

Psalm 116

The Bountiful Dealings of God

Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee – v. 7

I believe that one of the reasons the Lord calls us to His table regularly is to remind us how rich we are in Christ. You wouldn't think that people who are rich would need to be reminded of it but it is indeed the case for Christians. Can you picture a man with great wealth in the bank that strangely finds himself reduced to nothing because he fails to remember or utilize the wealth that he possesses?

Picture a man that's very anxious because his house needs repairs – and his car doesn't run – and his clothing is tattered and torn and worn and he doesn't have any food left in the house. *Why don't you draw from your wealth?* – we might ask him. And then we'd find ourselves laboring trying to remind him or convince him that he really is rich, that he has untold amounts of money in the bank.

We might feel sorry for elderly people who think they're rich but they're not. I know of elderly people whose minds slow down and they become vulnerable enough in their thinking to really believe they've won all that money in the sweepstakes – *it says so right here on the envelope* – they say.

We would feel sorry for them – but how sorry would we feel for the man who lets everything collapse around him because he really is rich but has forgotten his wealth? We would count that man to be foolish. We would say of that kind of person that he's in dire need of help. He needs to be reminded and convinced that he's rich.

And yet in the spiritual realm we manifest that kind of foolishness. We act as if we're poor – when in fact we're rich. To the church at Smyrna Christ says in Re 2:9 *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)*. We're heirs – even joint heirs with Christ. He's bestowed upon us *all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ* – according to Eph. 1:3. In finding Christ we have found that pearl of great price that is worth much more than all we could possess in this world. We would willingly sell all we have to gain that pearl – and by gaining it we gain more than we've ever had. We gain riches that are everlasting in duration. We gain treasure that is everlastingly secured for us – treasures that will not rust or be stolen.

And yet – how often do we drag our feet through the course of the day – our countenances fallen as we look down at our feet while we indulge ourselves in self pity. Or we allow anxious thoughts to dominate our hearts and minds. What Christ says to Martha in Luke 10 could be said to most of us – *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things*. And these many things rob us of the rest that ought to be our portion.

I think we find the Psalmist in this condition in the Psalm we've read this morning. Would you notice how he ministers to himself in v. 7 – *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*. Do you see how he's engaged in a practice that we find often in the psalms? He's preaching to himself. Doesn't the exhortation to himself indicate to us that he had lost his

rest which means simply that He had been restless. He had been anxious about many things. So now he must issue such an exhortation to himself – *return* he says – *return* to that state that you knew in former days.

How often such exhortations need to be ministered. *Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?* – Paul must ask the Galatians. They had lost their rest by losing sight of their standing in Christ. They were rich in Christ but thought they had to earn the wealth that Christ had already earned for them.

And how does the Psalmist in our text propose to return to his rest? He'll return to it by remembering and reflecting on the glorious truth that the Lord has bountifully blessed him as he says in the text – *Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

The statement applies universally to all who have gained a saving interest in Christ. There is not a one of us who has come to Christ that could say *the Lord has dealt scarcely with me – the Lord has closed His hand to me and reluctantly blesses me but a little.* The message conveyed to us by the cup this morning is the message that He's given everything for us. He's poured out His life's blood for us. What greater blessing could He bestow? What richer provision could He make?

But such is our propensity to dullness that we have to be called back. And so the Lord's table serves the function of calling us back – calling us back to the rest that is our portion – calling us back to the blessedness we have spoken of in days gone by in order that we may enter into the present enjoyment of that blessedness once again.

And so this what I want to direct your attention to this morning – God's bountiful dealings with our souls.

We do well to remember God's bountiful dealings with our souls

Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

As we remember the Lord's bountiful dealings with us I want to call your attention to 3 things. Consider with me first of all:

I. The Enumeration of those Bountiful Dealings -

Psalm 116 brings to our minds many of the spiritual blessings that we've gained in Christ. Notice what the Psalmist says in the first 2 verses: *I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.*

Here is a bountiful blessing from the Lord – He hears the voice of the Psalmist. And not only does He hear him – but He inclines his ear unto him – i.e. He hears him with a favorable disposition toward him. He's inclined to listen to him.

How often have you found yourself disinclined to give your ear to someone? When the telemarketer calls you find yourself disinclined to listen to him so you either abruptly cut him off or you patiently endure him.

