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

**11. LOVING THE ENEMY by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"Love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the most High."*

*Luke 6:35*

**"Love Your Enemies"**

THIS searching counsel describes a certain pose or posture of the soul. The exposure of a greenhouse is vital and determinative of the quantity and quality of the flowers and fruits. It is even so with the attitude of the soul. Its finished issues are determined by its pose. Dispositions are just the poses of the soul. A soul in the attitude of prejudice is disinclined to the light. A soul in the attitude of jealousy presents a front of unkindly suspicion. A soul in the attitude of hatred bristles with perpetual antagonisms. Love is likewise an attitude of the soul, and is significant of a certain prominent temper in the life.

Love is the attitude of wooing. Love seeks to convert the hostile forces into a friendly power. Love is a seeker, that it may be a winner. Its aim is to transform the unfriendly sword into a friendly plough-share. It therefore seeks the conversion of force. Love is that temper of the soul which seeks to change alienation into intimate fellowship. This pose or temper of the soul can only be acquired in the atmosphere of prayer. It is in the ministry of prayer that the crooked become straight. If we entertain feelings of perilous hatred against another, let us force ourselves into the presence of God, and in that all-corrective Presence the foul inclination will be changed, and the posture of the soul will be transformed into the forgiving attitude of God. Love your enemies.

Love is the instrument of knowing. We can have no real knowledge of our enemy if we are destitute of love. Love is the posture in which vision becomes possible. It is through love that we have discernment and knowledge. If a man say, "I know my brother," and he loves him not, his knowledge is only pretence. To see anybody aright we require a disposition of love.

Love reflects the disposition of God. If I may say it reverently, to love an enemy is the very pose of our God. "While we were yet sinners Christ died." "When we were enemies we were reconciled." God is well disposed towards us and all men. "I know the thoughts that I have towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." To let the mind dwell upon the disposition of God is to unconsciously acquire His pose. It always helps us to be well disposed towards anybody when somebody whom we love is well disposed towards them. The attitude of the one we love imperceptibly fashions our own. Because God loves His enemies, we shall find it possible to love ours. "We love because He first loved us."

**"And do them Good"**

The posture of love will inevitably issue in the doing of good. Let me put three words together, which, in their order, suggest a sequence of actual life. Benevolence, Benediction, Benefaction! Benevolence is the pose of love. To be benevolent is to be well-disposed, to be will-disposed. To be benevolent is to have the kindly inclination to woo and to win even our fiercest foe. Benevolence will issue in benediction. Benediction is benevolence expressed in speech. Our diction will be ordered and chastened by our benevolence. Unkindly criticism will be checked. Contempt will be changed into eulogy. The art of fault finding, will be changed into the ministry of grace-finding. Malediction becomes benediction. Benevolence will also express itself in benefaction. Benefaction is benevolence ex pressed in service. It is love testifying to itself in gracious service. In what kind of benefactions does love express itself? I cannot tell you. Love will discover its own ministry. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him." Love will discover what the enemy's hungers are. Love will interpret and supply the enemy's lacks and gaps. It may not be the hunger for bread. It may be the hunger for comfort and cheer. Whatever the hunger may be, "God shall reveal that unto you." "Do them good." Kill the enemy by unfailing kindness.

**"And Lend, never Despairing"**

"And lend." I cannot limit the interpretation of this word to the mere content of money. Love is self-impartation, and with self we give all things. Lend to the enemy! Let out your substance, your possessions: make use of everything that you may woo and win him. Be liberal in thought, in sympathy, in labours, in prayer. Bleed freely, that by the power of the sacrifice he may be allured into communion. "Lend, never despairing." Never say, "I have prayed so long for the enemy, and he is as unfriendly as ever. I shall attempt the insuperable task no more." That is the very opposite to the course of much-enduring love. There are some phrases which love never uses, and I think they ought never to pass over Christian lips. Here are one or two: -- "A hopeless case "; "Too far gone "; "A bad job." The despair which is expressed in these phrases ought never to find entrance into the hearts of the disciples of Christ. We never know just how near we are to victory. The chairman of one of our great mining companies was telling us a little while ago how very near they were to overlooking the wealth of a great estate. They had been working for a long period, and the labour appeared to be absolutely fruitless, and one day, when the purpose to cease work was almost ripe, and the settlement was to be left as quite a hopeless sphere, the manager was at the facings, speaking to one of the work men, and idly playing with the facing with his walking-stick, when a small quantity of the soil tumbled down, and lo! the long-sought- for vein was discovered. They were purposing relinquishing the labour when the gold was only a hand's breadth away. This is even so in the searching for souls. When the work appears hopeless, we may be within an inch of victory. One more try, and we may be at the gold. "Lend, never despairing."

**"And your Reward shall be Great"**

To some extent love enshrines its own re ward. Even when love is wounded, we would not lose our love to escape the pain. If a mother have daily agony because of her way ward son, if the love she bears him brings her constant sorrow she would not be willing to lose her love that she might escape the grief. No mother would have the nerve of love deadened in order that her sensitiveness might be benumbed. No, there is something in love itself which has its own reward. But, beyond this, to love an enemy brings to man the reward of fellowship with God. "Everyone that loveth ... knoweth God." We "walk together" because we are "agreed." And beyond all this, to love the enemy brings to the lover a spiritual transformation. "Ye shall be sons of the most High." Our character is to be elevated and sublimed. Our sonship is to be worthy of the father. The child is to be glorified. We are to "awake in His likeness."