**APOSTOLIC OPTIMISM AND OTHER SERMONS - SERMONS BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**18. THE GREAT ENFRANCHISEMENT by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood; and He made us to be a Kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever."*

*Revelation 1:5*

"Unto Him that loveth us." That is where our hopes are born. That is the background in which we find the base and the warrant for all our confidence and faith. God loves us. All effective reasoning concerning human redemption must begin here. God loves! The beginning is not to be found in us, in our inclinations and gropings and resolvings and prayers. These are essential but secondary. The primary element is the inclination of God, The fire which warms the hearthstone is not original; it is derivative, and refers us back to the sun. The candle with which we search for the lost piece of silver is not original and originating; it is borrowed flame from the great altar-fires of the sun. Earth's broken lights, a candle here, a lamp there, a fire yonder, all index backwards, and point us to the great originating centre of solar light and heat. The lamps and candles and fires that burn in human life, everything that is bright and genial and aspiring, have reference backward to some creative and beneficent source. "We love, because He first loveth us." "He first loveth! " That is the primary quantity, and every kindly feeling that warms the heart, every pure hope that illumines the mind, were begotten of that most gracious source. "He first loveth!" When did He begin to love? "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Up from the everlasting! "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee." The primordial germ is not a material plasm, or a fire-tuft. Let us trace our pedigree far enough back into the love-purpose of the Everlasting. This is the Biblical account of our origin, of the primary movement that gave our being its birth: -- "He first loveth." Nobody comes into the world God-hated. It is possible to come into the world man-hated, or with most reluctant and indifferent welcome. But behind everybody is God, and God is love. Everybody's pedigree begins in love. A glance into origins is a look into love. That is the all-sufficient warrant of human hope and confidence.

"Unto Him that loveth us." Loveth! Then the gracious sentiment did not exhaust itself with our origin. "Unto Him that loveth." The affection is continuous; not spasmodic, but unbroken; there is no abatement of its volume. "The river of God is full of water," and it flows near the life that it first created. There is a highroad which I knew full well away in the distant North, and a gladsome, shining river keeps it company. Their tracks remain in closest fellowship. They turn and wind together, and at any moment you may step from the dusty highway and drink deep draughts from the limpid stream. "There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God." Here is the hard, dusty highway of the individual life, and near it there flows the gladdening river of the Eternal Love. It turns with our turnings, and winds through all the perplexing labyrinths of our intensely varied day. We may ignore the river; we cannot ignore it away Thrice blessed are they who heed and use it. "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." The inspiring resources are always just at hand. The river of love runs just by the hard road. It never parts company with the highway. "He first loved." "Unto Him that loveth." "Having loved ... He will love unto the end." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." That is the point to fix the vision when we wish to re-enkindle hope in our ultimate and perfected redemption. "Unto Him that loveth us." Love is not an idle sentiment, a sweet langour, a gaily-tinted bubble, sailing in the quiet summer air. Love is energy, throbbing with benevolent purpose, seeking for ever increasing ministries through which to express itself in beneficent service. Love is no effeminate reverie; it is a hungry spirit of sacrifice. "God so loved that He gave!" That is it; love is an impartation, a giving, sacrifice unconscious of itself. The word "sacrifice" is not to be found in love's vocabulary. Love gives and gives, and takes it as a gracious favour if you will receive the gift. Love never sits down to contemplate its sacrifices. It only sits down to think out new fields of service. Love is tremendous energy, hungrily keen for the detection of need, that it might fill the gaping gap out of its own resources. Exalt your conception of love as of a spirit with a thousand eyes and a thousand hands, and then read anew the words of my text. "Unto Him that loveth us!" "Loveth!" Keen eyes; strong-hearted; strong-handed! What need does He discover, from Whom there is nothing concealed? He beholds His children in the bondage of corruption and night. He sees them enslaved by appalling encumbrances which they cannot discard. They are the captives of sin and of death. How has it all arisen? Shall I give you the explanation offered by the Apostle James? Here it is. I have a Will, most mystic yet most real. This Will was purposed by the Almighty to marry the word of Truth, that out of the pure and gracious union there might arise all the beauties and graces of the divine life. But, says the Apostle James, there comes along a lust, subtle and bewitching, and it fastens its fascinating eye upon the Will, and the Will is enticed. "He is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." It is a most unholy union, and begets a most unholy issue. "Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin," and that is not the end of the awful generation. There is a further offspring; "sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death." Here, then, is the consequence of an immoral union; the soul draws into itself enslaving presences, sin and death, and it cannot shake them away. The soul is in the bondage of guilt. The soul is in the bondage of death. Is this an imaginary analysis? Is its basis fictional? One of the clearest and calmest thinkers of our time, a man who sees far into the secret springs of human life, has given his judgment that the most real terrors that afflict men are the guilt of sin and the fear of death. You don't find the evidence of this upon the surface. Men do not like these things to walk abroad, and they seek to bury them in the deepest graves. But the terror is often the most real where the outer life appears undisturbed. It is often the man who is whistling who is most afraid of the ghost. Do not be misled by the whistle. That is only on the lips, while the terror is shaking the heart. I have heard men speak of their sins, and they could not have spoken about them more jauntily or laughingly if there were no God, and no great white throne, and no hell! But I have not allowed myself to be deceived. The whistling has been the index to the reality of their fear, and not the proof of its absence. Have you never broken into humming and singing to drown the voice of your conscience? Somebody heard you suddenly break into singing, and they interpreted it as a sign of peace and merriment, while all the time its signification was this -- a man fighting down his ghosts.

