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

**21. THE MINISTRY OF PRAISE by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all Thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in Thee; I will sing praise to Thy name, O thou Most High."*

*Psalm 9: 1,2*

"I will praise Thee" That is a note that is too commonly silent in our religious life. Even many of our consecration pledges avoid any reference to the duty of praise. We have our prayer-meetings, and our self-denial weeks and our days of humiliation, but we rarely gather together for the supremely exhilarating business of praise. We extend our hands in supplication, we do not jubilantly uplift them in adoration. There are ten who cry "God be merciful" for one who sings "God be praised." There were ten lepers who possessed sufficient faith to cry for healing; there was only one returned to engage in the ministry of praise.

Now, here is a man who sets himself to the business of praise, as though he were about to engage in a great matter. He does not turn to it in any easy, lazy, and indifferent manner. "I will praise Thee with my whole heart.'' He sets about it with undivided attention, He awakes his entire personality, and devotes all his manifold powers to the ministry of thanksgiving. "With my whole heart." The word heart is a spacious word. It includes all the interior things, all the central things. It includes the will, the power that lies behind all the faculties, the energy that contributes resolution and purpose and directive force. It includes the intellect, and, primarily among the powers of mind, the faculties of memory and imagination. When a man comes to the ministry of praise, his memory must be wide awake. He must be able to search his yesterdays, to gather up their suggestiveness, to behold the broad marks of Providence, to see the gracious dealings of the King. He must "call to mind the things that have been." "Thou shalt remember all the way by which the Lord thy God hath led thee." And when a man comes to the business of praise, his imagination also must be active. He must be able to pierce the outer vestures of things. He must be able to apprehend the grace that hides in a plain face. He must be able to appreciate the mercy that is hidden in gloom. He must be able to feel something of the love of God even in the dark and cloudy day. He must never forget the blue sky even when he is enveloped in fog. And he must also bring to the ministry of praise the worship of his feelings. If the thought is brought into the sanctuary, the feelings will assuredly follow. The tides are governed by the moon; the power of thought governs the flow of the emotions; the trend of the feelings is determined by the "set" of the mind. All this is meant by the phrase, "praising God with the whole heart." Come, will! and make my praise forceful. Come, intellect! and make it enlightened. And come, feeling! and make it affectionate. "All that is within me, praise and bless His Holy Name."

I will show forth all Thy marvellous works. When a man has got his whole heart busy in praising God, he will have some marvellous things to show. If will and intellect and emotion are all engaged in worship, there will be no difficulty in discovering the wonderful works of God. "I will show forth." The suggestion is just this, he will score it as with a mark, he will not allow it to slip by unrecorded. He will be his own scribe. He will be as a man "with a writer's inkhorn by his side." And he will be always recording the doings of God. He will keep a journal of mercies. For his own sake he will write the things deep upon his memory, that he may recall them and rehearse them in the days when all the daughters of music are brought low. But he will not only register the works, he will also publish them. The word is suggestive not only of a note-book, but of a proclamation. To whom shall we tell the story of God's marvellous works? "Tell ye your children of it." How rarely we tell our children the story of the goodness of God to us! How rarely we unfold the providence of our own experience! If we have made a journal of mercies, if we have written them deep in the book of our remembrance, let us sometimes turn the pages and read the records to our little ones, if per chance their eyes may be opened to the ever- present loving kindness of the Eternal Lord. To whom shall we tell it? "I will declare Thy name unto my brethren." Cannot we give our brethren a few extracts from the journal? "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." That is far away the best preaching. When a man lays hold of his brother or his neighbour, and says to him, "Thou art in trouble; let me tell thee what the Lord once did to me," that is of all preaching most pregnant with strength and consolation. To whom shall we tell it? "Declare his glory among the heathen." There are people who have never heard the story. "Tell it out among the heathen." The day will be fruitful in opportunity. Everywhere we shall have space to proclaim our evangel. Let us be the ministers of the Lord's goodness, and make it known in the ways of men.

"I will be glad and rejoice" I do not wonder at this sequence. A man who is bringing his whole heart to the contemplation of the Lord's mercies, and who is making them known to others, must be filled with the spirit of rejoicing. "I will be glad" The word is significant of a brightening up, a dawn, a breaking of cheer, geniality. "I will rejoice" The word is suggestive of the exulting bubbling of the spring. And so the two words together give us the image of the leaping waters with the sunshine on them! And such is always the joy of the Lord. It is fresh as the spring, and as warm and cheering as the sunlight.

"I will sing praises to Thy name" Again I do not wonder. The contemplation of mercies, the giving of thanks, the bearing of witness, the flowing of gladness. Surely we may expect the sequence of song. And the singing itself will re-act upon the praiseful life and enrich it. William Law devotes a whole chapter to the influence of singing psalms in the devotional life. It brightens the heart; it purifies the spirit. It opens heaven and carries the heart near to it.

"Sometimes a light surprises

The Christian while he sings."

When we have got this type of Christian praiseful, rejoicing, singing Christians, we shall have some splendid service rendered to our Lord. Says Thomas Carlyle: -- "Give me the man who sings at his work; he will do more, he will do it better, he will persevere longer." The ministries of heaven are accomplished to the accompaniment of a song, "And they sang a new song."