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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Rehoboth Chapel, Tunbridge Wells
Anniversary on 21 June 1905
Morning.

Text: Psalm 37 v 7

"Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him"

The scope of this Psalm is this - it deals with two different persons, the oppressed and the oppressor. They are both in God's hands, and the oppressed is spoken to, and warned against fretting himself because of the present power of the oppressor; he is not to fret himself on account of any present and seeming advantage his enemy has over him. Fretting is as a canker, it eats into the spirit, depresses the mind, warps the judgment, blinds the eyes, irritates the spirit and very much blocks up the way of prayer. Against this the children of God are in this Psalm warned. "Fret not thyself because of evil doers". There is a question in the prophecy of Isaiah to this effect "Where is the fury of the oppressor?" Probably, if the question were put to some of you, you would point to your own breast and say "it is here". You might point to your circumstances and say "it is there." The Lord asks the question and says "where is it?" He asks it, I think, in derision, as if He would point out His omnipotent, infinite wisdom to His people and say to them "Though you suffer through it, though you are so helpless, though you do not know what to do, I both can, and will circumvent him; I will sheathe his wrath, intercept it by my power and bring his devices to nothing". Therefore the text says "Rest in the Lord."

So much for the general scope. My wish is to leave that and take these words in a spiritual and more exclusive sense. At least, at first, regard them as belonging to a spiritual state and exercise and condition of mind to which rest is peculiarly applicable, peculiarly needed. As, when one is weary, he needs rest, as when a labouring man returns from his work and labour in the evening, his bed is welcome to him, so when people are in soul labour and have wearisome days and nights, they do want what

here the Lord speaks about - rest. And I would, as helped, bring before you two or three particular points in this matter. First of all speak of the great and wondrous Person who is the Rest. In the Lord there is rest, nowhere else, to people who know themselves and who know Him. Secondly I would speak of the resting, the act of faith, of reliance, the resting of the saints in the Lord. This is a wondrous blessing, to rest in Him. And thirdly, because some of us do know what it is very often to wonder if we have any warrant, any right ground, on which to go any hope that this rest is provided for us, I shall try to speak of the warrant, the ground that the Lord does afford His people for this coming to Him and resting in Him. And then, in the next place, notice what follows this kind, this most suitable invitation and admonition "Wait patiently for Him", which looks at delays, which looks as if there would be times when a man should be hasting to this rest and not get at it, as if one would seem to be only following a shadow, as if the more he sought this rest, to come to it, the more it went away from him to elude him altogether. In that case, that experience, this admonition comes "Wait patiently for Him" He does not mock, He is not asleep, or gone on a journey, He does not break His word. If He says "Come" He means it; if He speaks of rest, He will give it. And though you may not get it just as you want, you may not find rest just when you are coming, but wait, He will make His word good. These are the three points to which I would ask your attention.

First, to speak of the great and wondrous Person who is really the rest, the only rest. He is the Lord, He is the Lord Jesus, Emmanuel God with us, singularly suitable to us. A mere man would not do; absolute deity could not give a sinner rest, but the complex Person of Jesus, the Eternal Word, by a personal union with our nature, a union that is close, intimate, beyond all conception, this Person is the rest of His people. He will be their rest and if they do rest, or try to rest, elsewhere, if they get into a nest of their own making, and say they will live and die in it, they will find some stick, some stone, some lump of ice. They will find no rest in it all, for God will be the rest of His people. May we, for a little, meditate upon this Person. He will, if we are the subjects of the Spirit's

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teaching, at times be to us everything. The sun is not, cannot be, more to our earth, than Christ will be to our souls, if we are at all rightly instructed, and it must be, it will be, an eternal wonder to the church, how the Trinity could, and did, pitch upon such a device, scheme, plan, remedy for the sin-sick soul, guilty conscience, distracted mind and all who are brought to know the plague of their own hearts; that God, in His eternal goodness and wisdom should have devised that the second Person in the Trinity should, by a personal, wonderful, intimate union with our nature, become man, that the Holy Spirit should form in the virgin's womb a sacred ^{body} ~~humanity~~, which the Son of God should take into that intimate, wonderful union with His Person that nature, so that what is said of God, is said of the Man and what is said of the Man is said of God. I only need say that to you who are readers of your Bibles. You will easily catch up the various scriptures that are in my mind. And that Christ should be the image of the invisible God to His people, and the rest of their souls, this is very wonderful. The more faith a man has, the more conflict he will have about this mystery, because reason always opposes faith, and in the strength of a man's faith, so will be his reasoning powers, and in proportion to his faith, so will be his conflict. The Apostle says "great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." There is but one place in the world where the mystery goes without controversy. That is spoken of in the verse preceding the one I have quoted "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth". In all other places Christ is and has always been disputed about; as one said, there never was, never will be, another Person disputed about as the Person of Christ. Ah, well, what a wonder it will be if this Person has, at any time, a divine attraction for us, if He should be to our hearts what the sun is to the rivers and the earth, what the sap is to the roots, a powerful attraction, drawing everything up to itself. Oh, if Christ should be that to us, it will be a wonder of wonders throughout eternity. Real religion then has this great bottom, this solid hope, this immovable foundation. Living faith comes to this eternal Rock, Christ Jesus the Lord. If you have been driven out

