**BROOKS BY THE TRAVELLER'S WAY - ADDRESSES BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**04. SPIRITUAL CULTURE by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"Teach me Thy way."*

*Psalm 86:11*

*"Teach me to do Thy will."*

*Psalm 143:10*

*"I delight to do Thy will."*

*Psalm 40:8*

"Teach me Thy way." Refine my conscience. Make my sense of right and wrong clear and definite. Suffer me not to grope in moral confusion. Train me in a fine discernment of moral values. Let me grow ever more and more exquisite in the perception of the spiritually lovely.

"Teach me to do Thy will." I want more than a fine sense of moral distinctions. I need more than a rare perception of right. I need to know the best way to accomplish it. There are wise and unwise ways of seeking the sovereignty of the right. I may fail of the end by using indiscreet means. I require not only a trained conscience, but an illumined judgment. I need to be taught how "to do."

"I delight to do Thy will." That marks a still more matured stage in discipleship. When the soul instinctively and joyfully inclines to the way of obedience, the life has reached a stage of rare fruition.

And so the scattered verses of my text arrange themselves in a heightening gradation, and together express the spacious compass of a consecrated life. "Teach me Thy way"--the training of the conscience. "Teach me to do Thy will"--the illumination of the judgment. "I delight to do Thy will"--the rectification of the will.

**I. The Training of the Conscience.**

"Teach me Thy way." The conscience is the organ through which the Lord makes known to me His way, and unveils the primary distinctions between right and wrong. The more refined and highly trained is the organ, the more exquisite will be its perceptions. The greater sensitiveness of the telephonic receiver has vivified the clearness and the detail of the message. But the organ of conscience can be impaired and its receptivity largely destroyed.

**(1) It can be injured by sin.**

John Ruskin's father would never allow him to gaze upon any inferior picture lest his artistic sense should be impaired. A similar reasoning might be followed in relation to the moral sense. To contemplate the morally inferior, to gaze upon the ugly, to have intercourse with sin, damages the fine delicacy of this sensitive organ.

**(2) It can be perverted by prejudice.**

If conscience be regarded as a light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," then it is within our power to put up a stained window and pervert the light. We can erect the coloured medium of a prejudice or a spirit of envy, or a jealousy, and the light we then receive is in reality "darkness." We walk in the darkness, and our errors re-act upon the conscience, and injure its exquisite perceptions.

**(3) It can be muffled by compromise.**

All attempts to find a go-between in matters of right and wrong inevitably issue in the muffling of the conscience. There are tradesmen who, on the Sabbath, compromise with their sense of right by putting up two shutters to their shop window, and then behind the shutters they continue their business as on any other day of the week. Those two shutters play a large part in the destruction of the finer parts of the moral life. If the Lord is to teach us His way, to lead us into deeper and more fruitful perceptions, all these things must be forsaken. He, who is the Teacher, will be our Defender; He who gives the revelation to conscience is willing to provide the power by which the accuracy of the conscience may be preserved.

Now all training of the conscience proceeds in the direction of the scruple. In moral and spiritual culture the line of progress is not from the less to the greater, but from the greater to the less. A man can measure the increasing refinement of his conscience by its more pervasive activity in the trifle. The path of perfection leads towards a "faithfulness in that which is least." It is "he that doeth the least," whom the Lord accounts as great. "Teach me Thy way." Train my conscience. Educate it. Breathe upon it Thy refining breath, that in the smallest affairs I may discern the secret of the Lord.

**II. The Illumination of the judgment.**

"Teach me to do." A man may know the right to aim at, and may take an unwise way to reach it. He may have a good conscience and be possessed of little tact. He may be conscientious but not resourceful. He may have fine moral discernment, but poor practical judgment. We often dim and imperil the end by the unwisdom of our means. Much good work is spoiled by ill-judged method. A man may speak to his fellow man concerning the matter of his salvation, and he may altogether impair the beautiful purpose by an ill-considered approach. We require not only refined conscience but illumined judgment, and so the Psalmist prays, "Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me." Knowing the truth, he prays for knowledge to apply it. In short, he needs a sound judgment. He requires to be taught how "to do" the will.

Now what is the secret of wise judgment? Does it not consist very largely in the active exercise of the imagination? A man of sound judgment is a man who looks all round a thing, and to do this requires the use of a disciplined imagination. Wellington used to say that one of the great secrets of successful generalship was the power to imagine what was going on behind a stone wall. That is the faculty we require in common life, the power to imagine what is going on in our brother's life, the power to "put ourselves in his place." Imagination is the twin sister to sympathy. They move together. If we had a broader and more responsive sympathy, we should have a quicker and more alert imagination. A more spacious sympathy and a more active imagination would give us two of the main essentials of a sound judgment. When we pray, therefore, "Teach me to do," we, in reality, ask the Lord to enrich the stock of our humanity, to make us more human and less self-centred, to broaden the responsive service of our life. "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart."

**III. The Rectifying of the Will.**

"I delight to do Thy will." "I delight," which, literally interpreted, means, "I am bent," to do Thy will. The inclinations of life are instinctively set in the way of obedience. The sense of constraint and reluctance is absent. The bent of the life is God-ward, and the bent abides. This represents a fine and mature attainment. What at first was constrained has come at length to be natural. He who says "I will incline my heart unto Thy testimonies," and will resolutely incline it every moment, day by day, will at length be able to sing, "O God! my heart is fixed." When the spiritual becomes natural, we have entered into the joy of the Lord. When our obedience has become instinctive, "His statutes have become our song." "We delight to do His will."