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

**08. LIGHTENING THE BURDEN by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."*

*Psalm 55:22*

To whom is this gracious promise of sustenance made? Some people's burdens are intended to be burdensome; the very heaviness of their load is purposed to discharge a gracious ministry. The yoke of the unrighteous is purposed to be galling. It would be calamitous to ease their pain even by shifting the position of the burden. The load that presses upon their souls may bring them to their knees, and the endurance of pain may issue in the fellowship of prayer. The gracious promise of our text is spoken to the surrendered life. Immovableness shall be the characteristic of the righteous. It is the righteous who remains uncrushed beneath the heaviest load, and who, under the burden, is sustained by the strengthening influences of grace.

**I. The Burden Bearers "the Righteous."**

But who is the righteous? We can infer the nature of sources by the character of issues. We can discern the nature of the will from the tendency of the life. If we know the effects of living, we can infer its secret springs. Now the Word of God records many significant symptoms and effects and tendencies of the righteous life, and from the observation of these we may possibly interpret its primary character and source. Let us glance at two or three of these descriptive words.

**(1) "The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life."**

Here is a symptom of the righteous life. Its conversation is vitalising; the purport of its speech is constructive. The Scriptures dwell on this characteristic with very varied emphasis. "Let nothing proceed out of your mouth but what is edifying." Our speech is to aid in the rearing of a stately and exquisitely finished life. "The lips of the righteous feed many." Their speech is food. Their conversation nourishes the minds of those with whom they hold intercourse. Their words revive the better selves of their companions. "The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver." Nothing common or vulgar is permitted. Their speech is carefully selected. It is sincere and refined, and therefore refining. The whole round of their conversation is a gracious "fountain of life."

**(2) "The labour of the righteous tendeth to life."**

Then not only their speech but their labour is a minister to more abundant life. The manner of the man's labour, the way in which he earns his bread, quickens the common life. There is nothing poisonous about his business ways; nothing perverting or destructive. They are not murderous but vitalising, and tend to quicken and enrich the corporate life.

**(3) "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life."**

All the varied issues of his life, all his accomplishments, the plentiful products of character and conduct, everything that emerges from his personality, minister to a more abundant life. All the fruit on his branches tend to sweeten and purify the common life.

Such are a few of the effects and symptoms of the righteous life. From such streams we can infer the spring. "With Thee is the fountain of life." The righteous is in profound fellowship with the Eternal. His will is united by steady, momentary surrender to the will of God. He lives and moves and has his being in the august contemplation of the Eternal. "The fear of the Lord is the fountain of life." The righteous is one who, by reverent fear and obedience, is in communion with the fountain, and the issues of his conduct and character minister to the vital enrichment and purification of the race.

**II. The Burden: "Thy Burden."**

What is the burden which is weighing with painful intensity upon the heart of this troubled Psalmist? Let us look abroad over the disturbed surface of the psalm. What does he bemoan as the burden of his soul?

**(1)** He bemoans the loud unblushing aggressiveness of evil. He goes about the city, and the ostentation of evil fills his eyes and ears--"The voice of the enemy"; "The oppression of the wicked"; "They cast iniquity upon me"; "Violence and strife in the city"; "Iniquity and mischief also"; "Oppression and guile depart not from her streets." It is the burden of social evils which weighs upon the man's soul, as an intolerable and suffocating load. It weighs him down. "My heart is sore pained within me." "Horror hath overwhelmed me."

**(2)** He bemoans the unfaithfulness of the professor. The leaven of professed goodness is revealing itself to be bad. The salt is going wrong. "It was thou ... my companion, my familiar friend ... we walked in the House of the God with the throng." He is burdened by the presence of the unfaithful professor, who hath profaned his covenant. Such is the two-fold perversity which is crushing the Psalmist's soul; the burden of proud evil and the burden of false virtue. In the face of these he is almost seduced into flight. "Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest."

**III. The Divine Injunction: "Cast Thy Burden on the Lord."**

The remedy for thy depression is not to be found in flight, but in continued fight. Rest will not be discovered in the solitude of the wilderness, but in an alliance with thy God. Thou art assuming to carry the burden in thine own weakness, and the load is too much for thee. Thou hast a Partner. This kind of burden-bearing is the labour of a "company." The yoke is proposed to be borne by thee and thy God. Bring together all the words of the Scriptures which suggest the gracious truth. The Bible is great in that class of words which begin with the syllable "com": communion, companionship, comfort, commit, communicate. And all these words with the suggestive preface declare that life is purposed to be an intimate partnership between ourselves and God, and that, if man ignores his great Divine partner, life's burden will break his heart. "Cast thy burden on the Lord." Hie thee away to God, go into thy closet shut the door, have a little time with thy Partner; tell Him of the evil of thine own heart; tell Him of the evils that invest the city; tell Him that the word "flight" has been whispered in thine ears, but that thou art more inclined to stand. "Cast thy burden on the Lord," and when thy Partner lays hold of the load, thy burden shall become light.

**IV. The Divine Promise: "He Shall Sustain Thee."**

That is the common way by which the Lord lightens the burden of life. It is not lifted away from us; our strength is increased, and the burden becomes light. He gives us sustenance, and, being stronger men, we are able to carry the old load with a lighter and more confident heart. Is not this what happened under the appalling sufferings of Gethsemane? The burden was unspeakably heavy. "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will but Thine be done." And what was the answer to this poignant prayer? The burden was not removed, but the Master Himself was sustained. "There appeared unto Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him." That angel is still ministering among the children of men. He is still imparting sustaining strength to those who are bowing beneath life's load. He appears to us in unexpected guise. Sometimes the strengthening food is brought to us in most unfamiliar ways. "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee." "I have commanded a widow to sustain thee." We never know just how the sustenance may come. It may come to us through the speech of our friend, through a chance incident related in a book, through a suggestion from a work of art. We cannot tell how the angel who brings the bread may be robed, but the bread is sure. "He never will suffer the righteous to be moved." Thou shalt not slip or slide, thou shalt remain firm as upon a rock. He will preserve thee from the timidity which is fraught with moral peril. He will strengthen thee so as to encounter thine own temptations and the evils of thy city with a brave and exultant heart.