of yourselves from time to time, any of you, as no doubt you have, you will be glad of this Rock as revealed to you by the Spirit.

But besides this, let me mention the work of Christ. He took a life and He gave it up. "No man taketh it from Me". He said "I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again, this commandment have I received of My Father". He did not die of mere mortal necessity, as we do. Hold that fast as God may help. If He had died of mortal necessity, His death would not have been voluntary, and if His death had not been voluntary, it would have had no efficacy to save. It is of the very essence of the atonement that the death of Jesus should be voluntary. You could not rest in a death of mere mortal necessity, such as we ourselves must die. You could not rest the necessities of your immortal soul on anything but a vicarious death, such as was the death of Christ. Bind this with cords unto the horns of the altar, O you people of God. This will be the song above, this will employ all the powers and faculties of the saints throughout eternity. It may not be a lasting song here, but they sing sometimes "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" and they will sing this blessed song throughout eternity. Another point I would direct your attention to is His righteousness. Every person going to heaven is righteous before he gets there

Righteousness to full perfection
Must be brought
Lacking nought
Fearless of rejection

The rags of our so called righteousness will not do. They are torn off every exercised person, every instructed sinner. They are ripped away from him by the unctuous teaching of the Spirit and he is made, under that teaching, to put off his filthy garments. He sees his righteousness is such that God must reject; he believes in that scripture with all his heart "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven"

Another thing is this, there is His intercession, His advocacy. He pleads. What a mercy, and it does for those who cannot plead for themselves. When people are dumb before God's throne, they are in a good case if Christ but take them up. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not". If the Lord but put in a word for a sinner, that sinner is safe

And he is safe and must succeed
For whom the Lord vouchsafes to plead

He is in heaven now to open His mouth for the dumb. One more word and that is, His great power, His omnipotence, is necessary. New life is given and must be supported. Why do not the heavens vanish away? Why do the stars continue to shine, each in its own place and sphere? Why is the earth stable for a minute? All because the Lord upholds them by the word of His power. Why is there a church? Because she lives in the life of Christ. He lives after the power of an endless life. She lives in that life. Her faith, hope, love, grace, everything she has that is godly, the Lord supports, even as He gives.

His faithfulness too, we may speak of here. There is faithfulness in God, unsullied faithfulness. What He says He is able to perform, and He is determined to do it. The thoughts of His heart endure to all generations. They stand fast for ever and ever, and there the saints have a remarkably solid ground on which to stand, on which to recline and rest their weary souls. I do not get less fond of a good bottom as I get older and in my own apprehension nothing will bear the weight of my immortal interests short of this Person, this work, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This then is our only rest.

Secondly we were to notice the resting. There is such an experience as rest, there is such a thing as a sinner resting in the Lord and on Him by a distinct act of faith. Faith does act. If yours does not, and you profess to have faith, it is a dead faith, but there are many acts of faith short of this distinct act of rest. Good Bunyan tells us, in his own inimitable way, that faith acts in two manner of ways. It walks as long as it can,

and when it can walk no longer, it cries; speaking of the case of Peter who walked on the water and, finding the waves boisterous and beginning to sink, he cried out to the Lord "Save or I perish". Now I would speak of this experimental part of my subject in the following way. If you have a conscience, there will be times when you will find sin in it, guilt burdening it, and, as exercised, you will find sin and guilt a disturbance more wearisome to your conscience than any labour you ever had for your body, more distracting to your conscience than any mental trouble that has kept you awake at night, more apprehensions of evil to come than if there were an avalanche that might fall on you. There is nothing like sin to make a man troubled about eternity. "I don't know what the Lord will do with me, I don't know what will become of me when I die, because I have got this sin on my conscience." Never did a man look for a bed to rest his weary limbs as a man when he has got a hope of rest in Christ and on the atonement. Sinner, it will be well with you when you rest on the Word of Christ, when your conscience lies down there and says

