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

**06. MY NEED OF CHRIST, CHRIST'S NEED OF ME by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"I am the vine; ye are the branches."*

*John 15:5*

The Bible appears to exhaust all available figures in describing the intimate relationship which exists between the Lord and His own. All the most subtle and vital associations are laid hold of to shadow forth the wonderful fellowship which unites God and the children of God. The exquisite fitness of the one to the other is suggested by such relationships as hunger and bread, thirst and water, and the intimacy of their united lives is unveiled in the figures of the vine and its branches, the head and its members, the bridegroom and the bride. It is around the first of these symbols that we will concentrate the thought of this meditation.

**I. "I am the Vine Ye are the Branches."**

Then man can only realise himself in union with the Christ.

The branch cannot realise itself apart from the Vine. Its powers remain latent and unexpressed. Its capabilities remain undeveloped and unconceived. If the branch is to burst into bud and leaf and flower and fruit, its resources must be drawn from the Vine. It has no sap of its own creation. Its quickening and sustaining power can be obtained only by association. Its ideal is realised by an alliance which engages the tissues of its most inward parts.

Man can only come to himself by an intimate alliance with Christ. Apart from Christ man is never consummated. The force is wanting which would bring his powers to fruition. If his capabilities are to become abilities, if his possibilities are to ripen into actualities, if the human branch is to break into bud, and flower, and fruit, and life is to receive its appropriate crown, man must enter into profound and hearty fellowship with Christ. Every part of man's varied and composite personality will receive enrichment when the energising sap of the Lord flows in the deep and hidden parts of his life.

**(1)** May we assume a physical quickening? Why should we shrink from the assertion that if the branch comes into union with the Vine, even the physical powers will be purified and strengthened? Surely it is not illegitimate reasoning to assume that virtue is a finer health-minister than vice. We do not make nearly sufficient allowance for the influence of the spirit upon the body. The hopeful temperament is very frequently a more potent element than the doctor's medicine in ridding the body of sickness and disease. Get a clean, sanctified spirit into the body, and the influences, even upon the flesh, must be very different from the influences which proceed from an unclean spirit of rebellion and night. "He shall quicken your mortal bodies by His spirit that dwelleth in you." I am not prepared to relegate the fulfilment of this promise to an altogether remote futurity. It may be consummated only upon the day of the great unveiling, but I cannot think that its operations are still and inoperative even to-day. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh"; and in that "everything" I am inclined to include the quickening even of the physical capacities of the life.

**(2)** May we assume a mental quickening? If the energy of the Vine flows into the branch, will man realise himself more perfectly in the realm of the mind? That is the promise of the book. The Word of God has a great deal to say about "discernment." Again and again it is implied that the mental powers are sharpened, that the judgment is quickened when life is pervaded by the fine presence of the Spirit of God. The damp atmosphere will blunt the edge of the finest razor, and an unclean spirit can impair the acuteness of the rarest mental power. The wholeness of the mental capacity is affected by the general atmosphere of the life. In a remarkable article written by the late Mr. Hutton, at the time of Sir Isaac Holden's death, the great essayist declared his conviction that the extraordinary fertility and inventiveness of Sir Isaac's mind had been fed and nourished by the deep underlying spirituality and nobility of his life. When a man worships the Lord with "all his soul," he attains the possibility of serving Him "with all his mind."

**(3)** May we assume a moral quickening? If the sap of the Vine flows into the branch, man will realise himself in a rarer moral fruitage. Conscience will flower in more exquisite discernments. Will will sweeten into a rarer willingness. Obedience will become more and more choice. Affection will grow richer in benevolence and discernment. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." When the divine sap flows into human life, the branch bears all manner of fruit. Life is not morally lopsided. It is full and fine proportioned, abounding in an all-round moral excellence.

**(4)** May we assume a spiritual quickening? When the branch becomes allied with the Vine man realises himself in undreamed-of powers for the apprehension and appreciation of the things of God. He is enabled to enter with awed and reverent discernment into the mysteries of grace. He finds himself capable of appropriating the riches of redemption. He experiences the peace of forgiveness. He knows "the power of the resurrection." He "grows in grace and in knowledge," and feels the glory of the immortal hope. When life is energised by the divine sap, life acquires rare appreciations, and holds intimate fellowship with God. In all these ways man must realise himself in union with the Christ. We come to ourselves in Him. In Him our best is hidden; He has our crown. "Our sufficiency is in Him." "We are complete in Him."

**II. "I am the Vine; Ye are the Branches."**

Then Christ can only express Himself through union with man.

We have been considering the impotence of the branch apart from the Vine; but what can the Vine do without the branch? The Vine has need of the branch in order to express itself in flower and fruit. We frustrate the Vine if we deprive it of the branch. We have only to conceive of a branchless vine to realise its impotence. It has pleased the Lord to express Himself through His own. He still incarnates Himself in His children. He communicates Himself to the world through man. If we revolt we deprive the Lord of the means of expression.

He declares His Gospel through witnesses; therefore He has need of the branches. He proclaims His power through the healed man; He has therefore a need of the branches. He warns and counsels the people through prophets; He has therefore need of the branches. In an equally intimate figure, He declares that we are His "body." The unseen life of the Spirit embodies itself through us; we are its eyes, ears, hands, and feet. If we refuse the service, we silence the King.

He is yearning to express Himself in your own home, but He has no branch! He wants to reveal to your family what gracious fruit is matured in the life that abides in Him. He wants to show how barrenness changes to beauty under the influence of His sap, and how unfulfilled promise grows into ripe and beautiful attainment. But He has no branch! He longs to express Himself in the civic life. He wants branches in the Town Councils, on our School Boards, in all the different spheres of civic government and life. He wants to display the fruits of consecrated politics, the clear and mature rectitude of the Christian saint. But does He always find the branch? This is an aspect of the matter which we are commonly inclined to forget. The severance of the Vine and the branch is contemplated as meaning the paralysis and death of the branch. We do not very frequently regard it as meaning a maimed and impoverished Vine. When we offer ourselves to Christ, the branch not only attains the power of self-realisation, but the Vine acquires the vehicle for its own gracious and benevolent expression. The Apostle Paul offered himself as a branch to the Vine, and so intimate was the alliance that he was able to say, "I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me." "For to me to live is Christ." The Lord consummated the personality of the Apostle, and through him expressed His mind and purpose to a world. "I am the Vine; ye are the branches."

"Take my life and let it be

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee."