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

**14. STATUTES BECOME SONGS by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."*

*Matthew 5:44,45*

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." "The children." There is a wide difference between a mere connection and a kinsman. One is in the sphere of the legal and artificial; the other is in the vital and natural. One is determined by a certificate; the other resides in the blood. There is an equally wide and more profound distinction between offspring and children. One is suggestive of common blood; the other of common spirit. One indicates relationship; the other implies fellowship. Joel and Abiah, who "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment," were not the children of Samuel; they were only his fleshly seed and offspring. To be a child is to share a spirit. Not to share the spirit is to be only the seed. "Abraham is our father." No, "ye are of your father the devil." Your deeper spiritual movements have their origin and affinity in him. To be a child means more than succession; it means repetition of the life which gave us our birth. It means more than descent; it means spiritual likeness. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God"; so beautifully do they reflect and repeat the spirit of our God. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you ... that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." I shall be a child, revealing and repeating a Father. If I do this I reflect Him. The child unveils the Father. Then mark this principle, What He wishes me to be, He is. He says that if I love, I shall be like Him, a child of my Father who is in heaven. What is the significance of this? His commandments are revelations of Himself. If I gaze at what He commands me to be I shall see what He is: Have we sufficiently thought of this? We have looked for revelations of our God in the promises; have we sought the revelations in the commandments? We have looked into the commandments for our duties; have we looked for our comforts? It throws a tender, mellow, softening light round about apparent severity. Take the most searching and exacting commandment you can find in the Sacred Word. Say to yourself--"This is what a child is to be like; this, then, is what the Father is like," and use the apparently stern commandment as an open window through which to gaze upon the incomparable and inspiring loveliness of the eternal God. The commandments laid upon men are revelations of God. That which stands alone as a commandment appals me; seen as a revelation it fills me with rejoicing.

Now, let me turn the light of this principle upon two or three exceeding broad and uncompromising commandments which confront us in the Word of God.

**1.** "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." The brilliance of the ideal almost consumes me. The vastness of the height tends to make me faint and despondent even before I leave the base. Let us hold the commandment squarely before us. "Love your enemies." The man who makes your misery his policy, who dogs your steps, who sets snares for your feet, who twists your words, who is always pointing out the fly in the ointment, and who is never happier than when he is slowly dropping bitterness into your cup; your enemy, love him. There must be no fiery retaliation, no mere chilling toleration, no proud and lofty contempt. I must remain well-disposed toward him, watching my opportunity to save him from himself. My enemy is first of all an enemy to himself. The bitterness which he drops into my cup has, first of all, poisoned his own. I must be lovingly alert for his salvation. "Do good to them that hate you." If opportunity should place him in thy power, let there be no rejoicing because thou hast him "on the hip." Use the opportunity in the ministry of goodness! Ferret out a way of doing a kindness, and take the beautiful living branch and drop it into the waters of bitterness, if perchance they may be made sweet. "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Remember them upon thy knees. Name them quietly and kindly in thy most secret place. Offer them the highest privilege it is in thy power to grant--the privilege of being remembered when thou art face to face with God. Forget the superficial injury he inflicts upon thee in the absorbing thought of the fatal injury he is inflicting upon himself. On thy part he creates bitterness; on his part he commits suicide. Therefore for their sakes, "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

The demands of the command are appalling. The command is so exceeding broad as to stretch across the entire path of my life, and there is no possible margin for compromise or evasion. If I confine my attention to the commandment and its relationship to me, I am oppressed and discouraged by the firm breadth of its demands. Why should I bow to the commandment? That I may be a child of the Father. This is what a child is like; so through this I see my Father. The commandment becomes a revelation, and I am filled with an inspiring and aspiring sense of rejoicing. What God wants me to be, He is.

