

ALTOGETHER LOVELY

NO. 1001

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“Yea, he is altogether lovely.”
Song of Solomon 5:16

WHEN the old Puritan minister had delivered his discourse, and dwelt upon firstly, and secondly, and thirdly, and perhaps upon twenty-fifthly, before he sat down he usually gave a comprehensive summary of all that he had spoken. Everyone who carefully noted the summary would carry away the essence of the sermon.

The summary was always looked upon by the Puritan hearer as one of the most valuable helps to memory and consequently a most important part of the discourse. In these five words, the spouse here gives you her summary. She had delivered a tenfold discourse concerning her Lord. She had described in detail all His various beauties, and when she had surveyed Him from head to foot, she gathered up all her commendations in this sentence, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.”

Remember these words, and know their meaning, and you possess the quintessence of the spouse's portion of the Song of Songs. Now, as in this allegorical song the bride sums up her witness in these words, so may I say that all the patriarchs, all the prophets, all the apostles, all the confessors, yea, and the entire body of the church have left us no other testimony.

They all spoke of Christ and they all commended Him. Whatever the type, or symbol, or obscure oracle, or open word in which they bore witness, that witness all amounted to this, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.” Yes, and I will add that since the canon of inspiration has closed, the testimony of all saints, on earth and in heaven, has continued to confirm the declaration made of old.

The verdict of each particular saint and of the whole elect host as a body, still is this, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.” From the sighs and the songs which mingle on the dying beds of saints, I hear this note supreme above all others, “He is altogether lovely,” and from the songs unmingled with groans, which perpetually peal forth from immortal tongues before the presence of the Most High, I hear this one master note, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.”

If the whole church desired to say with the apostle, “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum,” she need not wait for a brief and comprehensive summary, for it lies before her in this golden sentence, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.”

Looking at my text in this light I felt much humbling of spirit, and I hesitated to preach upon it, for I said in my heart, “It is high, I cannot attain unto it.” These deep texts show us the shortness of our plumb-line. These ocean verses are so exceeding broad that our skiffs are apt to be driven far out of sight of land where our timid spirits tremble to spread the sail.

Then I comforted myself by the thought that though I could not comprehend this text in a measure, nor weigh its mountains in scales, or its hills in a balance, yet it was all mine own, by the gift of divine grace, and therefore I need not fear to enter upon the meditation of it. If I cannot grasp the ocean in my span, yet may I bathe in it with sweet content. If I cannot describe the King in His beauty, yet may I gaze upon Him, since the old proverb says, “A beggar may look at a prince.”

Though I pretend not so to preach from such a heavenly word as that before us, as to spread before you all its marrow and fatness, yet may I gather up a few crumbs which fall from its table. Poor men are glad for crumbs and crumbs from such a feast are better than loaves from the tables of the world! Better to have a glimpse of Jesus, than to see all the glory of the earth all the days of our life.

If we fail on this subject, we may do better than if we succeeded upon another. So we will pluck up courage, seek divine help, and draw near to this wondrous text, with our shoes from off our feet like Moses when he saw the bush aglow with God.

This verse has been translated in another way, “He is all desires.” And so indeed Jesus is. He was the desire of the ancients, He is the desire of all nations still. To His own people He is their all in all. They are complete in Him. They are filled out of His fullness.

*“All our spacious powers can wish,
In Him doth richly meet.”*

He is the delight of His servants and fills their expectations to the full. But we will not dispute about translations, for, after all, with such a text, so full of unutterable spiritual sweetness, every man must be his own translator, and into his own soul must the power of the message come, by the enforcement of the Holy Ghost.

Such a text as this is very like the manna which fell in the wilderness, of which the rabbis say it tasted after each man’s liking. If the flavor in a man’s mouth was very sweetness, the angel’s food which fell around the camp was luscious as any dainty he had conceived. Whatever he might be, the manna was to him as he was. So shall this text be.

