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

**07. MY STRENGTH AND MY SONG by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation."*

*Isaiah 12:2*

THE storm is over. Even the distant rumblings have ceased. The righteous, and yet very tender and pitiful, severity of the Lord has perfected its ministry and has passed away. The alienated heart has been constrained by the sharp instrument of suffering to turn its weary self unto God. And now the sun is shining again, the birds are singing, the desert is blossoming like the rose! There is a new heaven and a new earth! "The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song: He also is become my salvation."

What does this sweet and joyful singer find in God? "My strength"! "My song"! "My salvation"! How extraordinarily rich and comprehensive! Everything is there! All that a man needs in the battle of life is enshrined in this most wealthy and ancient word. "My strength"; the very power to fight! "My song"; with my God I can fight to music; I can march to the war to the accompaniment of the band; I can be a singing warrior, stepping out to the harmonies of heaven! "My salvation"; with my God I fight to victory, to larger liberty, to ever more glorious possessions. I say everything is here, the strength that makes me a warrior, the song that makes me a happy warrior, the salvation which makes me a happy warrior fighting unto richer freedom. Here truly is a perfect equipment for life's battle, and this equipment is absolutely and entirely found in God.

"The Lord Jehovah is my strength." That is primary and fundamental. The first thing we need is that our weakness be transformed, and that we become possessed of resource. All other gifts are useless if this initial gift be denied. A box of tools would be impotent without the strong hand to use them. There are many gifted lives that are held in languor and are altogether inefficient because the gifts ire not backed by this elementary strength. Phrenology is far from being a science, and much of its teachings savour of quackery, but, amid all its vagaries, one lesson has been emphasised, and I think to great advantage, that, however finely built a man's mind may be, it is like a magnificent engine, idle and productless, unless beneath and behind it there is a fine force of executive strength. Our mental powers are built up, layer upon layer, from the domestic sentiments, through the intellectual senses, to the social and moral and spiritual perceptions, but they are all dependent for their vigour and persistence on a primary strength, without which they are altogether impotent. Here is the organ, which leads the musical services of the church. It is a combination of faculties and functions; let the engine power go wrong, and all the constituents will become idle! The engine provides the power in which all the pipes find their requisite strength. "The Lord is my strength." The Lord imparts unto us that primary strength of character which makes everything in the life work with intensity and decision. We are "strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man."

And the strength is continuous; reserves of power come to us which we cannot exhaust. "As thy day so shall thy strength be," strength of will, strength of affection, strength of judgment, strength of ideals and of achievement. "The Lord is my strength," strength to go on. He gives us the power to tread the dead level, to walk the long lane that seems never to have a turning, to go through those long reaches of life which affords no pleasant surprise, and which depress the spirits in the sameness of a terrible drudgery. "The Lord is my strength," strength to go up. He is to me the power by which I can ascend the Hill Difficulty, and not be afraid. "They shall walk and not faint." "The Lord is my strength," strength to go down. I heard a man say the other day concerning his growing physical frailty, "It is coming down that tires me!" And in other senses it is coming down that tires a great many of us. It is when we leave the bracing heights, where the wind and the sun have been about us, and when we begin to come down the hill into closer and more sultry spheres, that the heart is apt to grow faint. When a man has reached his height, the height of his fame and popularity, and he begins to go down the hill, it is then he requires exceptional resource. "Though I walk through the valley ... I will fear no ill, for Thou art with me." "The Lord is my strength," strength to sit still! And how difficult is the attainment. Do we not often say to one another in seasons when we are compelled to be quiet, "if only I could do something!" When the child is ill, and the mother has to stand by in comparative impotence, how severe is the test! If she could only do something, if she could only exhaust herself in some effective ministry, if she could only open her own veins and give away her blood! But to do nothing, just to sit still and wait, requires tremendous strength. "The Lord is my strength!" "Our sufficiency is of God."

Let us bring out the music of the pronoun which also brings out the wonder of the promise. "The Lord is my strength." Is the conjunction presumptuous, to bring the Almighty in communion with me? I made a little toy water-mill the other day for my little girl, and I used the water from the Welsh hills to work it. And we can let in the river of Water of Life to work the little mill of our life, to make all its powers fruitful and effective. Our God is

"A gracious, willing Guest,

Where He can find one humble heart

Wherein to rest."

"The Lord is my song." The religious life must not only be characterised by strength but by music. If the life of the Christian is not musical it is because there is not strength enough. Have you ever heard an organ when the wind-power was insufficient? Have you ever listened to a man with defective lung-power trying to blow a bugle? The wind with inadequate strength results in imperfect harmonies. It is when the strength is abounding that we have full song. Go to the Book of the Acts, the pentecostal book, where the Holy Spirit is sweeping men's lives like a mighty wind. Is there any book more full of music and song, with the strain of a triumphant march? Even in the midnight "Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God." It is not otherwise with the Epistles. The power-Epistles are the singing Epistles. In the greatest of the Epistles, when Paul's Spirit-swept soul surveys the wonders of grace, the doxologies are abounding. We can be perfectly sure that if we are melancholic and gloomy we are wrong at the base, we are lacking in resource. Let me return to the illustration I have just used. When I had made the little water-mill, and I turned the tap and let in a little water from the Welsh hill, it ran reluctantly and sluggishly, and without any song. When I still further turned the tap, and let in a stronger supply, the wheel spun round with great speed and hummed in the spinning! That is what we want. More power would make things hum, would make our spirits sing in the riches of grace. How the psalmists sang in the day of their power! How frequently comes the phrase, "I will sing!" And we can depend upon it, it is a singing religion, a religion that sings while it serves, a cheering, musical religion that is going to save the world! Again let us say, "Our sufficiency is of God." "The Lord is my song." All my music is from Him. If the Lord fill my soul with power, there shall rise a unique song, a perfectly original strain. Every life will be a new song. Get the elementary strength and "the time of the singing of birds is come."

"The Lord has become my salvation." That is a fine, full-blooded word, literally signifying "wealth of space." It is as though a man had been fighting in a tight corner, and by the aid of immeasurable "strength," used to the accompaniment of a "song," he had fought his way through into a wide space, into larger liberties, into more glorious possessions. Salvation includes deliverance, inheritance, and freedom. This man has fought and sung his way into ever richer inheritances of spiritual liberty. And that may happen to all of us after every one of our battles. The Lord will always become our salvation. And then, surely, after every fresh deliverance the soul will have more strength for its next victory, and in its victory it will sing a larger song, and in its song it will be ready for the next fray! "And they sang a new song." I do not wonder at it, and they changed it every day!

"From victory unto victory

His army shall He lead,

Till every foe is vanquished

And Christ is Lord indeed."