**THE EAGLE LIFE - STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**39. LITTLE-MINDEDNESS by JOHN H. JOWET**

*"God repented ... But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and be was angry."*

*Jonah 4:1*

That is a most extraordinary conjunction of circumstances. A great city had repented of its sin, and because of its repentance God had lifted the curse. The dark, menacing cloud had been rolled up like a garment, and the blue sky was unveiled, a radiant symbol of forgiveness, and hope, and peace. But here is a prophet who had predicted that the black cloud would break in terrors of tempest and overwhelming flood, and because events had turned out otherwise, and black sky had been changed into blue, he was displeased exceedingly and he was angry. That is very startling, a man blazing in fury because God's hand had moved in pity and in grace! I should have expected that he would have lifted his heart in gladness, and that he would have sung as the lark sings when the tempest passes away. But, no, he was angry because God was merciful, and his anger is all the more bewildering because God had been merciful to him, and had offered him the open door of a second chance.

How is it that some people are so much sterner than God? How is it that they are so antagonistic to even a trembling suggestion that God's love may go out far beyond our dreams? In my early ministerial life, when I used to dare to speak about anything and everything, I once ventured to preach on the text, "And he went to his own place." The reference is, of course, to Judas Iscariot. I cannot recall what I made of the solemn words, and I am not anxious to recall it. I certainly should hesitate to speak about it now. But I do remember one thing. I remember that, in closing the sermon, I left "our brother Judas" in the hands of God's wonderful mercy, and I quoted the familiar words of Tom Hood:

"Owning his weakness,

His evil behaviour,

And leaving with meekness

His sins to his Saviour."

When I got back to my vestry a lady followed me storming with passion. She knew all about the fate of Judas. She could not have spoken with greater assurance if she had stood by the great White Throne and heard the words of final judgment. And what right had I, she said, to, etc., etc., etc., etc. She was "displeased exceedingly." I had rested my bewildered mind in the marvellous hostel of the divine mercy, and she was very angry.

"The love of God is broader

Than the measure of man's mind,

And the heart of the Eternal

Is most wonderfully kind."

But there are some people who seem to prefer the prison of God's law to the comforting home of God's grace. Or shall I put it like this -- they would fain imprison the grace of God in the fetters of His own law. They would silence the Father in the Judge. They seem to like to live near Sinai, with its thunderings and lightnings, its cloud and its tempest, rather than on the Hill of Beatitudes, with a sight of another hill called Calvary, a green hill just outside the city wall, where the dear Lord was crucified Who died to save us all. They have chosen a very shaking and disturbing site for their spiritual home. I prefer a sunnier spot, where grace is abounding, and where there are resources of spiritual hope and comfort which are called "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Yes, I prefer to pitch my tent at a sheltered spot called Expectation Corner, from whence I can look out upon the multitudinous mercies of the Lord, and there is more than enough in that outlook to fill my days with fruitful vision and my nights with happy dreams. And if I see the redeeming pity of God resting upon anybody on whom there once seemed to rest dark menace and frown, I will certainly not be angry or displeased. Rather shall my mouth be filled with happy laughter, and I will rejoice with the Great Shepherd because he has found another of His sheep which was lost.