To you with low ideas of Christ, the words shall but glide over your ears and be meaningless. But if your spirit is ravished with the precious love of Jesus, there shall be songs of angels, and more than that—the voice of God’s own Spirit to your soul in this short sentence, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.”

I am an engraver this morning, and I seek somewhat whereon I may engrave this heavenly line. Shall I take unto me ivory or silver? Shall I borrow crystal or gold? These are too common to bear this unique inscription—I put them all aside. Shall I spell my text in gems, with an emerald, a sapphire, a ruby, a diamond, or a pearl for each single letter? Nay, these are poor perishable things—we put them all away.

I need an immortal spirit to be the tablet for my writing. Nay, I must lay aside my engraving tool and ask the Spirit of God to take it. I want a heart prepared of the Holy Ghost, upon whose fleshy tablets there shall be written this morning no other sentence than this, and this shall suffice for a right royal motto to adorn it well, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.”

Spirit of God, find out the prepared heart, and with Your sacred hand write in eternal characters the love of Christ and all His inimitable perfections.

In handling our text this morning, we shall note three points of character and then we shall show three uses to which we may profitably turn it.

I. We shall consider THREE POINTS OF CHARACTER which are very noticeable in these words, and the first which suggests itself is this—the words are evidently uttered by one who is under the influence of *overwhelming emotion*.

The words are rather a veil to the heart than a glass through which we see its emotions. The sentence labors to express the inexpressible. It pants to utter the unutterable. The person writing these words evidently feels a great deal more than any language can possibly convey to us.

The spouse begins somewhat calmly in her description, “My beloved is white and ruddy.” She proceeds with due order, commencing at the head, and proceeding with the divers parts of the person of the Beloved. But she warms, she glows, she flames, and at last the heat which had for awhile been repressed is like fire within her bones, and she bursts forth in flaming words.

Here is the live coal from off the altar of her heart, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.” It is the utterance of a soul that is altogether overcome with admiration, and therefore feels that in attempting to describe the Well-beloved, it has undertaken a task beyond its power. Lost in adoring wonder, the gracious mind desists from description, and cries with rapture, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.”

It has often been thus with true saints. They have felt the love of Jesus to be overpowering and inebriating. Believers are not always cool and calm in their thoughts towards their Lord. There are

seasons with them when they pass into a state of rapture, their hearts burn within them, they are in ecstasy, they mount up with wings as eagles. Their souls become like the chariots of Amminadab. They feel what they cannot explain. They experience what they cannot express though the tongues of men and of angels were perfectly at their command.

Favored believers are altogether enraptured with the sight they have of their all-beauteous Lord. It is to be feared that such raptures are not frequent with all Christians, though I should gravely question his saintship who has never experienced any degree of holy rapture. But there are some saints to whom a state of overwhelming adoration of their Lord has been by no means an unusual thing.

Communion with Jesus has not only entranced them now and then, but it has perfumed all their life with holiness. And if it has not caused their faces literally to shine like the face of Moses, it has made the spiritual glory to flash from their countenances, and has elevated them among their fellow Christians to be leaders of the host of God, whereat others have admired and wondered.

Peradventure, I speak to children of God who know very little of what I mean by the overwhelming emotions created by a sight of our Lord. They have not so seen the Lord as to have felt their souls melting within them while the Beloved spake with them. To such I shall speak with sorrowful sympathy, being alas! too much like unto them, but my prayer shall go up all the while, “Lord, reveal Yourself to us, that we also may be compelled to say, ‘Yea, he is altogether lovely.’ Show us Your hands and Your side till we exclaim with Thomas, ‘My Lord and my God.’”

Shall I tell you why it is, my brethren, that many of you but seldom enjoy the exceeding bliss of Jesus’ presence? The cause may lie partly in what is, alas! too common among Christians—a *great degree of ignorance of the person of the Lord Jesus*. Every soul that sees Jesus by faith is saved thereby. If I look to Christ with a bleared eye, that is ever so weak and clouded with tears, and if I only catch a glimpse of Him through clouds and mists, yet the sight saves me.

