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

**12. MY SHIELD AND MY GLORY by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. ... I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me."*

*Psalm 3:3,5*

THAT is a sweet and heartening song, and the song is all the sweeter when we note the estate of the songster. Some circumstances set the sweetness of music in pronounced relief. The thrush pouring out its varied note amid the sweet, fresh leafage of the luxuriant spring, does not arrest us like the robin warbling its cheery note from leafless trees in the depths of a winter's day. The music of village bells is never more fascinating than when it sounds through the interludes in a night of storm. I stood in delight as I listened to a choir on the summit of the Rigi singing "All things praise Thee, Lord most high"; but delight passed into still wonder when, outside a dreary little cottage in a dull and dingy street, I heard the strain, "My God, I thank Thee who hath made the earth so bright!" It is the song that rises out of dreariness that exercises such a fascinating ministry. "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them." And here is the singer of this Psalm, not dwelling in luxurious ease, in the inspiring warmth of a glorious summer; with him it is winter-time, and it is night; yet out of the winter and the night, there rises the jubilant strain of this triumphant trust in God. Let us look at the "outside" of his life. "How are they increased that trouble me!" His external comfort was disturbed. "Many are they that rise up against me." His legitimate progress was checked. "Many there be that say of my soul, there is no help for him in God." His piety was questioned, and his fellowship with the Divine was denied. Now, put all these together. Here is a man surrounded by multiplied annoyances, encountering barriers that are everywhere reared to prevent him grasping his legitimate rights, his piety denounced as impiety, and his spiritual companionship proclaimed as a pretence! He is denied the need of physical comfort, the taste of worldly success, and the luxury of human regard. Man fails him! How then? He retired more entirely upon God. In God he found that which transcended comfort, he found peace; in God he found that which transcended success, he found glory. In God he found that which transcended human regard, he found the approbation of the Divine.

**"Thou, O Lord, art a Shield for Me"**

It is a beautiful figure this figure of the shield! It suggests the all-sufficient protection which comes from the companionship of God. The Lord will be to him a shield against the foe without. The Lord will not permit my external circumstances to injure my spirit. The world will not be permitted to pass beyond its threats. The hostility of my surroundings shall not hinder my spiritual growth. My gardener said to me two or three weeks ago: "I have got some shoots in the frame, we must have them covered up before the winter comes." And now the gardener has supplied the shield, and the tender shoots are growing in spite of the unfriendly air without. And there are young shoots in the life, the tender growths of faith, and hope, and love. And in my external life there is often a winter of failure and adversity, and human malice and contempt. The Lord will defend the young shoots. He will be "a shield for me." But the Lord will also be a shield against the foe within. When the circumstances are unfriendly, man is apt to become embittered. The hostility may nourish revenge. Failure may make a cynic. The winter time may breed envy, malice and uncharitableness. I need some defence against these foes within. "Man needs re-enforcing against his worse self." This re-enforcement I obtain from my God. But then I claim all real protections as the ministry of the King. Anything which shelters me from the enemy is the armour of God. "The shields of the earth belong to God " (Ps. 47:9). We claim them all. If good literature is a fine protection against vice, we claim it as one of the Lord's shields. And so with art and music, and all recreation and pleasure which ward off the approaches of the devil. They are King's shields, the gift of His grace for the protection of His children.

**"Thou, O Lord, art my Glory"**

In the approbation of God, I find my honour. The light of God's countenance eclipses all the dazzling tinsel of worldly fame. The crown that man can give me, man can take away. I hold my human glory at the bidding of human caprice. There are no crowns like God's crowns, and His crowns are worn, not as external dignities, but as spiritual dignities which adorn the soul. He gives to me "the Crown of Life." Every faculty in my being shines in the abundance of life. No power is dull and dead. Everything is bright and living, glorious with the crown of life. "Thou, O Lord, art my glory."

**"Thou, O Lord, art the Lifter Up of mine Head"**

The failures of men, the many obstacles they have to encounter, and especially the malice and contempt of their fellows, might humiliate them, and cause them to hang their heads in confusion of face. The man whose external life passes from defeat to defeat, and who never sits down at the festival of success, is apt to acquire the attitude of severe depression. "But Thou, O Lord, art the lifter up of mine head." The Lord's companionship is my pride and my boast. The sublimity of man's surroundings often gives a loftiness to his bearing. A man who companions much with kings may unconsciously gain the kingly carriage. How, then, must it be with men who companion with the Almighty, and who find in Him their shield and their glory? It is a simple fact, that the intimate companions of the Lord are characterised by a certain stately dignity, which is never so manifest as when they are in the minority, and are compelled to stand alone. God is " the lifter up of their head." Is it any wonder that these wealthy conceptions of God should be accompanied by the inspiration of glad and ceaseless communion? Men were unfriendly; circumstances were unsympathetic; this man "cried unto the Lord, and He heard him." There was a constant festival of fellowship, a fruitful responsiveness between man and his God.

**"I laid me down and slept; I waked; for the Lord sustained me."**

Contrast the calmness of these words with the tumult of the opening of the Psalm. The Psalmist is proclaiming the secret of peace. There is no peace like the peace of the man who loves to lie down at night with the thought of God possessing his mind and heart. Happy the man who delights to recall the thought of God before he sinks into slumber!

**"Be my last thought how sweet to rest**

**For ever on my Saviour's breast."**

There is no peace like the peace of a man who, when he awakes in the morning, gives first welcome to the thought of God.

**"Fairer than the morning, lovelier than the daylight,**

**Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with thee."**

The man who finds in God his shield, who seeks in Him his glory, and who makes in Him his boast, will have mornings of joy, and evening times of light.