

1353e
La 1892

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

1912/12/02
2/12/02

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Rehoboth Chapel, Tunbridge Wells

Anniversary on 21 June 1905
EVENING

Text Psalm 37 verse 7

"Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him"

In speaking from these words this morning I proposed four points, two of which I a little considered. First, the rest, it is a Person, the one who is the Rest, namely the Lord, and secondly, I noticed the resting in the Rest, the actings of faith on the Person and work of Christ. I do not propose to weary you by repeating what I said then.

The two other points were, first, what warrant a sinner has to come to this rest to which he is so kindly invited. What is the particular warrant or that on which one may stand and plead and look and hope for success in this great business? Well, this is very important to one who is concerned about eternity, whose concern arises out of two things namely, first, his apprehensions of God as he sees God in the broken law, and secondly, his apprehensions of his own state, as he sees himself in the light of God in that law. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light". Unless there be light the eye is of no use for the purpose of vision, and unless God shine upon a sinner, he cannot know what he is as a sinner, the evil of sin, the terrible magnitude of sin, as done against a holy, almighty God, the guilt of sin, as charged on him by the Spirit of God in the law, the demerit of sin as seen according to the light of God in the law. These things do make it a wonderful business on which men are set, to seek safety, happiness and holiness for ever and ever. And unless there is manifested to persons so exercised good, sufficient ground, on which to go and engage in this matter, how can there be any hope of a right sort, any confidence of a good issue? I cannot see how there can be. Oh, to see yourself in God's light is to see yourself a very child of hell. To see sin, as He speaks of it, in the malignancy, nature, pollution,

unrighteousness of it - as it is a nature wholly contrary to His nature - is to see what will make your eyes wet with tears, your heart sore with aching, your spirit oppressed with heavy fears of the end of your immortal soul. Then you will want, in such an exercise, to know if there is any warrant, any ground on which you stand, that will bear your weight, reasons that you may urge before the Lord why He should be gracious to so guilty a sinner, why He should cast a pitying eye on so vile a wretch. This does make it very important to consider. Such a person as I have spoken of, and as some of us feel to be, has to go before the Lord and beg for this rest, and it is this matter I would wish, as assisted, a little to take up now. And where shall I begin? If I go to the earth, if I go to myself, my poverty, my hardness, coldness, dreadful sins, forgetfulness of God, base ingratitude and utter helplessness, I cannot urge them as a plea why that God against whom I have done all these things should forgive them. There must be another reason, affording another ground to stand upon for the approaches, arguments, wrestlings, beseechings of a sinner, if there is any hope of a refuge to be found. First of all then, the ground that any guilty wretch, miserable, forlorn, distraught sinner has afforded him is revealed and given out in the very nature of God Himself. Goodness, justice, love, pity, decree, purpose, thought, intention are set forth in the scriptures in the Person and death of Christ, as the proper and only reason, ground, plea, and urging for such as some feel themselves to be, when they approach the almighty God to ask for salvation. And I would speak of this great, this sufficient, eternal Rock, on which the saints do stand and pray, in three respects, and they are in the Trinity. First, the love of God. His nature is declared to be love. "God is love". O what an amazing declaration was that made to Moses as he was on the mount, about to receive the law the second time. The Lord passed by and proclaimed "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation." This is the plea the gospel affords us. This is