And what right do you and I have to approach God? We're rebels against Him. We've sinned against Him many times. We've forfeited any right and privilege to gain a hearing with Him. The way to His chamber is barred against us. But then Christ came and became One of us. He took to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul and when He cried with a loud voice and yielded up the ghost – we read in Mt. 27:51 that *the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom*.

This signified that the way of access was now open to God for all who would approach Him through Christ. Here indeed, then, is a blood purchased blessing – access to God, the invitation to approach His throne and make our voices heard. I love the way this is expressed in {**Heb. 10:19-22**}.

You see the connection between access to God and the blood of Christ. It's no wonder the Psalmist would say *I love the LORD because He hath heard my voice* – It was because of Christ's provision based on His love that the way was opened for Christ to hear the voice of those who believe in who He is and what He's done.

Now the bounty of the Lord's blessings to His people becomes all the more magnified when you consider the contrast between what you were and what you became by His grace. This comes out in vv. 3,4: *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul*. Here is the very petition that the Lord heard – it was a plea for deliverance. It was a plea that was raised to God at a time when the Psalmist was conscious of the brevity of life – the reality of death and the truth that hell is what he deserved.

This verse presents a picture for us of a troubled soul who is conscious of his guilt. He finds nothing but sorrow in this life and the prospects for the life to come are indeed dim because of sin – but the Lord granted him – and has granted us such great deliverance! This deliverance is elaborated in v. 8 – *For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling*.

You begin to see why the Psalmist would say in our text that the Lord had dealt bountifully with him? What bountiful dealings Christ takes with His people to work such great deliverance from death, from trouble, from the guilt and power of sin, from everlasting destruction, and from the sorrows that these things produce!

As you partake of the bread and the cup this morning remember the bountiful dealings that Christ has had with you. Has He heard your voice? Has He come to your rescue? Has He inclined His ear to you? Has He redeemed you to Himself and taken you into His service? The Psalmist knew that by God's bountiful dealings with him he had been taken into the service of Christ His King. So he says in v. 16 – *O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds*.

What bountiful dealings the Lord takes with His people then. He delivers them. He frees them. He enlists them in His service. If He has so dealt with you then you can say with the Psalmist – *return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.* And would you notice that it is the remembrance of these bountiful dealings that should bring us to His table – *What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?* – verse 12 asks and then verse 13 answers – *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.*

This is what we're here to do this morning – to take the bread of salvation remembering that Christ is the bread of life and to take the cup of salvation remembering the blood of the everlasting covenant. And as we think on how bountifully blessed we've been then as we partake of these elements we will do so in the spirit of the words expressed in v. 17 – *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.*

We do well then around this table to enumerate the blessings that are ours in Christ as we remember Christ. But would you think next that we must also remember:

II. The Basis for God's Bountiful Dealings – {Ps. 116:5}

Here is a statement in the Psalm that provides for us the theology of the Psalm. This is why the Psalmist can testify that God has dealt bountifully with him – because God is gracious, and righteous, and merciful.

We find another instance in this verse that brings home a point that I have often stressed – i.e. that grace and righteousness go hand in hand. We find a similar statement in another Psalm. In Psalm 112:4 we read: *Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: [he is] gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.* You see how grace and righteousness are companions in this text also.

This is emphasized twice in Romans 5 –

- Romans 5:17 *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*
- Romans 5:21 *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The two things we must receive to reign in life are grace and righteousness. Both come freely. Both come abundantly. Note that we receive *abundance of grace*. Isn't this how the Lord deals bountifully with us? He doesn't give us limited grace. He doesn't minister to us a little grace. He doesn't grant to us grace up to a point and then cut it off.

No he ministers *abundance of grace*. And He does so because *grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*. This is why we can be confident that God will never deny grace to His people. This is why we can have assurance that grace will never fail.

Through Christ grace has brought righteousness to us. We had no righteousness. But in His grace Christ provides for us His own righteousness. The bread serves to remind us that

He became one of us in order to fulfill all righteousness for us. And the cup testifies to us that in His righteousness He paid and satisfied the penalty for the broken law.

It's only by thinking we can gain righteousness any other way that we frustrate the grace of God. This was the pit that the Galatians fell into. And so Paul had to remind them not to frustrate the grace of God (Gal. 2:21). The only way we can frustrate the grace of God is to think that we are obligated and can somehow gain righteousness apart from that grace.

Now there's a verse in Psalm 85 that conveys to us the same truth using slightly different terms. It's a verse that clearly points us to the cross. In Psalm 85:9 we read – *Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.* The subject is salvation. Salvation is near them that fear him. How is it that salvation can come near those who fear Him?