No, do not let us attempt to deceive ourselves. Sin is most real; guilt is most real; death is most real -- not merely the dissolution of the flesh, but that which the gentle Jesus called the "outer darkness," the black night of separation from the holy presence of God. The bondage is most real. How can we obtain deliverance? I want deliverance from the baleful shore of guilt. I want deliverance from the power of acquired habit. I want deliverance from the outer darkness of death. Where can the liberating power be found? I turn to those who have closed the Bible, denouncing its remedies as fictional, or at the best as antique and obsolete, and I ask them what provision they are prepared to put in its place. The problem is this: Here is a man, guilt-bound, sin-bound, death-bound. Release him. Take that haunted chamber of the mind, lay the ghosts, and make the chamber into a quiet and peaceful living-room. Take the heart, and turn out the unclean devils of desire and lust, and tenant it with the white-robed angels of faith and hope and love. Take the evil power out of to-day, and take the black threat out of to-morrow. That is the problem, often under-estimated because the remedies offered are peddling and insufficient. I am not surprised that men who close the Bible should so often interpret human need as though it were a skin complaint, and not a heart disease. It is an old device, and you may find the answer to it in the inspired word, "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord." That is a word which, I think, is peculiarly applicable to our own day. Polish is consistent with great depravity. Culture may coexist with rank uncleanness. Sandpaper may smooth a surface; it cannot change a substance. The primary need of man is not accomplishment but character, and for this we require not the washing of culture, but the washing of regeneration. It is possible to refine away a pimple of uncouthness; it is not possible to refine away guilt. Man can wash himself into good manners; he cannot provide himself with a new heart. When education and culture have reached their utmost limits, and the mental powers are refined into exquisite discernment, the two black, gruesome birds of the night remain -- guilt and death, and only the Eternal Son can disturb them, and cause them to flee away.

Here, then, there comes in the energetic, sleepless ministry of the Eternal Love. "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood." No man, by his own agony and bloody sweat, could wash his robes and make them white. "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood." Is the loosening real? That question does not suggest an argument I interpret it as a demand for proof. Call for those who are "in Christ," who live in Him by faith, and solicit their testimony. Call the witness, and let him declare what the Lord hath done for his soul. Let us examine him. What about thy ghost-chamber, the haunt of paralysing fears? Has the Lord laid the ghosts? "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding," keeps our minds. "He is our peace." And how is it with thy present temptations, with all the fierce onrush of desire and lust? "We are more than conquerors through Him who loveth us." And how about to-morrow and ... death? "To die is gain." The testimony is eager, persistent, unbroken. The loosening is an immediate and urgent reality. However real may have been the sense of guilt, the driving power of evil inclination, and the chilling fear of judgment, the sense of liberty and reconciliation is even more real, and life exults with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." The reality of reconciliation in Christ, of loosening and liberty by His blood, has given the keynote and emphasis to the evangel which has been the ceaseless glory of this Church. "And He made us to be a Kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father." He "loosed," and then He ennobled. After emancipation there came enfranchisement. We had been in the servitude of the evil one, the poor slaves of an appalling tyranny. Now we are made a Kingdom, we become citizens, endowed with a sublime franchise, the possessors of unspeakable privileges and rights. We are made a "Kingdom of priests." Every child has the right to share the sovereignty of Jesus, and to enjoy free access into the most secret place of the Father's presence. No longer does He call us "servants," but "friends." There is no closed door between us and Him. We have "the run of the house." We may be "at home with the Lord." This is the issue of the primal loving! The ultimate aim of redemption is the creation of a family of sanctified children, reigning as kings and queens, in the possession of spiritual powers, and enjoying happy and intimate fellowship with one another and with their Father in heaven.