the reason the gospel will put into the mouth of a sinner sometimes, when he goes with aching heart and confessing mind and sincere spirit, yet with all his death and hardness, unto God for mercy. This is bigger than his sins, greater than his iniquities, more than his transgressions. Oh, if it please the Spirit of Christ to show this to any coming, labouring, afflicted sinner, it must be in him a prevailing plea, a reason why he should go, an urging power in him to take him to the throne of grace, a guiding light to direct him safely through the mazes of his own transgressions and dreadful iniquities. Then if that be revealed to any poor, afflicted, guilty sinner, it will be to him and in him an all sufficient reason why, though to often stumbled, so much tempted, sorely cast down on account of what he is, he should yet persevere, beg, pray, argue, beseech, wrestle with the Almighty. "God is love" And see the floodgates open of this love in the greatest gift Infinity could give out of Itself, namely, the beloved Son of God. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." No wider could the gates of Life open than this; no greater flood could issue from the river of the water of life, than this; no greater manifestation of God's goodwill to sinners could ever be given; no greater opening of His mind and purpose to save sinners could ever be displayed before the opening eyes of guilty people than this "God is love". And we are told in the chapter I have just read (1 John 4) "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins". What an effect of love is the Person of Jesus, the complex person of Jesus. What an evidence that God does intend to have sinners with Himself is the gift of His Son. What a proof it is that He means what He says when He speaks of His goodwill, the goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush. O, you people, who at times can hardly bear the sight of yourselves, and are afflicted with sadness because you are not sad, and grieve because you cannot grieve, and feel because you have such an unfeeling heart, and are ashamed because you are so bold in sin, when a blessed, great, and all sufficient ground of going before the Lord is set before your eyes, you wont have a good reason to urge against venturing. Here there is rest, and God has declared it is His goodwill that

men should have it. And this is the first reason, the first warrant.

The second warrant and ground and reason, is the coming and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." "I am the good Shepherd, the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep". He laid it down. No man took it from Him. "I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again, this commandment have I received of My Father." An eye to the atonement will marvellously strengthen a sinner in his begging. A view of the greatness of Christ's precious blood, the efficacy of it to remove sin, the fervency and efficacy of it before God, is a plea that, when faith perceives it, will wonderfully encourage the most downcast sinner. Here is wisdom's voice. "Unto you, O men, I call and my voice is to the sons of men" What is this blessed voice? Says wisdom to these poor sinful ones, ruined by their own sins, destroying themselves as they have done over and over again, fallen, as they have, by their own iniquities, as intently unwilling as they are, universally unable in themselves, yet to them says this voice "Oh, ye poor, depressed, miserable sinners, empty souls, poor things," - who in themselves have neither help, nor hope, who cannot go and tell the Lord they have got a good feeling towards Him, cannot tell Him their hearts are like a fountain and their eyes like springs, who have rather to confess they are held in their sins - to them says this voice "You simple ones, turn in. Here's rest for the weary soul, life for the dead, in My blood. Holiness for the polluted in My righteousness and sanctification; power in My atonement for the weak; victory in My atonement for the defeated; heaven for those who feel themselves children of hell." What would you have? Will this do? This great gospel, this great reason why God should give rest and why one should venture to ask for it, will it do?

Our Lord Jesus Christ is a Man. "Why" says one "that is a common thing to say". If it is ever given to you to believe it, that there should be a Man in heaven to represent you, to take your place and stand before infinite purity for you, instead of you, no, it won't be a common thing then. It will be heaven, if

you may but reach it. That there should be a Man there to take the place of a sinful worm, who, being also God, can lay His hand on God, and being Man, can lay His hand on you, and can bring you and the great God and Father of all His poor people together, and reconcile you in the body of His flesh, through death, and in the sacred prevalency of His intercession, what a wonder this would be. Jesus is the image of the invisible God in His great and firm decrees to the church. As this is opened by the Spirit, through faith, to the church, it does afford the most guilty, polluted, - who may not in themselves come to God - a plea to venture in the Person of another. Will it do for thee, sinner? Does it afford a plea for thee? This is the warrant, this is the plea.

