that you deserve all that is laid on you and much more. Now when the Lord enables you to do this, cast thy burden on the Lord, come to the rest, the sweet place of rest where mercy shines, where love reigns, where forgivenesses are; come where omnipotence is; come where wisdom is; come where all the perfections of Deity are; come to this place of rest. Here is a promising God, here is a mighty God, here is a teaching God, here is God, the end of faith. "Return unto thy rest O my soul". Return in these regards. It is a great mercy to be enabled so to do.

And now just a word in conclusion on the next part - "For the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee". He turns the past into an argument. He argues with his soul as it were, he looks back. Oh looking back is sometimes very helpful. He looks back, he remembers the sorrows of death and the pains of hell. The remembrance of those things is very keen sometimes. Then he remembers how he was delivered, how the Lord came to him, how the devil was put out of court, how a change of raiment was given, how mercy reigned, how the blood of Christ was made known and powerfully prevailing over guilt and sin and everything that was wrong. Now he says, the Lord dealt bountifully with you, do not turn away from Him. The bountiful dealing appears, first of all, in the provision of a rest. Who deserves a resting place, having left God in the Fall and by practice? Who deserves a rest? Can any convinced person here lift up his face to God and say he deserves a resting place for his sinful nature? O, but the bounty of God in providing a resting place. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life". What bounty, O what divine bounty. Riches, great riches, riches of grace, riches of glory, riches of love in the provision of the Lord Jesus, in the sending of Him and making Him what He is, Jesus. Giving Him a Name and

everything attaching to that Name, and making that known in the Bible and again and again in the hearts of all for whom it was provided. And what bountiful dealing of the Holy Ghost is here. Who has taught me my need? Who has taught you your need? Who but the blessed Spirit. Who passed by us when we were dead and loathsome and said "live"? O the bounty of God in giving a new heart to a sinner in the work of regeneration, in the work of conviction, in the work of casting a sinner down from his holiness and bringing him into a sense of his wickedness and guilt and hell-deserving condition, and then opening this great thing - Jesus, the sinners' Friend. And the bounty of the Lord in giving out an invitation to a person - "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". And the bounty of the Lord in laying hold of that person, as it were. As the hand of Noah was put out of the window of the Ark to take in the dove, so the Lord put out the hand of His power and goodness and took us in, and gave us rest to our souls. And did He do it for a time only, for once only? Did He not do it for all time? Has He not said, here we have an anchorage, here we have Jesus within the veil. And now he says, let us cast an anchor into that which is within the veil. Here we have a good God who, willing to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, did by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, afford strong consolation. If you have strong sorrow, you need strong consolation. If you have strong sin, you need strong grace, a strong gospel. Things must fit. Strong consolation we need as we are sinners and as we feel again and again, driven from every natural resting place, from every arm of flesh. driven from everything in which and on which we would rest and lean if we were permitted, driven from these things and then brought to this, so that we say - I was glad to find this this morning moving in my mind - "Return unto thy rest O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee". And perhaps you will begin at once to say, Lord I have dealt churlishly with Thee. Treacherously have I dealt and I have treachery still in my nature. Deal kindly with me and be gracious to me. May the Lord help us so to speak to our own souls and if any of you are saying "Why art thou cast down O my soul?" may you be helped also to say, "Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."

AMEN.