But who will remain content with such a poor gleam of His glory as that? Who wishes to see only “through a glass, darkly”? No, let my eyes be cleansed till they become as doves by the rivers of waters, and I can see my Lord as He is seen by His dearest friends, and can sing of those beauties which are the light and crown of heaven itself.

If you do but touch the hem of Jesus’ garment, you shall be made whole—but will this always satisfy you? Will you not desire to get beyond the hem, and beyond the garment, to Himself, and to His heart, and there forever take up your abode? Who desires to be forever a babe in grace, with a half-awakened dreamy twilight consciousness of the Redeemer?

Brethren, be diligent in the school of the cross, therein is enduring wisdom. Study your Savior much. The science of Christ crucified is the most excellent of sciences, and to know Him and the power of His resurrection is to know that which is best worth knowing. Ignorance of Jesus deprives many saints of those divine raptures which carry others out of themselves, therefore let us be among those children of Zion who are taught of the Lord.

Next to this you shall find the *lack of meditation* to be a very serious robber of the wealth of renewed hearts. To believe a thing is, as it were, to see the cool crystal sparkling in the cup. But to meditate upon it is to drink thereof. Reading gathers the clusters. contemplation squeezes forth their generous juice. Meditation is of all things the most soul-fattening when combined with prayer.

The spouse had meditated much in this chapter, for otherwise she had not been able to speak in detail concerning her Lord. O saintly hearts, imitate her example! Think, my brethren, of our Lord Jesus. He is God, the Eternal, the Infinite, the ever blessed. Yet He became man for us—man of the substance of His mother, like ourselves.

Meditate upon His spotless character. Review the sufferings which He endured on Calvary. Follow Him into the grave, and from the grave to the resurrection, and from the resurrection up the starry way to His triumphant throne. Let your souls dwell upon each of His offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King. Pore over each one of His characters, and every Scriptural title. Pause and consider every phase of Him, and when you have done this, begin again, and yet again.

It is good to chew the cud by meditation—then shall the sweetness and fatness of divine truth come to your soul, and you shall burst forth with such rapturous expressions as that of the text, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.”

The most of you are too busy. you have too much to do in the world, but what is it you are doing? Scraping together dust, loading yourselves with thick clay. O that you were busy after the true riches, and could step aside for a while to enrich yourselves in solitude, and make your hearts vigorous by feeding upon the person and Work of your ever Blessed Lord. You miss a heaven below by a too eager pursuit of earth. you cannot know these joyful raptures if meditation is pushed into a corner.

Another reason why little of the Lord’s beauty is discerned is *the low state of the spiritual life in many Christians*. Many believers are just alive and no more. Do you not know such starveling souls? May you not be one such yourself! His eyes are not delighted with the beauties of Christ, he is purblind, and cannot see afar off.

He walks not with Jesus in the garden of pomegranates, he is too feeble to rise from the couch of weakness. He cannot feed upon Christ, his appetite is gone—sure sign of terrible decline. For him there are no climbings to the top of Amana, no leaping for joy in the temple, no dancing before the ark with David.

No, if he be but carried to the feet of Jesus in an ambulance as a sick man borne of four, it is as much as they have yet received. To be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, to have the wings of eagles with which to mount above the clouds of earth—to this many are strangers. But beloved, there are noble spirits and better taught, who know something of the life of heaven even while here below.

The Lord strengthen us with grace in our inner man, and then shall we drink deeper draughts of the wines on the lees well refined. And then, also, our eyes being open, we shall see Jesus more clearly, and bear fuller witness that He is “fairer than the children of men.”