I must hasten. There is, in the next place, a ground, a reason, a warrant, for the blackest, the guiltiest to venture before God, because of the love of the Spirit to him. One of the greatest acts of love the Holy Ghost ever does after His preparing the body of Christ for the eternal Son of God is His coming into the wretched, and what Dr Goodwin calls, the dunghills of the hearts of His people to operate, live and dwell there, and to teach. Ah! God never mocks anybody. If there be in a sinner's heart, a panting for God, as the hart brays for the waterbrooks, the face turned towards Mount Zion, the heart towards God, towards Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, if there be a simple prayer, an honest confession, a sigh Godward, a groan that is unutterable, that sinner will never meet with a rebuff at the throne of grace, never see a frown on God's face. If we are exercised about our state as sinners, about being reconciled to God, we shall be much troubled to get near Him because of an unbelieving heart, a tempting devil, many urgent things in our own spirits, such as we shall pollute the place, that He must be angry with us, that His nature forbids us going near Him, as, that we are told in the scriptures He heareth not sinners, that perhaps we have never had one single scripture powerfully said to our hearts to encourage us, to warrant us to come. With all these reasons one may say there is a reason that will overtop them, a mountain to whose summit they never can reach, flood, though they may, the spirit with dismal feelings,

and that mountain is God Himself in His decrees, His goodness, His kindness to sinners. The work of the Spirit is a remarkable work. It concurs with the scriptures, it is often a secret invitation, as it were, issued from Himself to the sinner. It is as if sometimes a sinner may almost translate His work into language as if one should be saying in your heart "You may come, there is room; you may come, there is mercy; you may come, there is Christ's blood and love; you may come, there is pardon; you may beg, God gives; you may ask, and you wont get the contrary of what you ask!" He concurs with the invitations, that is to say, as they are written in the Word, so at times He will cause them to distil on the mind, and strengthen the heart. Does the Lord say "Seek and ye shall find?" Does not the Spirit also say in the heart of a sinner "Seek, there is a finding?" Do the scriptures say, "Knock, and it shall be opened?" Does not the Spirit prepare the soul to knock at mercy's door? Does the scripture tell us "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force?" Does not the Spirit produce that holy violence by which the sinner feels, though he perish, it shall be knocking. And does he not feel he can understand that "Mercy" knocked so loudly she really thought she would be reproved, and asked what the one who opened the gate said about her. Does not the Holy Ghost beget this violence, this holy violence in a poor sinner? Then, with this inward work concurring with the scripture, the Word of truth, what encouragement there is and what a ground for us to stand upon. Will it do, sinner?

Now one may begin to say, by way of objection, one here may be mentally saying "I lack one thing, I have never had the letter sent to me that was sent to Christiana bidding her go on pilgrimage." If, though you have not had as distinct a message as she had, if you say you want a scripture, as if your name were said, suppose you got something that said "Mary", "John", "Thomas", the devil would say "there are many Mary's, John's, Thomas's". So he might come and try to rob you of it by putting their names beside yours. But this will do, if it come with a holy power on your spirit, and makes you say "Why, God is good, I will venture; Christ died, I will venture; the Spirit is

gracious, I will venture; the gospel is great, I will beg; the Lord is faithful, I will seek" You cannot possibly have a better warrant than that, which will bear the weight of your soul, carry all the necessities of your soul and you will see One has made Himself responsible and that is not you, you cannot do it, but the Lord Himself will see to it that you are brought honourably through this great business and landed at last in heaven. Now I have been a little particular about this because it suits me so. I do want a ground, shifting sand wont do to build on. The strength of a building is its foundation. You may get thick walls and bond them together well, but if the foundation be bad, that is the strength of the building, not the walls. And if you get a quantity of things as you imagine, and if you should encourage yourself on inadequate grounds, you will have a bad foundation, depend upon it. If you get this good ground, and cannot put brick upon brick, and seem to be constantly losing ground, you wont be lost. Shaken on it, you may be, washed off it, you will never be. I would earnestly ask you to look very narrowly at this "Bring no money, price or aught". "'Tis not for good deeds, good tempers nor frames". They will not be our ground, depend upon it. They may be for garnishing, here and there, God's work, but a bottom they will never be, for God has not ordained they should. Reasons of this sort He will never own. Graces He does own, where they are, but a reason for praying, hoping for mercy, will always be found in God Himself, and not in another.

