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

**06. SILENT UNTO GOD by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be moved."*

*Psalm 62:5,6*

"My soul!" Here is a man communing with his own soul! He is deliberately addressing himself, and calling himself to attention. He is of set purpose breaking up his own drowsiness and indifference, and calling himself to a fruitful vigilance. There is nothing like the deliberate exercise of a power for making it spontaneously active. Men who come to have keen and discerning vision begin by deliberate exercise of the eyes. It is a good and a healthy thing to stand before a flower and to clearly and strongly challenge the eyes to attention. It is a profitable thing to stand before some natural panorama and wake the eyes to diligent quest. Eyes that are trained in deliberateness come at last to watch instinctively. We may apply the same reasoning to the realm of the spirit. We must challenge our own souls, and rouse them to the contemplation of the things of God. "My soul! look upon this, and look long!" But let us see to it that when we do incite the attention of our spirits we give them something worthy to contemplate. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease!" That was a most unworthy spectacle to present to the wondering spirit, and it would be no surprise if, after a single glance, the soul fell back again into deeper and more perilous slumber.

Here in my text the Psalmist calls upon his soul to contemplate the manifold glory of God. Let us gaze at one or two aspects of the inspiring vision.

"He only is my rock." Here is one of the figures in which the Psalmist expresses his conception of the ministry of his God. "My rock!" The figure is literally suggestive of an enclosure of rock, a cave, a hiding-place. There are two or three kindred words used in the Old Testament Scriptures which will, perhaps, unfold to us something of the wealthy content of the speech which the Psalmist employs. All the words are suggestive of encirclement; they describe the state of being surrounded, protected, and secured. Here is one of the kindred words, "Thou hast beset me behind and before." How perfectly complete is the suggestion of an all-encircling presence, round about me on every side. The ramparts are built up all about me, and the ring of defence is complete. Perhaps there is no experience in human life which more perfectly develops the thought of the Psalmist than the guardianship offered by a mother to her baby-child when the little one is just learning to walk. The mother literally encircles the child with protection, spreading out her arms into almost a complete ring, so that in whatever way the child may happen to stumble she falls into the waiting ministry of love. Such is the idea of "besetment" which lies in this familiar word "rock."

But let me remind you of another kindred word, "Bind up the money in thy hand." You place a coin in the palm of your hand, and your fingers close over it, and the precious metal is strongly secured. It is encircled by a muscular grasp. Let us carry the suggestion into the relationships between ourselves and God. Our Father will secure us as a precious jewel in His own clenched hand. His fingers will wrap round about us, and there shall be no crevice through which the sheltered piece may slip. "None shall pluck you out of My hand!" This, then, is the significance of the word "rock." It is a strong enclosure, an invincible ring, a grand besetment within which we move in restful security.

"He is my salvation." Then He not only shields me, but strengthens me! We are not left by protection in the state of weaklings. We are nourished and developed into healthy children. Salvation is a wealthy and comprehensive word. It denotes not merely "first aid," the primary treatment given to those who are bruised and wounded by the wayside; it means, also, "last aid," the bringing of the wounded into strength again. Salvation implies more than convalescence, it denotes health. It is vastly more than redemption from sin; it is redemption from infirmity. It offers no mediocrity; its goal is spiritual prosperity and abundance. This promise of health we have in God. He accepts us in our disease; He pledges His name to confer absolute health. "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end."

"He is my defence." The Psalmist is multiplying his figures that he may the better bring out the richness of his conception. Defence is suggestive of loftiness, of inaccessibility. It denotes the summit of some stupendous, out-jutting, precipitous crag! It signifies such a place as where the eagle makes its nest, far beyond the prowlings of the marauders, away on the dizzy heights which mischief cannot scale. God is my defence! He lifts me away into the security of inaccessible heights. My safety is in my salvation. Purity is found in the altitudes. I have lately been reading the analysis of the air as it is found by the aeronaut at different levels above our metropolis. The heightening grades revealed heightening degrees of purity, until the last microbe appeared to have been left behind. God lifts us to spiritual heights where our very loftiness of thought and feeling is our best defence. "He hath made us to sit with Him in the Heavenly places." In those lofty spheres the pestilential microbe is harmless. "Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."

In these three words the Psalmist expresses something of his thought of the all-enveloping and protecting presence of God. He is "my rock," "my salvation," "my defence." What, then, shall be the attitude of the soul towards this God? "My soul, wait thou only upon God." "Wait!" Or as the marginal rendering so beautifully gives it, "be thou silent unto God." We are to be in the presence of God with thoughts and feelings which are the opposite to those of false haste. The spirit of impatience is to be hushed and subdued. There is to be nothing of passion or of heated distemper. Loud murmurings are to be silenced. Our own clamorous wills are to be checked. The perilous heat is to be cooled. We are to linger before God in composure, in tranquillity. We are to be unruffled. It is the unruffled surface of the pool that receives the reflected beauty of the skies. The reflection is clearest where the life is most calm. How much evidence we have of this in the temper and disposition of the Quakers! They are so frequently, and so long, silent unto God that the very peace of God steeps their spirits, and chastens and refines their manners, gives softness to their speech, and appears to impart leisureliness even to the very activities of their bodies. Would it not be wise for us to copy something of their method, and to linger silently and quietly in the presence of our God? Perhaps we are inclined to talk too much in communion with our God. If silent our spirits might be the more receptive. "One evening," says Frances Ridley Havergal, "after a relapse, I longed so much to be able to pray, but found I was too weak for the least effort of thought, and I only looked up and said, `Lord Jesus, I am so tired,' and then He brought to my mind Rest in the Lord,' and its lovely marginal rendering, Be silent to the Lord,' and so I was just silent to Him, and He seemed to overflow me with perfect peace in the sense of His own perfect love."

"My expectation is from Him." It is to my mind a very fruitful significance that the word translated "expectation" might also be translated "line" or "cord." "The line of scarlet thread." The line of all my hope stretches away to Him, and from Him back to me! The Psalmist declares that however circumstances may vary, the cord of his hope binds him to the Lord. Ever and everywhere there is the outstretched line! I stood a little while ago by the sea. Away over the waters above the horizon, there was the moon shining at the full. Between me and the moon there was a golden line of light stretching across the waters. I walked away down the shore and the line moved with me. Wherever I stood there was the golden cord between me and the lamp of the night. The experience came back to me when I was considering the meaning of the Psalmist's words, "My line is from Him." Whether he was in trouble or in joy, in prosperity or adversity, on whatever part of the varying shoreline he stood, there was the golden track between him and his God. "Thine expectation shall not be cut off"; the line shall never be broken.

"I shall not be moved." Of course not! man whose conception of God is that of "Rock," "Salvation," and "Defence," and who is "silent unto Him," and is bound to Him by the golden "cord" of hope, cannot be moved. But mark how the Psalmist's confidence has grown by the exercise of contemplation. In the outset of the Psalm his spirit was a little tremulous and uncertain. "I shall not be greatly moved." But now the qualifying adverb is gone, the tremulousness has vanished, and he says in unshaken confidence and trust, "I shall not be moved."