I am afraid that *the visits of Christ to our souls have been disesteemed, and the loss of those visits has not caused us corresponding sorrow*. We did not sufficiently delight in the beauty of the Bridegroom when He did come to us. When our hearts were somewhat lifted up with His love, we grew cold and idle, and then He withdrew His conscious presence.

But alas! we were not grieved—we wickedly tried to live without Him. It is wretched work for a believer to try and live without his Savior. Perhaps, dear brethren, some of you have tried it until at last you have almost succeeded. You were wont to mourn like doves if you had no word from your Master in the morning, and without a love-token before you went to rest, you tossed uneasily upon your bed.

But now you are carnal, and worldly, and careless, and quite content to have it so. Jesus hides His face, the sun is set, and yet it is not night with you. O may God be pleased to arouse you from this lethargy and make you mourn your sad estate! Even if an affliction should be needful to bring you back from your backsliding, it would be a cheap price to pay.

Awake, O north wind, with all your cutting force, if your bleak breath may but stir the lethargic heart! May the Lord grant us grace so to love Christ that if we have not our fill of Him, we may be ready to die with hungering and thirsting after Him. May we never be able to find a place to build our nest while our wings wander away from the tree of life. Like the dove of Noah, may we drop into the water and be drowned sooner than find rest for the sole of our feet except upon the ark, Christ Jesus, our Savior.

Beloved, if none of these suggestions should hit the mark and reveal the cause why so little is known of rapturous love to Christ, let me suggest another. Very often *professors’ hearts are vain and frivolous*. They are taken up during the week with their business. This might plead some excuse, but when they have little spaces and intervals, these are filled up with very vanity.

Now, if the soul has come to look at the mere trifles of this world as all-important, is it any marvel that it should be unable to perceive the exceeding preciousness of Christ Jesus? Who will care for the wheat when he dotes on the chaff?

And with this it will often happen that the professor's mind has grown proud as well as vain. He does not remember his natural poverty and meanness, and consequently does not value the riches of Christ Jesus. He has come to think himself an established, experienced Christian. He fancies that he is not like those foolish beginners who are so volatile and so readily led astray. He has acquired the wisdom of years and the stability of experience.

O soul, if you are great, Christ will be little. You can never see Him on the throne until you have been on the dunghill yourself. If you be anything, so much the less is Christ, for if He be all in all, then there is no room for anything else—but if you be something, you have stolen just so much from the glory of your Lord Jesus.

Lie low in the dust, it is the place for you.

*“The more Thy glories strike my eyes,
The humbler I shall lie.”*

The humbler I am in myself, the more shall I be capable of seeing the enchanting beauties of Christ.

Let me just say these two or three words. I believe those are the happiest saints who are most overwhelmed with a sense of the greatness, goodness, and preciousness of Christ. I believe these to be the most useful saints, also, and to be in the Christian church as a tower of strength.

I pray that you and I, walking with God by faith, may nevertheless often have our festival days, our notable seasons, when He shall specially bless us with the kisses of His love, and we shall drink larger draughts of His love, which is better than wine. Oh! to be carried right away with the divine manifestation of the chief among ten thousand, so that our souls shall cry out in rapture, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.” This is one characteristic of the text—may it be transferred to us.

2. A second is this, and very manifest it is upon the surface of the verse—here is *undivided affection*. “He is altogether lovely.” Note that these words have a world of meaning in them, but chiefly they tell us that Jesus is to the true saint the only lovely one in the world. “He is altogether lovely.” Then there is no loveliness anywhere else.

It is as though the spouse felt that Christ had engrossed all the beauty, and all the love-worthiness in the entire universe. Who among us will say that she erred? Is not Jesus worthy of all the admiration and love of all intelligent beings?

But may we not love our friends and kinsfolk? Ay, but in Him and in subservience to Him. So, and so only, is it safe to love them. Did not our Lord Himself say, “If any man love father or mother more than me, he is not worthy of me”? Yea, and in another place He put it more strongly still, for He said, “Except a man hate father and mother,” or loves them not at all in comparison with Me, “he is not worthy of me.”