"Love your enemies." Look through that window at God. God loves His enemies. Don't let the energy of that great truth be wasted in a vague and diffused generality. God loves His enemies. He is vigilantly alert to redeem us from ourselves. From Him there proceeds a river of mighty beneficent energy working round about us to accomplish our redemption. Love in God is no idle or passive sentiment. A mother's love is just a bequest from the heart of God. All her finest, most exquisite, and tenderest instincts have been communicated to her out of the unsearchable riches of God. A mother's purest love is just a broken piece of the ineffable love of God. All the deep feelings of parental solicitude are but echoes of the primary reality that dwells in the heart of God. And this love of the Eternal is at work about His enemies, seeking to deliver them from their enmity, and to lift them into the sweet and spacious condition of spiritual health. There is no one, however remote he may be from God, however wretched and dejected, however shameless and unclean, to whom the eternal love is not ministering, as a mother stoops with yearning solicitude over her sickly child. That is a wonderful word of the Psalmist's, and abounding with cheer and inspiration, "Thou hast loved my soul out of the pit." Thou hast loved me out of it! Have we not known men who have been loved out of meanness and out of looseness by the unwearied affection of a noble wife? Their character was elevated by the persistent application of a mystic gravitation which they were unable to resist. God loves His enemies, and loves them out of the pit! He does good "to them that hate Him." His mercies do not cease with our obedience. He prepares green pastures for us when our just reward would be a desert, and He leads us by still waters when we might have expected a land of drought. God loves His enemies, and does good to them that hate Him. This fills me with rejoicing, and makes the soul to exult in the power of a quenchless hope. So I will interpret His commandments as revelations. They shall first of all tell me, not what I must be, but what God is, and the inspiration of the glorious vision shall nerve and brace me for the task--by the attainment of which I become my Father's child. "Love your enemies," and so be a child. God is the Father, and so loves the children.

**2.** Now, turn the light of the principle upon another commandment, calculated, I think, to fill us with fear. "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?" "I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven." That is a suggestion that these things are not to be governed by mere processes of counting; that they belong to a province where arithmetic has no sovereignty, and where quite other measures and standards hold the throne. Let us deepen the clear significance of the teaching. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent,' thou shalt forgive him." That seems an overwhelming ideal! I do not wonder that the apostles, to whom the word was spoken, fearfully perceived the vastness of the demand, and instinctively broke into speech which was both confession and prayer--"Lord, increase our faith!" What is the principle of the commandment? The principle is this, that arithmetic plays no part in real forgiveness, that mere counting is not to determine the outgoings of mercy and grace. But what a large part we allow arithmetic to play in common life! How many of us have ever forgiven a man three times? "As this is the first time, I forgive you, but--." And we carry the memory of the first offence forward and forward, and in the second offence condign, and final judgment is inflicted for both. Our arithmetic is our ruler. That is not the prescribed way of the Word. To forgive, and forgive, and forgive, and on each fresh offence not to count the last--to have no arithmetic in these high regions--this is to make demands upon our grace which we have apparently no resources to meet. And that is perfectly true if we confine ourselves to the bald limits of the commandment. We want an inspiration, if the aspiration is to be more than a mocking dream.

Where shall we get the inspiration? Apply our principle; the commandment laid upon men is a revelation of God. What makes a child reveals the Father. What God wants us to be, He is. Take the commandment, then, and use it as a window to look at God! "Not seven times, but seventy times seven." That is the character of the forgiveness measured out to us by the eternal God! There is no arithmetic in the transaction, no severe counting of the forgiveness of yesterday. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions ... and will not remember thy sins." I fell yesterday, and sincerely I turned to the Lord for forgiveness, and "He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." I have fallen again to-day. I would like humbly to seek His gate that I may tell Him the sad and saddening story. Will He heed me if I knock at the door? Or shall I be spurned away? Will the dogs be turned upon me, or shall I hear the heartening voice, "Come in, my beloved!" "If he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." Through that commandment I see my God. I will not be afraid to knock at His door. As old Samuel Rutherford says, "It becomes us still to knock, and to die knocking." I hold up this commandment concerning forgiveness, that in it you may see the beauty of your God. The commandment becomes a revelation, and in the inspiration of the revelation the commands may be fulfilled.