I'll lay me down and sweetly sleep
For I have peace with God

when you feel there is nothing between God and your soul to disturb your rest and peace, when you can feel His smile is to you what the sun is to this earth this morning, a source of fruitfulness, as it may be said, kissing it into fruitfulness. So with your soul, though you be as black as the confines of hell through sin's defilement and guilt, and in your conscience and judgment a very child of the devil, though your sins are greater than those of Sodom and Gomorrah, greater than Capernaum and Chorazin, yet this blood of Jesus can, and does, purge them all away, and brings you in your very heart and apprehension to a realisation that God has no quarrel with you, that He remits not only, and first, the punishment of sin, but also, and first, sin itself. And so, sin being put away, the soul is secure, the heart is at rest, the conscience is at ease, and asks no more. It has enough. What a leaning all the weight, the whole weight of the soul on the atonement of Christ, there is here! Conscience is a great faculty in man, and when the soul is

quicken and instructed by the Spirit, this court speaks for God, speaks for holiness, stands up for truth, and as long as it is a defiled conscience, it must be a plaguing conscience, a pricking thorn in a man's side, a disturbing element in one's whole life. It will sit down with him when he eats - the bread he is eating is evil, his blessings are a curse, his table is a trap, God will pursue him with evil throughout his days and the whole of eternity. Some of us remember when we lived like this and it was dying every day. We would not have been without it. He who has had the most trouble about his conscience will enjoy Christ in His rest most. This is the point, the rest of the conscience in the blood of Christ, when there is a realisation, an apprehension, of the sweet smile of justice, as if a man sees, by faith, that the justice of God - which a man so fears because he has angered it - is really on his side. As if he could see, by faith, every attribute of the Godhead - which, as a sinner, a lawbreaker, he could but apprehend was against him - now harmonizes in the sweetest possible way, and there is not an attribute in the Deity that forbids this sinner's happiness. There is not an attribute in the Deity, but confirms this sinner's happiness. The whole of the attributes of God are pleased with this sinner. Even the sweetest scriptures are made out which, before this experience, never could be understood. "Thou art all fair My love, there is no spot in thee". God finds no fault, the law now is satisfied, and has no claim. Justice is satisfied and smiles. Mercy has her bent, love has her full outflow now in the measure of God's design for the time, and her infinite power holds the sinner on. What a wonder, what a wonder it is! Many sweet scriptures will come to a person while he is in this case to show that he is right, to assure him that he has not mistaken the way or stolen this experience, but that God has wrought it in him.

There is a rest in Christ's righteousness. The faculties of a quickened sinner are exercised about righteousness. He knows he must be conformed to a strict rule or lie under a dreadful curse. The rule now is not his own, but God's, and God has made his heart approve of that rule. If there be a crook, an irregularity in his life outstanding as between God and his soul,

things cannot be well with him. This he realises; some of you have, have you not? Oh to have brought to him a righteousness which every way is perfect, every way answers to the law, every way glorifies God, every way, as it were, opening an avenue, a way, by which the Almighty Himself can come and bless a sinner, kiss a sinner, approve a sinner, tell him he has no spot about him. This righteousness of Jesus becomes the whole rest of the soul, does it not? Without a work, but by faith, the ungodly man is justified. "He that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly," this is counted for righteousness, and a man is delivered from all things from which he could not be delivered by the law of Moses. You read in the Psalms "They looked" - that is the saints - "unto Him and were lightened and their faces were not ashamed." It is a wonderful thing, a remarkable thing, a divinely good and mysterious thing, that one who is a sinner should look to Him against whom He has sinned and find his faith enlightened, and have no shame, yet all the while, the more he looks here, the more ashamed he is in himself. Christ's righteousness is the rest of the sinner.

But also His intercession is a rest. As the poor, ever failing, falling creature, looks at himself, as he remembers his ingratitude for mercies, as he thinks upon his unprofitable life, as he looks back along the stream of his profession, since first it sprang up, what does he see? That which shuts his mouth sometimes and covers his face with shame. I expect some of you have faltered as you have tried to pray. You may have thought within yourselves, and your heart ached at the thought, "How can we lift our faces and voices up to this great God, this forebearing God who for all these years has dealt so patiently and liberally, kindly and powerfully with us, as we hope, and towards whom we have behaved with the basest ingratitude, the most obdurate hardness of heart, against whom we have sinned with that inveterate hardness of mind which only characterises reprobates?" It is a heavy business is it not? If the Holy Spirit, when one is so touched with compunction, should show to him the Lord Jesus, ever living to intercede, it won't make him indifferent to his sins, but it will give him boldness to ask the Saviour to undertake for him, enable him to hope his troubles

will work for his good. Christ will not be offended with this, so as to turn His back upon him and have no more to do with him, but will enable him to look on that ever prevalent intercession of which one says so blessedly

Founded on right, Thy prayer avails;
The Father smiles on thee;
And now Thou in Thy kingdom art,
Dear Lord, remember me.