Except these are put on a lower stage than Jesus is, we cannot be His disciples. Christ must be Monarch in the breast. Our dear ones may sit at His footstool, and we may love them for His sake, but He alone must fill the throne of our hearts. I may see excellences in my Christian brethren, but I must not forget that there would be none in them if they were not derived from Him, that their loveliness is only a part of His loveliness, for He wrought it in them by His own Spirit.

I am to acknowledge that Jesus is the monopolizer of all loveliness, the engrosser of all that is admirable in the entire universe. And I am, therefore, to give Him all my love, for “He is altogether lovely.”

Our text means, again, that in Jesus loveliness of all kinds is to be found. If there be anything that is worthy of the love of an immortal spirit, it is to be seen in abundance in the Lord Jesus. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, all can be found without measure in Christ Jesus. As all the rivers meet in the sea, so all beauties unite in the Redeemer.

Take the character of any gracious man and you shall find a measure of loveliness, but it has its bounds and its mixtures. Peter has many virtues, but he has not a few failings. John, too, excels, but in certain points he is deficient. But herein our Lord transcends all His saints, for all human virtues, all divine, are harmoniously blended in Him.

He is not this flower or that, but He is the Paradise of perfection. He is not a star here or a constellation there—He is the whole heaven of stars—nay, He is the heaven of heavens. He is all that is fair and lovely condensed in one.

When the text says again that Jesus “is altogether lovely,” it declares that He is lovely in all views of Him. It generally happens that to the noblest building there is an unhappy point of view from which the architecture appears at a disadvantage. The choicest piece of workmanship may not be equally complete in all directions. The best human character is deformed by one flaw, if not with more.

But with our Lord all is lovely, regard Him as you will. You may contemplate Him from all points, and only find new confirmation of the statement that, “He is altogether lovely.”

As the everlasting God before the world was made, angels loved Him and adored Him. As the babe at Bethlehem or as the man at Bethany, as walking the sea or as nailed to the cross, in His grave, dead, and buried or on His throne triumphant—rising as forerunner or descending a second time to judge the world in righteousness, in His shame, despised and spit upon or in His glory, adored and beloved—with the thorns about His brow and the nails piercing His hands or with the keys of death and hell swinging at His girdle—view Him as you will, and where you will, and when you will, “He is altogether lovely.”

Under all aspects, and in all offices and in relations, at all times and all seasons, under all circumstances and conditions, anywhere, everywhere, “He is altogether lovely.”

Nor is He in any degree unlovely. The commendation forbids the idea. If He be “altogether lovely,” where could you find room for deformity? When the artist painted Alexander, he laid the monarch’s finger on an unsightly scar, but there are no scars to conceal when you portray the countenance of Immanuel.

We say of our country—and who among us will not say it, “With all her faults, we love her still.” But we love Jesus and find no strain put upon our heart, for trace of fault He has none. There is no need of apologies for Jesus, no excuses are required for Him. But what is that I see upon His shoulder? It is a hard, rough cross, and if I follow Him I must carry that cross for His sake.

Is not that cross unsightly? Oh, no! He is altogether lovely, cross and all. Whatever it may involve to be a Christian, we count even the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. The world will honor a half Christ, but a whole Christ it will not acknowledge. The bat’s-eyed Socinian says, “I admire the man Christ, but I will not adore Jesus the God.” To him the Eternal Word is but half lovely, if lovely at all.

Some will have Christ the exemplar, but they will not accept Him as the vicarious sacrifice for sin, the substitute for sinners. Many will have Christ in silver slippers—my lord archbishop’s religion—but they would not listen to the Gospel from a poor gracious Methodist or think it worth their while to join the unlettered throng whose devout songs rise from the village green.

