**THIRSTING FOR THE SPRINGS - SERMONS BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**09. IN CHRIST JESUS by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"In Christ Jesus."*

*Romans 8:1*

"IN CHRIST JESUS!" That is the centre of rest. The phrase leads us at once into the mystical heart of the Christian religion. Do I chill and repel your approaches by the use of the word mystical? Is that one of your perplexities with the Christian religion, that its forces are so mystical, so remote from the hard rough-and-tumble roads of practical life? But where have we got that antithesis of the mystical and the practical? Where can we find the justification for the divorce which places the mystical in dreamy castles in the air, and the practical in houses of bricks and mortar, reared upon the common earth? Is there any inevitable incongruity between them? What is the interpretation offered by the dictionary? Let us see what suggestion is given by the latest and most scholarly of these guides. Mystical -- "hidden from or obscure to human knowledge; mysterious; obscure; expressing a sense comprehensible only to a higher grade of intelligence, or to those especially initiated." And what is the significance of the practical? Practical -- "pertaining to action, practice, or use." I discern no antagonism between the two. I think they may be found in the most happy and intimate wedlock. There are forces, recognised only by their possessors, and even to them obscure and mysterious, which are, nevertheless, most powerful ministries in the domain of action and practice. What say you of love? Is it mystical? It is known only to the initiated. Love is known only to the lover, and even to him it is unknown. It is unknown, yet well known. It is most mystical. Is it practical? "Love beareth all things." It is "the greatest thing in the world." All the most practical and palpable forces in common life are steeped in the mystical. The more refined the force, the more dim and undefinable its kingdom. Coarseness is comparatively compassable, but when we rise into the higher graces and refinements of the spirit, the measuring rod must be left behind. There is many a practical river which has its birth-place in the misty and inaccessible heights.

When, therefore, I use the word "mystical," I do not exclude the content of the practical. And here is a mystical relationship, fraught with every kind and quality of beneficent, practical issue -- "them that are in Christ Jesus." What is the principle enshrined in the phrase? The principle is this. One personality is rooted and embedded in another personality, and receives from it an effluence which determines the trend and colour of its life. One is in the other. Well, is that principle altogether in the clouds? I find examples of its application on every side. Wherever I turn I find illustrative instances; teacher and scholars, master and disciples, fountains and rivers, one personality inserted into the personality of another, and receiving the determining gifts of thought and inspiration. If I turn to the sphere of politics, I find fountains and rivers, vines and branches. I find what is called "the Manchester School," a body of politicians whose political life is primarily rooted in the personality of Richard Cobden, from whom they derive the colour of their thought, the spirit of their policy, and the character of their ideal. "They that are in Richard Cobden." If I turn to literature, I find societies of men and women gathered in loving fellowship round about the personality of individual men. Here is a Ruskin Society! Ruskin is known among them as "the master." The disciples seek to acquire the master's thought, to perpetuate the master's spirit, to incarnate the master's ideal, to give it embodiment in schemes of practical enterprise. "They that are in John Ruskin." It is not otherwise if I turn to the regions of art; I find whole schools of men inhaling the breath of artistic life from the thought and spirit of another. I find the principle operating even in spheres ecclesiastical. "Puseyite!" That sounds indicative of master and disciple, of fountain and river. Wesleyan! That is suggestive of an ecclesiastical root with multitudinous branches. "They that are in John Wesley." All these are illustrative of a predominant principle that one man's life becomes the fountain of other men's rivers. In Cobden! In Ruskin! In Turner! In Wesley! "In Christ!" I feel the utter unworthiness and inadequacy of the illustrations. I only offer them as hints, suggestions, sign-posts, and even a rough and crumbling sign-post may point the way to the golden city.

Well, now, if we are not altogether strangers to the principle in common life, let us see what are the implications of the supreme fellowship expressed in the words of my text. "In Christ Jesus." On man's side, what are the elements in the gracious union? What does it involve? How can any personality be rooted and embedded in the personality of the Christ? How can a man become "in Christ"? First of all, it implies the choice of Christ. A man must choose his centre. He must make up his mind as to what shall be the centre round which his life shall revolve. He must determine his leader, to whom he will pay reverence and obeisance. Now that is an intellectual choice, and Christianity always appeals to the intelligence. It puts no premium on blindness. It offers no reward to those whose eyes are closed in guilty sleep. From end to end of the Christian Scriptures the clarion is sounding to awake. "Awake, awake, my soul." "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Jerusalem!" "Awake, thou that sleepest!" "Now it is high time to awake!" That is the note of the Christian religion. It calls for wakefulness, for mental alertness, for the exercise of a bright and vigorous intelligence. "What think ye?" says the Master. Put your intelligence to work that your choices may be sound. Don't go on blindly! "What think ye?" Is it a challenge to the intellect? Look about. Exercise thy powers of observation. Investigate the alternatives that present themselves. Inspect the creations of mammon. Look closely at the works and workmanship of Christ. "What think ye?" Make up your minds. Choose your centre. Register your choice.

But to be " in Christ " means more than the choice of a centre; it implies the surrender of the will. My brethren, it is no use our seeking to evade this supreme demand. The treasuries of the Christian religion cannot be entered through the ministry of merely intellectual exercises. If we do not surrender the will, we can never even faintly appreciate the spirit and genius of the Christian religion. Mental activity will bring a man up to the gate; he can only enter by moral sacrifice. Not through the weighing and assaying of grammatical usages, not by a penetrating exegesis, are we going to pass into the fellowship of Christ, but by the all-discovering ministry of a surrendered life. I know that this is familiar to everybody; why then do we not do it? I will give you the answer in the words of the noblest gentle man it has been my honour to know, a man whose personality was refined into such hallowed beauty and chasteness that all his judgments are attended with peculiar significance and weight. Henry Drummond once said: "What do I think keeps men from becoming Christians? Some special sin which they prefer to Christ. I think some one definite sin. In every life, I believe, there is some one particular sin, outstanding only to oneself, different in different cases, but always one with which the secret history is woven through and through. This is that which the unconverted man will not give up for Christ." I will leave the quotation with this one remark, that a man must be prepared to surrender that one thing before he can come into fruitful fellowship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Having chosen his centre of rest, having made a sacrifice of his will, let the man now abide in the attitude of rest. Let the mind rest in the Master's thought. Let the conscience rest in the Master's commandment. Let the heart rest in the Master's promises. Don't get away from His thought, His commandment, His promise! "Abide in Him!" Make your home there. Don't stray hither and thither in worldly flirtation. "Rest in the Lord!" In such ceaseless abiding you will know the inexpressible experience of being "in Christ." "All my springs are in Thee."