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

**32. OUTSIDE THE WALLS by JOHN H. JOWETT**

IT is a healthy experience to find rare flowers beyond the limits of one's own jealously-guarded garden. It is especially healthy when we have assumed that all the seed was in our own basket. It is altogether good to be made to wonder at these exotics growing so naturally in their alien bed. Our Lord seemed to take exquisite delight in pointing them out, and in emphasizing the teaching that His garden stretched beyond the confines of all the walls that had been built by men. He would stop His disciples on one of these alien roads--roads which to them had no significance except barrenness and desolation--and He would draw their reluctant eyes to some lovely flower growing by the way. Again and again He points them out, beautiful things outside the official circle, sweet presences beyond the limits of the recognized compound. He loved to reveal the flowers growing outside the walls.

There were ten lepers, and all of them were healed by the Master, but only one returned to give thanks for his healing, "and he was a Samaritan." This fine flower of gratitude was found growing beyond the pale of exclusive and traditional privilege. It is like "a root out of a dry ground." But there it is. A fair and beautiful thing which refreshed the spirit of our Lord. And so it is to-day; this noble and graceful flower of gratitude may often be found growing in profusion outside the outermost walls of the Church. And so it is again that within the walls, amid rich conditions of soil and climate, you may sometimes seek for the flower in vain. There are lives which claim exalted heavenly relations, but they lack the grace of gratitude. There are many who cry, "God be merciful!" who never cry, "God be praised!" But the sweet song is often heard outside the walls, and the sweet singer has not built her nest near the recognized altars of the temple.

"And the barbarians showed us no common kindness." That was a beautiful flower to be found growing in the wild home of caprice and superstition. Indeed, can we find anywhere a more beautiful flower than kindness? Is there any flower more pleasant to look upon, more sweet in its fragrance, more arresting and welcome to the eyes of men? And it was the barbarians who grew it in no common fashion. But where is the kindness born? From whose seed does it spring, and in what soil is it grown? With what sort of light and rain is it nourished? These questions lead us away to the source of every beautiful thing, even to the Great God, who has all "strength and beauty in His sanctuary." If the barbarians showed no common kindness, then the sweet flowers had been grown from seeds wafted from the paradise of God. When we call things by their right names, kindness is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and so these barbarians were just a part of the garden of the Lord.

"I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Here, again, is our Lord's delight in outside treasure. Here is a steady, steadfast, appropriating faith, liberating the divine and holy energies of healing, and yet the man in whom it dwells is not registered among "the favoured people of God." He is an outsider, an alien, remote from the privileged vantage-ground of sunshine and shower, and yet this strong, virile, oak-like faith is growing mightily in his soul. The Kingdom was wider than the visible Church. Some who were unregistered in the earthly lists of saints had "their names written in heaven." There were spiritual correspondences when there were no official wires. There was secret fellowship where there was no visible communion. And all this should be deeply heartening to our souls. The realm of the Spirit is bigger than we know. Our church rolls are not its measure. There are men and women of unconfessed relations who are at mighty grips with God. There is secret faith that has not yet found public confession. There are faithful souls who will never "follow with us," but who are busy "casting out devils in His name." They may keep their own way, but the Lord knows them, and He seals their faith with His grace and power. They are "outside the walls," but they are "in the Lord."

"Other sheep I have which are not of this fold." And yet we are so tempted to think that all His sheep are in our fold, and we look with sharp suspicion on those that are outside our walls. I do not say that we bluntly deny them a part in the Tender Shepherd's care, but there is a reluctance of recognition, a want of generous candour, a disposition to withhold the right names from things, which is painful evidence that we severely limit the Shepherd's fold. Let us test ourselves by our regard for the Roman Catholics. How about the sheep of that fold? Do we heartily recognize the close communion between these sheep and our Shepherd? Do we readily acknowledge our common fellowship in the Lord? Or are we rather inclined to regard them as "black sheep," shepherdless, or herded only by subtle and deceptive hirelings? "Them also I must bring." We urgently need this broader and deeper sense of communion. It is amazing how, with all our federations and alliances, the "fold" prejudices are so intense and vigorous. It may be that we take the "fold" spirit instead of the "flock" spirit into our alliances, and we preserve our bitter divisions in the midst of our apparent union. At any rate, there are deep denominational reluctances that would be burned out completely if we had more of the fire of the Holy Spirit, for concerning all such roots of bitterness "our God is a consuming fire."

It is thus a wise and holy practice to look outside our walls. It is well to cultivate a wide expectancy, and to keep vigilant eyes upon every road, if perchance we may see signs of the coming of the Lord. If we find the red flower of love, let us relate it to God, for God is love.