Alas, how much we see of crosses of gold and ivory, but how little do men love the lowly cross of Jesus! Brethren, we think Jesus “altogether lovely” even in poverty, or when hanging naked on the cross, deserted and condemned. We see unspeakable beauty in Jesus in the grave, all fair with the pallor of death. Jesus bruised as to His heel by the old serpent is yet comely.

His love to us makes Him evermore “white and ruddy” to our eye. We adore Him anywhere and everywhere, and in any place, for we know that this same Christ whose heel is bruised breaks also the serpent’s head, and He who was naked for our sakes, is now arrayed in glory. We know that the despised and rejected is also King of kings and Lord of lords, The “Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” “Yea, he is altogether lovely.” There are no flaws in Him.

The text intends us to know that Jesus is lovely in the highest degree—not lovely positively and then failing comparatively, but lovely superlatively, in the highest possible sense. I leave this for your hearts to enlarge upon.

I will close this point by saying, every child of God acknowledges that Christ Jesus is lovely altogether to the whole of Himself. He is lovely to my judgment, but many things are so and yet are not lovely to my affections. I know them to be right and yet they are not pleasant—but Jesus is as lovely to my heart as to my head, as dear as He is good. He is lovely to my hopes—are they not all in Him?

Is not this my expectation—to see Him as He is? But He is lovely to my memory too—did He not pluck me out of the net? He is lovely to all my powers and all my passions, my faculties and feelings. As David puts it, “My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God”—the whole of the man seeking after the whole of the Savior.

The whole Savior sweet and inexpressibly precious to the man’s entire being. May it be so with you and with me. But is it so? Do you not set up idols in your hearts? Men of God, do you not need to take the scourge of small cords and purge the temple of your souls this morning? Are there not buyers and sellers where Christ alone ought to be? Oh, to love Him wholly, and to love Him only, so that we have no eyes for other beauty, no heart for other loveliness, since He fills our souls and is to us “altogether lovely.”

3. The third characteristic of the text is that to which I desire to draw the most attention and that is *ardent devotion*. I called the text a live coal from off the altar and surely it is so. If it should drop into our hearts to set them on a blaze, it would be an unspeakable mercy. Ardent devotion flames from this sentence. It is the language of one who feels that no emotion is too deep when Jesus moves the heart.

Do any chide you and say you think too much of your religion? It cannot be, it cannot be. If the zeal of God’s house should eat us up until we had no existence except for the Lord’s glory, we should not have gone too far. If there be corresponding knowledge to balance it, there cannot be too much of zeal for God.

The utterance is that of one whose heart is like a furnace, of which love is the fire. “He is altogether lovely”—it is the exclamation of one who feels that no language is too strong to commend the Lord. The spouse looked through the Hebrew tongue to find an intense expression, and our translators ransacked the English language for a forcible word, and they have put it in the weightiest way, “He is altogether lovely.”

There is no fear of exaggeration when you speak of Christ. Hyperboles are only sober truth when we depict His excellence. We have heard of a portrait painter who owed his popularity to the fact that he never painted truthfully, but always gave a flatteringly touch or two. Here is one who would defy his art, for it is impossible to flatter Jesus. Lay on, you men of eloquence. spare no colors, you shall never depict Him too bravely. Bring forth your harps, you seraphs. Sing aloud, you blood-washed ones. All your praises fall short of the glory which is due Him.

It is the language of one who feels that no service would be too great to render to the Lord. I wish we felt as the apostles and martyrs and holy men of old did—that Jesus Christ ought to be served at the highest and richest rate. We do little, very little—what if I had said we do next to nothing for our dear Lord and Master nowadays?

The love of Christ does not flow in us as it should. But those of old bore poverty and dared reproach, marched weary leagues, passed tempestuous seas, bore perils of robbers and of cruel men, to plant the cross in lands where as yet Jesus was not known. Labors that nowadays could not be expected of men were performed as daily matters of commonplace by the Christians of the earliest times.

