**THINGS THAT MATTER MOST - DEVOTIONAL PAPERS BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**31. RIVERS OF LIVING WATER by JOHN H. JOWETT**

"HE that believeth on Me, from within him shall flow rivers of living water." The springs of life are found in faith. Vital belief in the Lord Jesus brings the soul into communion with fountains of vitality. "All my springs are in Thee." And we cannot have springs without streams. Fountains make rivers. When the Divine life possesses the soul, it flows over in gracious ministries among our fellow-men. The affluence becomes an influence imparting itself to others. "From within shall flow rivers." And what shall be the character of the river?

The life filled with the Spirit of God is a minister of vitality. Wherever the figure of the river is used in the Scriptures it always implies the carriage and the impartation of life. "The river of water of life." "Everything shall live whither the river cometh." Those who are in communion with the Holy Spirit are to be the antagonists of death, and are to convey the life-giving powers of the eternal God. First of all, they will vitalize dead organizations. There is nothing more burdensome than an organization bereft of life. There is nothing more inert than machinery divorced from energy. The Church is cumbered by dead and dormant institutions. Everywhere there is the incubus of institutionalism that has no inherent vitality. Now, the disciples of the Lord Jesus are to bring the needful life. Their influence is to be that of a river upon a mill-wheel. It changes the inactivity of death into beneficent motion, and things that were only impediments become ministers of progress.

And the disciples of Christ are also to vitalize dead dispositions. Everywhere in human life there are withered and withering things which need to be quickened. In some lives hopes are drooping like spring blossoms that have been nipped by the frost. In other lives desires are fading, and are like plants that are suffering from thirst. And, again, in other lives the affections are ailing, and their strength is lapsing into perilous weakness. If we could only look into the secret places of the souls of men, we should be amazed in how many lives there is the touch of death. Now, the friends of the Lord Jesus are to move about among these drooping people like "rivers of water of life." The withered heart is to be thrilled by our presence. The drooping faculty is to lift itself up in new strength, by reason of the influence of our lives. We are to be the ministers of a mysterious but most real vitality. There is a significant passage in the Book of Job, which always seems to me to lend itself to rich and far-reaching interpretations. "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant." The old stock withering in the ground scents the presence of the water, and is quickened into newness of life. And so is it to be in the life of man. When the river of water of life comes near to souls that are drooping in disquietude and defeat they are to become alive again and clothe themselves in strength and beauty.

But, in the second place, the life filled with the spirit of God is to be a minister of purity. It is "clear as crystal," and in all its movements it is the enemy of all defilement. I have watched a strong and impetuous stream, born after heavy rains, pouring its fulness into a stagnant pool which had become the home of corruption. In the energy of its presence the corruption was unloosed and carried away; until the pool was left clean and clear as a sea of glass. And such is to be the influence of the disciples of Christ upon the established corruption of our day. The glorious energies of a redeemed life are to be poured into the settled defilement, to stir up and release it, and to bear it entirely away. Imagine a half-dozen pure and strenuous moral rivers flowing strongly in every village in our land! Imagine ten thousand such rivers doing their purifying work in a great city! Think of such rivers moving in every human fellowship! I remember a town council which had come into the hands of men of common and questionable character, and the government of the town was becoming debased. And a number of men, in whom the Spirit dwelled mightily, and whose influence was like strong rivers, entered the council and made it clean. Who has not known a committee saved by the strength of one man's consecration? And this is suggestive of the possible influence of every life. If our souls, by faith in the Lord Christ, are in communion with the springs of life, then a river of pure and purifying influence will most assuredly flow in all our common intercourse.

And, thirdly, the life filled with the Spirit of God is a minister of refreshment. There are desert places in the life when the springs seem far away. I got a letter the other day, in which my correspondent described what he called "a dry sorrow." The sorrow was so intense that he had lost the power to weep. It was grief that could not find relief in tears. It was "a dry and thirsty land where no water is." And everybody is familiar with such experiences, either in his own life or in the lives of others. Now, what is needed in such drought is some refreshing river. The prophet Isaiah declares that the ideal man is like "a river of water in a dry place." He brings refreshment to the soul that is held in perilous dryness. And who is to bring this refreshment? It can only be brought by men and women who live at the springs, and whose very presence is "a river of water of life."

And, lastly, the life filled with the Holy Spirit is a minister of hilarity. What more fitting symbol of gladness can we find than a clear, bright stream, dancing and leaping in the sunshine? Just to look at it, just to listen to it, is to catch the contagion of its joyful movement. And "there is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." The river that takes its rise in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that is born among the hills of grace, and. flows in the sunshine of the Eternal Love, is bound to be a minister of gladness and cheer. The desponding and the melancholy, and those whose faces are heavy with the gloom of fear, are to be heartened and cheered when the disciple of Christ draws near, for the life filled with the Spirit is like a dancing, joy-imparting, and beauty-creating stream. How near do we come to this ideal? Perhaps we can give cups of cold water. But is our life richer than this, and is it suggestive of music and dancing? Is there anything hilarious in its influence? Is there the touch of joy, the gladdening ministry of those whose wills are in harmony with the King?

So, perhaps, instead of singing "Like a mighty army moves the Church of God," it might be a healthier expression if we sang, "Like a mighty river moves the Church of God"; a river carrying vitality, purity, refreshment, and making the birds to sing in the trees that line its banks.