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

**22. THE FRUITS OF GODLY FEAR by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant. Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net."*

*Psalm 25:12-15*

"What man is he that feareth the Lord?" "The fear of God" is a familiar expression in the Scriptures. Perhaps our very intimacy with the phrase has somewhat impoverished our sense of its content. Let us seek to lay hold of one element in the spacious word. When we profoundly fear a thing we are haunted by it. It affects everything. It throws a shadow into the sunniest hour, and brings a chill into the gayest feast. May we transfer any of this meaning into our interpretation of the fear of God? To fear God is to be God-haunted, God-possessed. But immediately we see the defectiveness of the figure. In all fruitful fear of God there is no cringing, no slavishness, no paralysing terror. Perfect love "casteth out" this type of fear. Let us, then, change our figure. We speak of being haunted by an air of music. We have listened to some sweet melody, and we cannot escape from its gracious thraldom. It pervades the entire day. It interweaves itself with all our changing affairs. We hear it in our work and in our leisure; when we retire to rest and when we awake. It haunts us. The analogy may help us to some apprehension of what is meant by the fear of God. The man who fears God is haunted by God's presence. God is an abiding consciousness. God is "continually before him." Everything is seen in relationship to God. The Divine presence pervades the mind and shapes and colours the judgment. Here are two descriptions from the Word of God, in the contrast of which the meaning will be made quite clear. "God is not in all his thoughts." The Eternal does not haunt his mind. Everything is secularised, and nothing is referred to the arbitrament of the Divine Will. He is not God-possessed. "Pray without ceasing." Here is the contrasted mind from which the sense of God is never absent. Like an air of penetrating music the divine presence pervades the exercise of all his powers. He is God-haunted, and in the consciousness of that presence he lives and moves and has his being. He fears God.

What would be the fruits of such a fear? If God haunts the life, and His presence is welcomed, what will be the gracious issues? The succeeding verses give some outline of the spacious ministry.

"Him shall He teach in the way that he shall choose." He shall be guided in his choices. He shall have the gift of enlightenment. His discernment shall be refined so as to perceive the right way when the ways are many. His judgment shall be illumined. I use the word judgment with a full and comprehensive meaning. The moral judgment shall be instructed. Its perceptions shall be rendered more microscopic. It shall be able to discern among scruples; it shall become more and more scrupulous. It shall truthfully detect that which is least. The moral choice shall be firm and sure. But it is not only the moral judgment which shall be put to school. The practical judgment shall also be nurtured and refined in the Lord's school. Such qualities as these are among the fruits of the education--tact, discretion, insight, foresight, shrewdness. I do not yield the distribution of these gifts to the sovereignty of the devil. They are among the gifts of the Spirit. Practical sagacity is one of the bequests of the Lord. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God." The enlightenment covers the entire field of human life. "He shall teach." The word is full of comforting suggestion. He will come down to my level. He will search out the needs of the individual scholar. He will begin where I am able to begin. He will break things up and make them clear to me. He will come to tender shoots like "small rain."

"His soul shall dwell at ease." Restlessness and worry shall be abolished. "He shall lodge in the chamber of content." The sense of the companionship of God will make every place the realm of promise, and in every place he will find the riches of grace. Every variety of condition into which his life may pass shall provide its own feast. He will not fret or be worried even though he be led into a place that abounds with antagonisms. He will still be "at ease." "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." That is a wonderfully heartening testimony! When the foes are all about him, and his besetment appears to be perilous, in the very midst of it all he sits down to feast with God. And so he "dwells at ease," wherever his lot is cast. Is not this only a paraphrase of the apostolic word, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." If the dwelling-place be one of tribulation, even in this dark spot the Lord's treasure may be found. "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience hope." Such are the jewels to be found in this black mine. The God-haunted man is restful in every place because the all-sufficient resource accompanies him in the abiding companionship of God. "With Christ in the vessel, he smiles at the storm."

"His seed shall inherit the earth." Children become heirs when parents become pious. The God-possessed transmits a legacy of blessing. Our children fare the better when we fear the Lord. It would be a fruitful subject of meditation for us to sit down and quietly think about the bequests of piety. It would be a profitable exercise to calculate what one may inherit because another man was good. The men and women who are haunted by God and live in His fear bequeath pure vital force, rare moral energy, and a spiritual atmosphere in which sin becomes more difficult. But among the legacies of the pious there are ministries other than these. "Nevertheless I will not do it for David thy father's sake." Is that suggestive of a common ministry in human life? Is judgment withheld from the son because of the sanctity of the parent? Is the son blessed because the father prayed? What vistas are opened out by the application of the principle! All that I have that is worth anything may be a deposit from the prayerfulness of a consecrated parent. I may have an inheritance because he walked with God. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children to such as keep His covenant." When I fear the Lord, I bequeath a spiritual inheritance to my seed.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." They are taken into intimate fellowship. They become the familiar friends of God. It is always a sign of deepening friendship when people begin to open their inner rooms to us. To be made the depository of a rare secret is to be sealed as a friend. When anyone tells us a secret joy, it is a mark of intimacy; when they unveil to us a secret grief, it is a proof of the closest fellowship. When we are taken from the suburbs of a man's being to the centre, it is a proof of an enriching communion. "No longer do I call you servants, but friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father, I have made known unto you." Is there not something tenderly suggestive in the word which tells us that "when they were alone, He expounded unto them"? When He had got His familiar friends to Himself, He told them His secrets and showed them His covenant. And so it is the saint who is the spiritual expert. The merely intellectual athlete may be in the remote suburb of truth, while the illiterate saint may dwell in its very heart. There are many illiterate saints who are grand expositors. The Lord "shows them" His covenant. He unveils to them rare glimpses of redemptive glory, and what is hid from the merely wise and prudent is revealed unto babes.

Here, then, are some of the fruits of the God-possessed life. How can we become God-haunted? Let us begin by deliberately consulting God in the individual movements of our busy life. Let us refer everything to His decision. Let us make Him a partner in all our affairs. Let us begin by distinct acts of volition, and what began at first with strained deliberateness may become at length an easy-fitting habit, and may even ripen still further into the spontaneity of an instinct. The Lord will be "continually before us."