Is Christ less lovely or is His church less loyal? Would God she estimated Him at His right rate, for then she would return to her former mode of service. Brethren, we want to feel, and we shall feel if this text is deeply engraven on our hearts, that no gift is too great for Christ—though we give Him all we have, and consecrate to Him all our time and ability, or sacrifice our very lives to Him. No suffering is too great to bear for the sake of the Crucified and it is a great joy to be reproached for Christ’s sake.

“He is altogether lovely.” Then, my soul, I charge you think nothing hard to which He calls you, nothing sharp which He bids you endure. As the knight of the olden time consecrated himself to the Crusade, and wore the red cross on his arm, fearing not to meet death at the hands of the Infidel, if he might be thought a soldier of the Lord, so we too would face all foes for Jesus’ sake. We want, only refined and purified, and delivered from its earthly grossness, we want the chivalrous spirit once again in the church of God.

A new crusade fain would I preach. Had I the tongue of such a one as the old hermit to move all Christendom, I would say, “This day Christ, the altogether lovely one, is dishonored—can you endure it? This day idols stand where He should be and men adore them—lovers of Jesus, can you brook it? This day Juggernaut rides through the streets on his bloody way. This day God’s Christ is still unknown to millions, and the precious blood cleanses not the nations—how long will you have it so?

We, in England, with ten thousand Christian hearts, and as many tongues endowed with eloquence, and purses weighted with gold—shall we refuse our gifts, withhold our witness, and suffer the Lord to be dishonored? The church is doing next to nothing for her great Lord. She falls short both of her duty and of the grim need of a perishing world.

O for a flash of the celestial fire! Oh, when shall the Spirit’s power visit us again! When shall men put down their selfishness and seek only Christ? When shall they leave their strifes about trifles to rally round His cross! When shall we end the glorification of ourselves, and begin to make Him glorious, even to the world’s end? God help us in this matter, and kindle in our hearts the old consuming, heart-inflaming fire, which shall make men see that Jesus is all in all to us.”

II. Thus I have shown you the characteristics of the text, and now I desire to USE IT IN THREE WAYS FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES. As time flies, we must use it briefly.

The first word is to you, Christians. Here is very *sweet instruction*. The Lord Jesus “is altogether lovely.” Then if I want to be lovely, I must be like Him and the model for me as a Christian is Christ. Have you ever noticed how badly boys write at the bottom of the pages in their copy-books? There is the copy at the top, and in the first line they look at that. In the second line they copy their own imitation. In the third line, they copy their imitation of their imitation, and so the writing grows worse and worse as it descends the page.

Now, the apostles followed Christ. The first fathers imitated the apostles. The next fathers copied the first fathers and so the standard of holiness fell dreadfully. And now we are too apt to follow the very lees and dregs of Christianity, and we think if we are about as good as our poor, imperfect ministers or leaders in the church, that we shall do well and deserve praise.

But now, my brethren, cover up the mere copies and imitations, and live by the first line. Copy Jesus. “He is altogether lovely.” And if you can write by the first line, you will write by the truest and best model in the world. We want to have Christ’s zeal, but we must balance it with His prudence and discretion.

We must seek to have Christ’s love to God, and we must feel His love to men, His forgiveness of injury, His gentleness of speech, His incorruptible truthfulness, His meekness and lowliness, His utter unselfishness—His entire consecration to His Father’s business. O that we had all this, for depend upon it, whatever other pattern we select, we have made a mistake. We are not following the true classic model of the Christian artist.

Our master model is the “altogether lovely” one. How sweet it is to think of our Lord in the double aspect as our exemplar and our Savior. The laver which stood in the temple was made of brass—in this the priests washed their feet whenever they offered sacrifices. So does Christ purify us from sin, but the tradition is that this laver was made of very bright brass, and acted as a mirror, so that as often as the priests came to it, they could see their own spots in it.