Now look at this great work. I have tried to lay the foundation. He says "Rest in the Lord". Look at the unrest that is in man. Part of God's curse, living in the world, and visiting every house, and every creature in the world now, is this unrest. Driven out of his original habitation, how can a sinner rest in the wilderness, the desert of sin? Eden, beautiful and sufficient, for all necessary things God planted, and put man into. Sin drove him out, and shut the gates, and now the gates are kept by cherubim and a flaming sword turning every way. Man does nothing but wander hither and thither. How can he rest, having lost his centre, God, and every proper, every good thing? Says God, in His gospel, in His church there shall be a people who shall rest, and they shall rest in Him. "Unto Shiloh

shall the gathering of the people be", unto Him, and unto another and a better Paradise, another tree and a better tree, the Tree of Eternal Life. And people, who are outcasts, who are in themselves wretched creatures, shall come to this place, dwell in this place, eat of this fruit, and live for ever. There is no rest out of God for sinners. The wicked are likened to the troubled sea, that cannot rest, casting up mire and dirt. Now, says the Lord "Rest in Me" "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest".

A word or two about this rest. When one ventures before the Lord, and it is a venture, with all the unrest of sin, the burden of guilt, the fear of being wrong for eternity, the sense of being unlike the Lord, contrary to Him, and the dreadful feeling of being under His curse in the law, it is a venture, but when the soul obeys the almighty call, and runs to this sweet and dear and sufficient relief that the gospel affords, this is coming to Christ. It is a marvellous thing how one, who has tried to pull off his rags and substitute something and been able, as he has thought at times, to weave himself a covering, when one, who has been trying to pull out bad bricks, put better ones in, and whitewash the building, when one should come to the Lord and say "It seems to me there is the plague in the house, wilt Thou undertake this? Canst Thou look on such a sinner?" When a man makes such a venture by precious faith it is a distinct act of faith, a direct act of faith on the Almighty. Faith, if I may use a phrase that is very common, takes a short cut sometimes. She says "For Christ's sake". "There is no other reason why God should be favourable to me". Says the devil, "you will miss". Says God in the scriptures "By two immutable things I have shown my willingness to give unto the heirs of promise, consolation, abundant consolation". His oath and His covenant, His promises; He cannot break them or violate them. And what do these people, to whom He shows His willingness to give this strong consolation, come for? To lay hold of the refuge set before them, and cast anchor into the only ground they may, with security, and they venture because of these two immutable things. If the promise is in your eye, you will go. If the Saviour is in your eye, you will go. If the Spirit is before your mind, as the One whose

operation alone can make you wise unto salvation, you will go; you will go to this good God for rest. It is an act of faith, as if a man should go to his bed at night and almost roll himself upon it, being so tired, and sometimes when a sinner, in his misery and trouble, is utterly worn out, he is brought to roll himself on this great Rest

I on Thy promises depend
At least I to depend desire
That Thou wilt love me to the end
Be with me in temptation's fire
Wilt for me work and in me too
And guide me right and bring me through

He casts his burden of sin, guilt and ruin, upon the Lord and by precious faith casts an eye on the atonement and none can tell but those who have had it, what a solace, support and comfort there is in the issue.

"Rest in the Lord". What for? Why, for several things which I can only mention. First, for full forgiveness. Any unpurged sin on a man's conscience is a trouble to him. A pure conscience, in which the mystery of godliness, and the faith of God's elect is lodged, is a conscience purged by the blood of Christ and no consciousness of sin, having no conscience or feeling or sense of sin yet remaining unatoned for. As faith sees this great atonement, she feels "Had I a thousand souls" as Rutherford said "I could trust them all on Christ". I daresay some of you have had the same feeling. It may not have taken that form, have found expression in these words, but how great has Christ been to you, how wonderful His blood has been in your eyes, how marvellous it has been to you to perceive the well pleased face of the Father in the Person of the Son, to see a fountain of infinite merit in the blood of Christ, the rest of the soul in His everlasting righteousness. As I said, this morning, man must be righteous or there is no heaven for him. Here is a rest, when one sees that perfect righteousness of Christ. He comes to rest here for perfect holiness. We must be holy in all the sense and respects in which God requires man to

be holy or we cannot be with Him. How can people, whose nature is a mass of sin, be holy? By Christ being made sanctification as well as righteousness to them. They rest here for victory.