The next verse in the Psalm answers that question for us – Verse 10 says *Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* This is a tremendous statement that finds its fulfillment in Christ's atoning death. What do we find at the cross of Christ?

We find the truth that sin calls for punishment. We find the truth that our sins call for God's wrath. We find the righteousness of the penalty against the broken law being executed. And yet we find mercy. It is Christ Himself that bears the penalty. It is Christ Himself that sheds His blood to meet the righteous demands of the broken law. And so we can say we have peace with God because righteousness has been fulfilled. We don't deny the truth of the law when we gain God's mercy – no – *mercy and truth are met together.* They've met at the cross of Christ.

Neither do we deny God's righteousness in order to gain the peace that His grace conveys because righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Where do you find righteousness and peace embracing each other? They meet at the cross where our peace is purchased and God's righteousness is honored.

This is the grounds, then, for the Psalmist saying *the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.* He's reflecting on what the Lord has done for him. And when you know the basis for the Lord's dealings with you in the past – then you'll be confident that the Lord will continue to deal with you in the same way in the future.

So as we meet around this table this morning – take the time to count your blessings. The Lord has heard you. The Lord is inclined toward you. The Lord has delivered you. The Lord has brought you into His service. The Lord has loosed your bonds. He's done so because he's gracious. He'll continue to do so because He's righteous. What great mercy we have enjoyed, and do enjoy, and will enjoy therefore.

Let the bread and the cup preach to you that you are bountifully blessed and that your blessings are eternally secure because they're grounded in the person and work of Jesus Christ. And so we've seen the enumeration of God's bountiful dealings. We've seen the grounds for God's bountiful dealings. It remains for us to consider:

III. The Effect of God's Bountiful Dealings –

The effect is rest – *Return unto thy rest, O my soul.*

Would you note from this statement that the rest spoken of here is said to be in the possession of the Psalmist – *return unto **thy** rest, O my soul.* There is a rest that belongs to each and every child of God. This rest signifies that the work of redemption is an accomplished work. Nothing needs to be added to it.

The issue of the Christian's rest is addressed in Heb. 4. In that chapter we read in v. 10 *For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God [did] from his.* The reference is to the days of creation. When God finished the work of creation He rested. The same may be said, in a sense, of redemption. When Christ finished the work of redemption He sat down on the right hand of God. The work was accomplished. And when we came to Christ by faith we rested in that accomplished work.

This rest is our possession. Now we may forget that it belongs to us. We may, through the cares of this life, lose the enjoyment of it. But we never lose the possession of it. Let the cup, therefore, which is the emblem of Christ's blood, remind you that His work is a fully accomplished work that need not be added to and you can say to your soul – *return unto thy rest, O my soul.*

In Spurgeon's commentary on this Psalm he includes a remark by Edersheim which tells us that the word *rest* is in the plural in the Hebrew and it indicates complete and entire rest at all times and under all circumstances. And in another part of that commentary some of those circumstances are elaborated:

1. Rest from the perplexities of ignorance, and the wanderings of error.
2. Rest from the vain efforts of self righteousness, and the disquietude of a proud and legal spirit.
3. Rest from the alarms of conscience, and the apprehensions of punishment hereafter.
4. Rest from the fruitless struggles of our degenerate nature, and unaided conflicts with indwelling sin.
5. Rest from the fear of temporal suffering and solicitude arising from the prospect of danger and trial.
6. Rest from the distraction of uncertainty and indecision of mind, and from the fluctuations of undetermined choice.

Now this rest belongs to us by design and it belongs to us by purchase and it belongs to us by promise – and it belongs to us by our simple choice as believers to return to it. I need only remark that the way of return to this rest is by repentance, by faith, and by prayer. And these are the very activities we engage in when we come to the Lord's table.

And so I trust as we come now to this table that upon reflection you'll be able to acknowledge – *The LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.* May the Lord enable you to enumerate His bountiful dealings. May the bread and the cup impress upon you the basis

for those bountiful dealings. And as a result of communion with Christ – I trust that you'll return to your rest and in the strength of that rest you'll go forth into this new week with your heart strengthened – strengthened in the assurance of God's love – strengthened in the peace that is your portion in Christ and strengthened in your faith – the faith that enables you to recognize that God has indeed dealt bountifully with your soul.