Oh, when I come to my Lord Jesus, not only do I get rid of my sins as to their guilt, but I see my spots in the light of His perfect character, and I am humbled and taught to follow after His holiness.

The second use to which we would put the verse is this—here is a very *gentle rebuke* to some of you. Though very gentle, I beseech you to let it sink deep into your hearts. You do not see the lowliness of Christ, yet “He is altogether lovely.” Now, I will not say one hard word, but I will tell you sorrowfully what pitiable creatures you are.

I hear enchanting music, which seems more a thing of heaven than of earth—it is one of Handel’s half-inspired oratorios. Yonder sits a man who says, “I hear nothing to commend.” He has not the power to perceive the linked sweetnesses, the delicious harmonies of sounds. Do you blame him? No, but you who have an ear for music, say, “How I pity him—he misses half the joy of life!”

Here, again, is a glorious landscape, hills and valleys, and flowing rivers, expansive lakes, and undulating meadows. I bring to the point of view a friend, whom I would gratify, and I say to him, “Is not that a charming scene?” Turning his head to me, he says, “I see nothing.” I perceive that he cannot enjoy what is so delightful to me. He has some little sight, but he sees only what is very near and he is blind to all beyond.

Now, do I blame him? Or if he proceeds to argue with me, and say, “You are very foolish to be so enthusiastic about a non-existent landscape—it is merely your excitement,” shall I argue with him? Shall I be angry with him? No, but I shed a tear, and whisper to myself, “Great are the losses of the blind.”

Now, you who have never heard music in the name of Jesus, you are to be greatly pitied, for your loss is heavy. You who never saw beauty in Jesus, and who never will forever—you need all our tears. It is hell enough not to love Christ! It is the lowest abyss of Tartarus, and its fiercest flame, not to be enamored of the Christ of God.

There is no heaven that is more heaven than to love Christ and to be like Him, and there is no hell that is more hell than to be unlike Christ and not to want to be like Him—but even to be averse to the infinite perfections of the “altogether lovely.” The Lord open those blind eyes of yours, and unstop those deaf ears, and give you the new and spiritual life, and then will you join in saying, “Yea, he is altogether lovely.”

The last use of the text is that of *tender attractiveness*. “Yea, he is altogether lovely.” Where are you this morning, you who are convicted of sin and want a Savior, where have you crept to? Are you hidden away where my eyes cannot reach you? At any rate, let this sweet thought reach you. You need not be afraid to come to Jesus, for “He is altogether lovely.”

It does not say He is altogether terrible—that is your misconception of Him. It does not say He is somewhat lovely and sometimes willing to receive a certain sort of sinner. But “He is altogether lovely,” and therefore He is always ready to welcome to Himself the vilest of the vile. Think of His name. It is Jesus, the Savior. Is not this lovely?

Think of His work. He is come to seek and to save that which was lost. This is His occupation. Is not that lovely? Think of what He has done. He has redeemed our souls with His blood. Is not that lovely? Think of what He is doing. He is pleading before the throne of God for sinners. Think of what He is giving at this moment—He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Is not this lovely?

Under every aspect Christ Jesus is attractive to sinners who need Him. Come then, come and welcome. There is nothing to keep you away, there is everything to bid you come. May this very Sabbath day in which I have preached Christ and lifted Him up, be the day in which you shall be drawn to Him, never again to leave Him, but to be His forever and forever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—SONG OF SOLOMON 5

MR. SPURGEON begs earnestly to thank a friend, who desires to be anonymous, for five hundred pounds towards buildings for the Pastors’ College, to commemorate the thousandth sermon, as also Mr. Thomas Ness for ten pounds, and a sermon-reader for a guinea. This last donor believes that at least a thousand readers might send a guinea each at once, to celebrate the occasion, and to aid in erecting rooms in which preachers would be trained, whose theme would be the Gospel

of Jesus. Mr. Spurgeon is thankful for the timely aid. Some three thousand pounds more will probably be required for the buildings.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.