I asked them whence their victory came
They with united breath
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb
Their triumph to His death

They rest here for victory over their sins, their lusts, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. They rest here for victory also over their enemy, the devil. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things" Says a worm "I shall do it". Yes, many worms have said that, many worms have entered into the inheritance through the blood of the Lamb and the mighty operations of the Spirit. Here they overcame their selfishness, their rebellion when providence frowns. Sometimes they are contented when the enemy roars; sometimes they are confident when wants are many and supplies few; sometimes they have sufficient, when all things appear lacking; sometimes the sun shines upon them and they rest in the Lord for all things.

They rest in Him for a good finish. What is a good finish? Would you think it a good thing for you to look on a profession, more or less long, and see how you have behaved yourself, not only in the world, but in the church, how you have behaved yourself in all respects? Would that be a downy pillow, a sweetness in your conscience? Ah, no! I believe that the only way in which one can possibly hope for a good finish, for a soft downy pillow, is in the Person, victory, grace, precious blood, justifying righteousness and everlasting sanctification of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he who has that, can say, with the Apostle Paul "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" etc. They rest here for heaven. There must be a presentation, there is to be a presentation of men, to the Father. Who shall present them? The One who has washed them and made them meet in Himself. "Behold I and the children that Thou hast given Me". Wonderful company. Have we a hope of being in it? All the saints find this to be their only resting place. "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently

for Him."

The fourth thing I proposed was to notice this last part of my text which indicates to us that we may not immediately get what we wait for, may not at first get the thing done. Waiting may seem easy to those who have all things they want in their hand, but to people who have nothing, whose wants are many and urgent, who go and beg for supplies and do not immediately receive what they want, waiting is another thing, especially if, added to the delay, as we speak of it, on God's part, there should be a strong tempter whispering, perhaps roaring, in their ears "Persecute and take him God has forgotten him, there is no help for him in God". You know he does not turn to a dozen of your friends and call them out and say there is no help in one of them for you, because if he did, and the Lord should say "look unto Me" you would say "Though I am sorry to do without them, yet I can do without them". But he says "there is no help for him in God" and the soul says "I am lost if that is true. To all intents and purposes, I am lost." "Wait patiently for Him." Patience is that frame and state of mind in which a person lives, and is not perturbed by things, and does not rush about looking for help in creatures. It is a wonderful state of mind, and, for some of us whose impatience is so painful, so particularly trying, it is a great thing now and again to feel as if one would not lift a finger to hasten God's work, for He says "I the Lord will hasten it". Joshua said, ere he died, to the Israelites "You know in your heart and soul that not one word of His promise has fallen to the ground." Now this is what every child of God must know in his heart and in his soul sooner or later. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thy heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord." And well would it be for us if the Lord should keep us from interpreting delays into denials. They are trials indeed, heavy indeed, but they are not denials. "Hath He said and shall He not do it. Hath He spoken and shall it not come to pass?" Go to the throne of grace, fly to the throne of grace by prayer, pour out all your wishes there. That you may be sent back worse than you came? No! "He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent". He is God, and with Him "one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years

as one day". May we then be brought by the good Spirit of God to this frame of mind, this exercise of faith to "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him" in all the disturbances, distresses, distractions, sinkings, sins and fears. "Wait on the Lord" I hope He will help us to do it.

AMEN.