Oh my dear friends, it is something for faith to see the Intercessor, when the sinner is, in himself, dumb, through coldness, darkness, indifference, perpetual wandering from the Lord, numerous backslidings that effectually seal his mouth in prayer, but the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, that becomes a rest. As if a man should say, "I hope I shall get an answer, notwithstanding all without and within against me. I hope He will come again, visit me again, smile again, speak again comfortably to one who deserves nothing but banishment from His presence for ever." Oh, it is comfortable to rest in Christ's intercession. It is comfortable to be able to say "For Christ's sake" in faith. It is comfortable to be able to present to the Father what the Son is, and what the Son does, what He is doing now He is in glory. "Rest in the Lord."

Once more, rest in His omnipotence. It is not naked, O sinner, it is not naked! If it were we could not rest in it. If it were armed with the terrors of the law, we could not rest in it. If it were stretched out to avenge sin in us, to touch us in providence because of God's just ire, we could not rest in it. But when it comes forth in the sacred humanity of Jesus, seen in the precious stream of His blood, in His divine, almighty love, then omnipotence is an attraction to a guilty person, very attractive. You can rest here by faith. As if faith says "sinner, you venture, that arm suits you, that omnipotence in your nature suits you. You are a mighty sinner, but everything must obey it. Sin must be crushed by it, the devil must be chained by it, lust must be subdued by it. It opens a way for the ransomed to pass over; it rebukes the dragon and the

avenger." Then, for that guilty worm to feel this, it makes God's omnipotence very attractive to him. He can rest his spirit on it, his soul, his wants, his cause, his afflictions. He can rest with all of them, on the Lord.

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Lastly, rest in His faithfulness. It never was forfeited, never was sullied. I wish the saints of the most high God could believe what seems a rudiment, sometimes. "Beloved be not ignorant of this one thing that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day". It looks very easy does it not? But believing it. When doubts arise, when you come into trouble, see if you believe it then. Get contradictions of science, falsely so called, long, long delays, the tempter coming at you, being to your spirit what drop after drop is to a stone, perpetually wearing it away, see if you can believe in the faithfulness of God then! If you can, you have got real faith, for temptations, delays, unbelief, wear out all profession sooner or later. But if God has passed His word, if Jesus has endeared Himself, if any hint has been given to any of us that mercy is on its way to us, though nothing shows any sign of its coming, "although the fig tree shall not blossom neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls" yet nothing shall hinder it coming! If such has been our favoured lot, we have reason to come here and say "The Lord remains" Though He shall roll up the heavens as a scroll, though the earth be removed and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea, He remains. He is "the same yesterday and today and for ever." Can you rest there sometimes? Can you sometimes say "well, He has passed His word. It came to me, I felt it, I believed it. Faith and feeling were mixed up in it; it is a wonderful thing in my experience, but I told the Lord I believed Him, that He would do for me what He had said to me, and now, though everything contradicts it, though appearances say it cannot be fulfilled, and though delays say it won't come, I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me". Well, it is good to believe God above the storm and noise of the waves, above the creaking of the planks - ready to part - above the surging of the foam, above all

these things, believe He is in heaven, nothing can disturb His affairs, change His thoughts, weaken His power, dim His vision. It is good to rest here, rest your body, circumstances, spirit, salvation, friends, weakness, ignorance. Rest in the Lord with all these things, rest in Him. Well nobody knows what this rest is but those who have enjoyed it. Rest on Jehovah. It is marvellous to have it. If you have had, I was going to say, five minutes of it, you cannot really forget it, it is so peculiarly sacred and solemn, attended with such worship, love, sweetness, and comfort. You have rest from your fears and all your hard bondage is gone. You cannot forget it if you have ever had it.

I must leave the other points. I really thought I should get through the whole of what I wished to say on this subject this morning, but it would not be prudent for me to keep you longer, so I must leave it for the present, hoping the Lord may make some little use - if He can stoop so low - of what I have said.

AMEN.