**THINGS THAT MATTER MOST - DEVOTIONAL PAPERS BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**24. THE SOUL INTHE MARKET by JOHN H. JOWETT**

I USE these words, "The Soul in the Market," to characterize the second temptation of our Lord. Here is a soul face to face with the supreme enemy of souls. The enemy of souls creates in life the atmosphere of the market. He proposes a transaction in the nature of an exchange. He suggests a bargain and makes an offer. What are the terms? What does he offer? "The kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." What does he ask in return? The worship and service of the soul. "If Thou wilt fall down and worship me." That is to say, he offers a temporality and demands a spirituality. He offers a reputation and demands a character. He offers a great "spread," but insists upon a stooping soul. He offers a show of liberty, but his terms are spiritual servitude. He offers possessions, but the price is degradation. He proposes a profitable exchange, and for the treasures of the soul he offers the treasures of the world. Make him supreme monarch in the empire of the soul, and he will make us kings in material domains. That is the essential bargain. The soul is in the market in Vanity Fair.

Let us inspect the character of the temptation a little more closely. The air was filled with the rumour of a coming king and of the restoration of kingdoms. Everywhere was the sense of thrill and expectancy. Men's eyes were scouring the horizon for one that should come. And now excitement was intensified, for there had appeared by the Jordan a desert prophet with the old authoritative word and mien, proclaiming the news of the King's coming, and the Kingdom of God was at hand. The King had left His palace! He was on the road! "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

And what did they expect to see? They looked for a king who should be clothed in the mysteries of unshared powers, before whom the kingdoms of the world would lie prostrate in awed and affrighted obeisance. He was to be a sort of Prospero, with invisible Ariels at his command, going forth on his decrees to charm or to paralyze, to bind or to free. The coming king would set up the throne of his glory in Jerusalem, the place of his presence would make the grandeur of empires sombre; he would have his feet upon the neck of kings, and he would lay their valiant ones in the dust. "Then cometh Jesus, and the devil taketh Him into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'"

Let us mark the subtlety of the snare. Think how much the young Nazarene might accomplish by the possession of a carnal rule. He could ride abroad redressing human wrongs. He could strike the weapon from the hand of the oppressor. He could destroy the tyranny of iniquitous taxation. He could lighten the burden of the poor. The sovereignty of kingdoms would give Him the ministry of freedom, and wherever men were in servitude, He could lead them into glorious liberty. "All these things will I give Thee!" What are the terms of the exchange? "If Thou wilt fall down and worship me." The devil is seeking his exchanges in the region of the soul. He is seeking them in the realm of spiritual homage and posture, in the secret place of worship and ideal. "Alter thy soul posture. Readjust thy secret homage. Change thy spiritual inclinations. Dilute the stringency of thy holiness. Change thy heavenly principles for loose expediencies. Change thy impossible ideals for working compromises. Change thy clear, straight sight for winks and nods and wiles. Change thy serene wisdom for sharp subtlety. Change thy unvarnished truth for the oil of flattery. Make more of appearances. Let life be more a game, a scheme, an artifice, and less of an exalted crusade. "All these things I will give thee, if thou wilt only play my game. Thou shalt appoint the goal, but mine shall be the way to reach it. Thine shall be the end, but mine shall be the means." Such were the terms of the proposed exchange.

And the answer? The Master's answer came sharp, immediate, peremptory, and absolute: "Get thee behind Me, Satan!" Our Master would not change the inclination of His soul by the shadow of a turning. He would not deflect His steps by a hair's breadth from the path of holiness and truth. To gain kingdoms and the glory of them He would not haul down the holy flag waving on the citadel of His soul. He would not worship in the house of Rimmon. He would not wipe out the Ten Commandments and write ten corn-promises in their place. He would not exchange the fair, clear, sunny ideals of the Divine hills for the will-o'-the-wisps of "the world and the flesh and the devil." "Get thee behind Me, Satan, for it is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Let no one imagine that with the defeat of this temptation the same temptation never returned. If I interpret the Master's life aright, the temptation returned again and again, with precisely the same enticements, always changing its attire, but always with the same motive, and armed with the same destructive quest. The Lord was always being tempted to use illicit means in the interests of the heavenly kingdom, to take forbidden ways to apparently legitimate ends. We have an instance of the return of the temptation when He was enticed by His own brethren to worship at the loud, garish altar of egotism and self-display. "If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world." Copy the ways of the world and make a noise! Advertise Thyself! He would have none of it. "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the street."

There is a further example of the return when Simon Peter sought to entice his Lord to take the easy road and to seek His throne by the flowery path of comfort. "Then Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him, saying, This shall not be unto Thee.'" And the Lord again answered with the sharp response He made to the first temptation, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." Christ would have no illicit compromises. He would make no bargains with indolence. He would offer no incense at the altar of worldly wisdom. "He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem," and He walked the thorny, flinty road to Calvary and the Cross, and this was His one response to all alluring besetments by the way: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."