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

**05. THE PASSING OF THE BURDEN by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."*

*Psalm 55:22*

THIS is a stormy psalm, abounding in threat, indignation, fear, and pain. The tempest rages right up to the confines of my text. Here, in the text, there is a temporary lull in the violence of thought and feeling. The driven, terrified pilgrim is becoming possessed by the recovering light of assurance, and the trembling heart is quieted into momentary peace. In the earlier outbursts the Psalmist is meditating relief from his burden by the way of flight. "Oh, had I the wings of a dove, then would I fly away." We have all known the inclination. We all know the critical moment when we are contemplating seeking relief by leaving our tasks. "I will just leave the whole thing; I will get away from it! " Such flight is usually fruitless. We carry our burden with us. On the further shore it sits upon us still. And yet there are some types of burden in which the refuge of flight will be found to be a rare and splendid defence. "Flee youthful lusts" In these matters flight is the only method of salvation. There are some atmospheres in which evil desire inevitably becomes irritated and inflamed. Our only refuge is to get away from them. Flee from any oil that would feed the unclean desire. If you are inclined to be feverish, passionate, voluptuous, flee from the inflammatory material on which the temper is fed. Get away from inflammatory books. Give up inflammatory companionships. Seek refuge by flight. "Flee from idolatry." Do not take part for a moment in the temple worship of an alien god. Do not sit in the temple of Mammon. Do not play with worldly maxims. Do not think there is security in partial worldliness, in a moderate compromise. We do not need to wear the entire dress of a smallpox victim in order to acquire the disease. A bit of ribbon will do it! And if we presumably turn our backs upon the world and the worship of Mammon, and yet retain and hug one worldly expediency or practice, we shall be accounted the followers of an alien god.

But the majority of burdens cannot be disposed of by the method of flight. In flight they are our inseparable companions. We have no resources but to cast them on God. What becomes of them when we take them to the Lord? There are some burdens which pass away, even while they are being recounted. They evaporate in the telling! To talk about them to God is to lose them! If you take a dimmed, steamed mirror into a dry, sunny room, the obscuring veil passes away, and the mirror becomes clear. And there are some burdens which perplex the spirit, and hinder its outlook, which, when we take them to the Lord, pass away like mist in the sunny light of the morning. Let me mention two or three.

There is the burden of fearfulness. What is this burden except the lack of assurance? The depression is born of uncertainty. The soul moves in fear, because it does not feel the presence of God. The lack of assurance breeds the restless offspring of anxiety, fretfulness, and care. Now this is one of the burdens which evaporate in the telling. Fearfulness is always the companion of little faith. The Master has told us this in a very significant sentence. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" The largeness of the one term is always proportioned to the smallness of the other. If we have little faith, we must have large fearfulness. If we have triumphant faith, fearfulness is abolished. ''Perfect love casteth out fear." While we are talking to our Father, the sweet genius of assurance returns. Our faith awakes. Our love revives. The heart grows calm in spiritual fellowship. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord," and, even while thou art telling it, the burden will disappear.

There is the burden of perplexity. Here, again, is a burden which frequently disappears while we are describing it. If we take it into our Father's house, even if it does not pass entirely away, it will be so eased that it will not crush us like an iron garment. We shall have freedom of movement. It is a beautiful experience in the lives of the saints that, when they take their burden to God, they frequently find the clue even while they are bowed in prayer. The atmosphere of devotion is favourable to revelations, and visions are multiplied when souls are upon their knees. "When I thought how I might know this, it was too painful for me ... until I went into the sanctuary of God." He took his perplexity into the presence of God, and considered it in the atmosphere of the sanctuary, and the pain and the burden of it were gone! "In Thy light shall we see light."

There is the burden of guilt. No man can reverently and penitently take this burden to the Lord without losing it. It goes in the telling of it. "Father, I am no more worthy to be called thy son, make ..." "Bring forth the best robes." The confession of ignoble sonship had not been fully uttered before the father called for the robes of re stored salvation. "So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up to the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulder, and fell from off his back." "Cast thy burden upon the Lord."

And yet there are some burdens which are not removed even when we take them to the Lord. They do not disappear in the telling. Is there some other gracious ministry of the loving Lord? Yes, if the burden remain, the bearer of it will be strengthened. "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh... . Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me, and He hath said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee." The Apostle cast his burden upon the Lord. He asked that it might be removed. The burden remained, but the Apostle was strengthened! "Most gladly therefore I glory in my weakness." This is the way of the Lord. Some burdens are permitted to remain. Perhaps the burden is an unwelcome and unpleasant duty. Perhaps it is some physical infirmity. Perhaps it is prolonged labour in a wageless and most exhausting sphere. What then will God do with us? "He shall sustain thee." The Lord will deal with the bearer of the burden. He will increase thy strength, and so in reality diminish thy load. This word "sustain" is a fine, wealthy word of most comforting content. There is in it a suggestion of the ministry of a nurse. He will deal with us as though we were infants. He will be to us the great mother-God. And He will manifest towards us all the tenderness of a nursing ministry. There is also in the word the suggestion of food. He will feed us. He will give to us the bread of life. He will increase our vitality. He will make our powers more alive, more wakeful, more exuberant. And I find in the word the further gracious meaning of "support." He will carry me, if need be. "Hold Thou me up!" cries one of the Psalmists. The word indicates one of the beautiful ministries of our Lord. We have seen the strong elder son taking the arm of his weakly mother, and holding her up. The kindly service is illustrative of the helpful fellowship of God. "He is at thy right hand."

The concluding word of the text is purposed to heighten the assurance of the Psalmist into the peace of absolute certainty. "He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." The life that is held by God, possessed and inspired by God, will be delivered from all trembling uncertain ties. On the one hand, he will not be dismayed by a frown or a threat; nor, on the other hand, will he be enticed by some bewitching fascination. He will continue his way unmoved. The road will be straight; the walk will be firm; his footing will be sure. The Bible appears to exult in its proclamation of the fine, confident "walk" of the man who companies with God. He does not move with the trembling solicitude of one who steps upon miry clay, but he strides out with the confident step of a man whose way is upon rock. This is ever the issue of intimate fellowship with the Lord. Men are delivered from fearfulness, and fickleness, and weakness. Their hearts are encouraged and lightened, and the heavy burden becomes a tolerable load. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."