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

**20. THE MODESTY OF LOVE by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"Love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own."*

*1 Corinthians 13:4,5*

"Love envieth not." And what is envy? To envy any one is to repine at their superior excellence. But the repining leads to something worse. Envious repining is the parent of malice and ill-will. Nay, envy drags after it a whole brood of evil spirits. I think the great tempter must be exaltingly satisfied when he has inserted into the life of anyone this germ of envy. There are some insects which insert their eggs into the bodies of others, and at first the insertion seems to be comparatively harmless. But the inserted life begins to develop, and to feed upon the body in which it dwells, and matures and strengthens itself by the entire destruction of the other. And so envy is somehow or other introduced into our spirits, and may at first appear nothing very harmful. But it begins to develop and mature, until it has devoured the whole of our spiritual life.

Here are these Corinthians, endowed with various gifts. One had eloquence, another had wealth, another had a wonder-working faith. And they became envious one of another. The one who had eloquence envied the one who had faith, and from envy he passed to ill-will and disparagement and slander. And the disposition became so prevalent that this Corinthian Church became the dwelling-place rather of Satan than of Christ. Well, you know how prone we are to this disposition to-day. Everywhere we are exposed to its insidious allurements. Here are two ministers. One has an influence assuredly broadening, and a congregation steadily increasing. The other has a congregation slowly diminishing, and an influence apparently shrinking. Oh, how terribly strong is the temptation to envy and ill-will! Is it otherwise in social functions? When one who has moved in your circle becomes a general favourite and is greatly courted and admired, while you are partially overlooked or altogether ignored, how fierce is the temptation to envy, and slander, and ill-will! And so it is everywhere and in every life. When we turn with this thought in our minds to gaze upon the personality of John the Baptist, I think it shines with most supernal light. Here he is by the Jordan, the popular favourite; vast crowds enrol themselves in his discipleship. And here comes Jesus, and the crowds about John begin to melt away; his popularity begins to wane, and the enthusiasm which he enjoyed gathers about the Nazarene. But there is no envy! He quietly and joyfully says--"He must increase, but I must decrease." I am only as the moon, and now that the sun is risen, I must fade away into obscurity. "He must increase, but I must decrease." No envy, I say. And why? Because John loved the Nazarene. He loved His mission; he loved Him with a great and passionate love, and with love there can be no envy. There is only one thing that can kill envy, and that is love. Everything else is impotent. If you want to destroy the envy that is lurking in your heart, you must have created in your heart the atmosphere of love, and the secret of that atmosphere you can learn at the foot of the Cross. "Love envieth not."

"Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." No, where there is no envy there will be no vaunting of oneself, no self-glorifying. It is the envious folk who are the swaggerers. Envy always forces a man into self assertion. Envy leads a man to disparage another, and the disparagement is always directed to the commendation of himself. If you listen to an envious person, who is engaged in disparaging another, you will find that the whole process is a glorification of himself. There is nothing like envy for puffing us up. Envy vaunts itself by slighting others. I have heard a man speak very critically and disparagingly of the electric light, pointing out its irregularity and its defects, but then he was a large shareholder in gas companies! And I think this has its moral application. Our envy leads us to speak disparagingly of other people's excellences, in order that we may vaunt ourselves. We criticise them that we may puff up ourselves. Our envy makes us proud. Love envieth not, and therefore it hasn't the progeny of envy--"it vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."

"Love doth not behave itself unseemly." Envy does. Envy leads to self-vaunting, to swagger, to self-conceit, and self-conceit leads to unseemly behaviour. The envious, conceited man is for ever pushing himself to the front. He is always putting himself in evidence, thrusting himself before the public gaze. In this Corinthian Church every envious man was wanting to exhibit his own gift. They all wanted to be at the front, and their behaviour became unseemly. "Unseemly," or, as the word literally means, mis-shapen; their behaviour became shapeless, ugly; it had no form, no comeliness. It ignored all the claims of civility and grace. Well, I think we shall all feel that this unseemliness of behaviour is not unknown among us to-day. There is a great deal of the behaviour, even of Christians, which is shapeless and ugly. We are called by our Master to see to it that our behaviour is graceful and comely. They who ascend into the hill of the Lord have not only to have a pure heart, but clean hands. Their behaviour is to be as graceful as their principles are true. I think we might all give a little more concern to this--that we might emphasize the clean hands as well as the pure heart, the seemly behaviour as well as the secret life. There are some men who even make their bluntness a boast, and others find defences for them in the excuse that "they mean well." That is not enough. We have not only to mean well, but to seem well. The demand is for a pure heart and for clean hands. No man has a right to be blunt in his speech and shapeless and ugly in his behaviour, whatever may be the worth and rectitude of his meaning. A good picture can be greatly helped by good mounting. And so it is in the Christian life--behaviour is the mounting of character, and we are called upon to have the character good and the behaviour seemly. But when the unseemly behaviour arises from envy, when pride makes us self-assertive, when our lust for praise leads us to trample upon others that we may display ourselves, when this makes our behaviour unseemly, there is only one remedy. We must get our hearts filled with love, the cleansing love which we may find at the Cross, and then all the unseemly behaviour will cease. "Love doth not behave itself unseemly."

"Love seeketh not her own." So far from rushing into any unseemliness in seeking to display itself, so far from trampling upon the rights of others, love does not even claim her own. "Love seeketh not her own." She claims no rights except where moral principle is involved, and on this she takes a stand, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. There is a quaint, grey monument in the sweet old town of Appleby, which was built in the days of the Puritans, and on which these words are inscribed: "Maintain your loyalty; preserve your rights." Maintain your rights! Aye, but they were the crown rights of manhood, freedom to oppose iniquity, freedom to worship God, and the very love in the hearts of those strong old Puritans made them claim the rights, and support their claim by death. There are rights which true love will never relinquish. She will always seek her own. On the other hand, there are rights which love is ever prepared to yield to others. If love had a right to the uppermost seat at a feast, and somebody else has got it, love would seek not her own, but would gracefully insist on the rights of the other. If love had a sitting in the Church of Christ, and came and found that someone else was seated there, love would not behave itself unseemly; love would seek not her own, but would cheerfully seek a seat elsewhere. Is not this the way of love? Would not this be the way of Christ? How many opportunities there are, in the whole round of life, where love might graciously abdicate its own rights for the comfort and interest of others. Let us keep our eyes open, that when the Master gives us such opportunity, we may use it according to His desire. And, some day, when the evening of our life is come, He will come to us, and because we have sought not our own, but have cheerfully yielded to others, He will whisper to us, "Friend, go up higher," and the word will make us leap for joy as we enter the eternal world. "Love seeketh not her own."