**THE SILVER LINING - MESSAGES OF HOPE AND CHEER BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**05. PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"Before governors and kings shall ye be brought for My sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you."*

*Matthew 10:18-20*

"Ye shall be brought before governors and kings." This was said to fishermen who had lived a quiet, unobtrusive life on and by the Galilean lake. It does not require much imagination to enter into the panic occasioned by the Master's words. In our day, to appear before a Court even as a plaintiff makes one limp and weak and useless; to appear as defendant is to suffer collapse. And these humble, toiling men, with their horny hands, with their homely dialect, are told that they must appear before kings and governors to answer for their lives! It is no easy experience for obscure people to appear in the presence of the great and mighty. They are often either the victims of awkwardness or the prey of paralysing fear. They do the wrong thing; they say the wrong thing; things they purposed saying and doing are forgotten; both in the presence of the august and when they leave it they feel abashed and ashamed. If not the prey of awkwardness they are in the bondage of fear; the pith goes out of their powers, and they feel as though their wills are melting away. It was by no means an easy prospect which the Master held out before them. "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings." When they heard the words their secret hearts began to busy themselves with this unspoken question: "What shall we do?" Immediately they became anxious, possessed by worry, thrown into mental and spiritual disorder.

Here, then, are the disciples contemplating a remote emergency. The emergency will come. It is inevitable. The line of their life, at present commonplace and even, will rise into a great crisis. As sure as the morrow comes the emergency will come with it! What shall they do? That was the pregnant question, and the question suggests our present meditation. How shall we prepare for emergencies?

Our life now may be a level, regular road; but to-morrow the character of the road will be changed, and we shall be confronted by some great and unusual task. What shall we do? It may not be ours to stand as culprits before powers of an imperial or ecclesiastical kind. But it is not only kings and governors who make life's crises. There are presences and powers of another kind, great, strong, and inevitable. Other things may stop us, arrest us, imprison us in close bondage. There are other kings beside those who sit on thrones. To-morrow I may not stand before a king who wears the purple, but I may come into the presence of sickness. I may approach the sudden shadow of calamity. I may come within the chill and loneliness of bereavement. I may meet King Death himself, the king of kings, the king of terror, the shadow feared of man. "Ye shall be brought before" sickness, calamity, bereavement, death! These presences are inevitable. What shall we do? How shall we prepare for them?

"Ye shall be brought before kings." When the disciples heard the words many of them began already to prepare the words which they would address to the king. "No," said the Master, "do not prepare a speech, be not anxious what ye shall speak. Don't prepare a speech, prepare yourselves!" That is the way to meet all emergencies. Not to make little detailed arrangements and little specified plans and finished speeches, but to have our souls in health and to meet all emergencies with the invincibility of a prepared life.

"Be not anxious." The first step in all wise preparation for emergencies is to cultivate the strength of stillness. Anxiety is mental and spiritual unrest. It always signifies the absence of stillness, the calmness which is the very secret of strength.

Most of us are familiar with the calm people to whom we instinctively turn in times of stress and danger. Among the poor and the working classes, where neighbourliness is more alive than among the well-to-do, it is beautiful how some one neighbour is renowned for this quality of calmness. There is nearly always some woman in the locality to whom poor people turn when life passes into the strain of some great emergency. She is sent for in cases of accident, or when bad news is received, or when Death is at the door. The neighbours say one to another, as their first and readiest counsel, "Send for Mrs. So-and-So," and the calm woman comes on the scene of general panic and disorder, and her presence at once begins to restore confidence. She has the strength of stillness. What do we mean by this calmness? We mean that she is self-possessed, that she has everything in hand, that all her powers are at her disposal like the well-arranged tools in the carpenter's shop. We have a very expressive word by which we describe this quality of mind. We call it "collectedness." The opposite of collectedness is distraction, when a man's powers do not work together, but one is passive and another is active, one pulling this way and another that, and there is no general aim and direction. The collected man has his faculties about him Me well-ordered troops, and he says to one "Go," and he goeth, and to another "Come," and he cometh, and to all his servants "Do this," and they do it. These are the people who save us from the perils of panic, and turn our crises into advantage. Lord Kitchener is known in the Army as the strong, silent man. There is no flurry or hurry about him. He moves toward seeming disaster as though he were going to a feast. None of his powers are paralysed by disorder, none are impoverished by anxiety, no strength is wasted, everything is intent upon a quietly seen and deliberate end. Now, if we are to meet the crises of life, this calmness of spirit must be cultivated. It is infinitely better than a prepared speech or a ready-made plan; these may fail us when the crisis arrives; the stillness is our friend in the dark and stormy day.

But if we are to obtain the strength of stillness we must practise the art of living in the present. "Be not anxious for to-morrow." "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." We must not needlessly go out to anticipate the crisis. We must not meet our trouble half-way. Half-met troubles always appear monstrous. Anticipation makes trifles loom gigantic. The thing that frowns, in threatening and terrific guise, often ceases to terrify when we draw closer to it. I saw a picture some time ago which represented a rising storm. Seen at some little distance it appeared as though dark, black, threatening cloud-battalions were speedily covering the entire sky and blotting out all the patches of light and hope. But when I went a little nearer to the picture I found that the artist had subtly fashioned his clouds out of angel faces, and all these black battalions wore the winsome aspect of genial friends. I have had that experience more than once away from the realm of picture and fiction, in the hard ways of practical life. The clouds I feared and worried about, and concerning which I wasted so much precious strength, lost their frown and revealed themselves as my friends. Other clouds never arrived; they were purely imaginary, or they melted away before they reached my threshold. "Be not anxious for to-morrow." Live in the immediate moment. Practise the art of omission. Leave out some things and concentrate upon the rest. The best preparation for the morrow is quiet attention to-day.

"I ask Thee for a present mind.

Intent on pleasing Thee."

If I am to be a capable expert, living in the present, I must engage in the practice of trusting God in every passing moment of my life. What is this that is nearest to me? What is this duty? What is this task? What is this immediate trouble? Just here and just now let me trust in God. Let me turn this present moment into happy confidence, and in this very season let me hold communion with my God. Let my trust be deliberate, repeatedly deliberate, until by conscious, volitional trust I come to have instinctive confidence in my God. Let me fill the present with holy faith, and "the changes that will surely come I shall not fear to see."

And why shall I not fear them? "Be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." Lay hold of the last two words of this great promise, "in you." That is the secret of everything. Every act of trust increases your capacity for God. Every time I trust Him I have more room for Him. He dwells within me in ever-richer fullness, occupying room after room in my life. That is a glorious assurance, and one that is filled with infinite comfort. Let me repeat it again, for it is the very music of the soul; little acts of trust make larger room for God. In my trifles I can prepare for emergencies. Along a commonplace road I can get ready for the hill. In the green pastures and by the still waters I can prepare myself for the valley of the shadow. For when I reach the hill, the shadow, the emergency, I shall be God-possessed: He will dwell in me. And where He dwells He controls. If He lives in my life He will direct my powers. It will not be I that speak, but my Father that speaketh in me. He will govern my speech. He will empower my will. He will enlighten my mind. He will energise and vitalise my entire life.

Here, then, is the little sequence I have been endeavouring to unfold. Put your trust in the Lord and you will live well in the immediate present; live well in the immediate present and you will have the spirit of calmness which is the secret of strength. The emergency will not affright you. You will approach it with that quietness which is the essential factor in triumph.