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

**12. HIDDEN MANNA by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."*

*Revelation 2:17*

I THINK we ought not to refer the fulfilment of this great prophecy to some remote futurity when we have passed through the veil and are in the kingdom of eternal day. If this promise is to be of much worth to me, it must be worth something now. I don't suppose there will ever be a time when I shall need the hidden manna more than I need it now. Certainly there will never come a day when I shall be in greater need of the white stone than I am to-day. Therefore I want at once to draw this word quite back from that remote day, and regard it as a promise for current need, as a blessing offered to men and women to-day.

Hidden manna! What is it? Hidden resources; strengthening and sustaining food given to the man who is in the fighting line--a feast upon the battlefield. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

There is nothing that distinguishes one man from another more than staying power. What resources has a man upon which he can draw? What hidden bread can he call out in the dark and impoverished day? You know how that contrast prevails even in the realm of the body; how we contrast and distinguish one from another by the amount he can visibly endure. Why, even of the men who try to achieve the feat of swimming across the Channel the great outstanding contrast is the amount of hidden manna they possess, the amount of secret resources, their capacity to hold out.

Then the contrast prevails in the realm of dispositions. Take the first half-dozen of your friends, and try to measure the length of their tempers; try to put your finger just at the point where irritability begins. You will be amazed how different are the lengths you will have to measure out. One man swiftly exhausts his little store, and has no hidden manna upon which to draw. We say, "his patience was soon spent." Others have hidden manna, and are marvellous in their powers of toleration. How long can you go on, how far can you go in an atmosphere of discouragement, ingratitude, apparent ineffectiveness, and open contempt? How long can you go on teaching a Sunday-school class, and never making a convert? How much hidden manna have you?

The contrast prevails in wider fields still. We hear people saying of a man, "How does he do it?" He is not over strong, sickness is never out of his house, the funeral hearse has often stopped at his door, money does not appear to be plentiful, business is not brisk; his sky is continually overcast. How does he do it? His disposition remains cheery, his hope remains bright, his endeavour abides persistent! What is his staying power? "Hidden manna."

Now, observe, there are two primary emphases of the Christian evangel. The first primary note is that our Lord is acquainted with the secret need of the individual life. "I know My sheep." "Thy Father"--is not this beautiful?--who seeth beneath the skin, who seeth in secret where the kindliest eye of thy dearest friend cannot pierce--"thy Father seeth thy secret need."

The second primary note is this: our God will bring the secret bread to the secret need. Our secret life shall be preserved from starvation, or, to use the words of Paul, our inner life is renewed--fed up, sustained, nourished. That is what constitutes the outstanding contrast between men. Some men are in covenant with the One who has the secret knowledge, and He brings down the hidden manna by which they gain their sustenance and give you and me such keen and frequent surprises. General Booth has not always been the idol of the country. He has rather been the victim of insult, brutality, and open contempt. Where now throughout the length and breadth of the land civic dignitaries hasten to pay him honour, in those very towns and cities in past days he was pelted with the mire of the streets and treated as the very scum of the earth. For thirty or forty years he endured, and no civic or national dignity was conferred upon him, no patronage of the great! Yet he endured--on, on, on! right on to white hairs! What was the secret? "Hidden manna." "I have meat to eat that ye know not of."

What is the second promise of the evangel? "I will give him a white stone." This phrase was running through my brain when I was away for my holiday recently, and in passing along a pebble-strewn beach I picked up a white pebble. I looked at it very intently and inquisitively--and spiritually, in the hope that it would communicate something to me of the significance of the Apostle's figure. It was wonderfully pure; it was intensely hard; it was exceedingly smooth. My Lord will give to me a "white stone." What is the significance of it? My interpretation was this: "I will endow thee with a character pure as a white stone that lies upon the beach, hard and tenacious as that stone, beautifully refined, with all obstrusive and painful angularities smoothed away." Is there anything more exquisitely clean than a white pebble? I don't know how many times the wavelets have washed over the stone until it is cleansed from all defilement. "I will give to thee a life so washed every day by the waters of grace that every part of thy being shall be as clean as a white stone." Perfectly clean is what God purposes us to be. Moral dirt is unnatural. When we are perfectly clean all our powers will work with simplicity and naturalness, as in the very sight of God.

"Perfectly pure I will make thee--and hard!" Oh, not the hardness of insensitiveness, but the hardness of strength. Said one of my young fellows, speaking of another man, "His muscles are as hard as nails." That is the hardness we want in the spirit. Muscular hardness that will not yield to an easy threat or even to a formidable threat, the hardness which is the opposite to flabbiness, softness of limb. The man whose moral muscles are as hard as pebbles, as hard as nails, cannot be broken by any temptations which assail him. That is the character we want--rock-character!

Then there is this beautiful addition: "In the stone a new name written." The name I bore in the old life before I turned to the Lord is to be forgotten. A man came to me in my vestry and said, "Do you think God ever forgets and forgives a man's past?" I replied, "God so forgets a man's past that He forgets the man's name! He blots it out, and gives him a new one." We have not to wait for the white stone, but I think we shall have to wait for the unveiling of the new name. No one will enter into the meaning of it except the one to whom it is given. How can any man know my triumphs who has not known my shame? I don't think that Lydia, who lived in Philippi, will ever be able to comprehend the new name of the jailer who lived in the same town. If there had been a kind of Wesleyan fellowship meeting in Philippi, I think their experiences would have been a perfect enigma to each other. I wonder if Billy Bray can ever appreciate the new name given to Henry Drummond, or if Henry Drummond will quite appreciate that of Billy Bray. I wonder if Catherine Booth will understand the new name of Mary Magdalene. I wonder if Mary Magdalene will ever be able to get beneath the surface of the new name of Catherine Booth. We all have our little secrets with our Lord. When He calls you by your name, no one else will respond to it but you.

God will feed us with strength, and endow us with a character like a white stone, and will give to us a unique and individual name. Will you have it? I remember hearing Henry Drummond, addressing a great meeting of graduates and undergraduates, say (and it was about the most sensational thing he ever did say): "Gentlemen, do you mean business? Here is my Lord. If you mean business, give Him your hand--and stick!"