THE BEST BELOVED

NO. 1446

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"Yes, he is altogether lovely."
Song of Solomon 5:16

NO words can ever express the gratitude we owe to Him who loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. The *love* of Jesus is unutterably precious and worthy of daily praise. No songs can ever fitly celebrate the triumphs of that salvation which He wrought single-handed on our behalf. The *work* of Jesus is glorious beyond compare, and all the harps of angels fall short of its worthy honor.

Yet I do believe, and my heart prompts me to say so, that the highest praise of every ransomed soul and of the entire Christian church should be offered to the blessed *person* of Jesus Christ, our adorable Lord. The love of His heart is excelled by the heart which gave forth that love, and the wonders of His hand are outdone by the hand itself, which wrought those godlike miracles of grace.

We ought to bless Him for what He has done for us as Mediator in the place of humble service under the law, and for what He suffered for us as Substitute on the altar of sacrifice from before the foundation of the world. And for what He is doing for us as Advocate in the place of highest honor at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But still the best thing about Christ is Christ Himself. We prize *Him*, but we worship *Him*. His gifts are valued, but He Himself is adored.

While we contemplate, with mingled feelings of awe, admiration and thankfulness, His atonement, His resurrection, His glory in heaven, and His second coming, still it is Christ Himself. Stupendous in His dignity as the Son of God, and superbly beautiful as the Son of man, who sheds an incomparable charm on all those wonderful achievements wherein His might and His merit, His goodness and His grace appear so conspicuous.

For Him let our choicest spices be reserved, and to Him let our sweetest anthems be raised. Our choicest ointment must be poured upon His head, and for His own self alone our most costly alabaster boxes must be broken.

"*He* is altogether lovely." Not only is His teaching attractive, His doctrine persuasive, His life irreproachable, His character enchanting, and His work a self-denying labor for the common good of all His people, but He Himself is altogether lovely. I suppose at first we shall always begin to love Him because He first loved us, and even to the last His love to us will always be the strongest motive of our affection towards Him. Still there ought to be added to this another reason less connected with ourselves, and more entirely arising out of His own superlative excellence. We ought to love Him because He is lovely and deserves to be loved.

The time should come, and with some of us it has come, when we can heartily say, "We love Him because we cannot help it, for His all-conquering loveliness has quite ravished our hearts." Surely it is but an unripe fruit to love Him merely for the benefits which we have received at His hand. It is a fruit of grace, but it is not of the ripest flavor, at least there are other fruits, both new and old, which we have laid up for You, O our Beloved, and some of them have a daintier taste. There is a sweet and mellow fruit which can only be brought forth by the summer sun of fellowship—love because of the Redeemer's intrinsic goodness and personal sweetness.

Oh that we might love our Lord for His own sake, love Him because He is so supremely beautiful that a glimpse of Him has won our hearts, and made Him dearer to our eyes than light. Oh that all true and faithful disciples of our beloved Lord would press forward towards that state of affection, and never rest till they reach it! If any of you have not reached it, you need not therefore doubt your own safety,

for whatever the reason why you love Jesus, if you love Him at all, it is a sure pledge and token that He loves you, and that you are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation.

Still covet earnestly the best gifts and rise to the highest degree of devotion. Love as the purest of the saints have loved. Love as John the apostle loved, for still your Lord exceeds all the loving homage you can pay to Him. Love His person. Love Himself, for He is better than all that He has done or given. And as from Himself all blessings flow, so back to Himself should all love return.

Our text tells us that Christ is altogether lovely. What a wealth of thought and feeling is contained in that exclamation! I am embarrassed to know how to preach on such a subject, and half inclined to wish it had not been laid so much upon my heart.

What, I pray you, what is loveliness? To discern it is one thing, but it is quite another thing to describe it. There is not one among us but knows how to appreciate beauty, and to be enamored by its attractions, but how many here could tell us what it is? Stand up, my brother, and define it. Perhaps while you were sitting down you thought you could easily tell the tale, but now you are on your feet you find that it is not quite so easy to clothe in words the thoughts which floated through your brain.

What is beauty? Cold-blooded word-mongers answer *fitness*. And certainly there is fitness in all loveliness. But do not tell me that beauty is mere fitness, for I have seen a world of fitness in this world which, nevertheless, seemed to me to be inexpressibly ugly and unlovable.

A wise man tells me that beauty is *proportion*, but neither is this a full description by many a league. No doubt it is desirable that the features should be well balanced, the eyes should be fitly set, no one feature should be exaggerated and none should be dwarfed.

"In nature what affects our hearts,
Is not th' exactness of peculiar parts:
'Tis not a lip or eye we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all."

Harmony is beauty. Yet I have seen the chiseled marble, fashioned with skillful art into a well-nigh perfect form, which did not, could not, impress me with a sense of loveliness. There stands in one of the halls of the Vatican a statue of Antinous. Every feature in that statue is perfect in itself, and in complete harmony with all the rest. You could not find the slightest fault with eye or nose or mouth. It is indeed as much the ideal of male beauty as the Venus is of female charms, yet no one could ever have been enchanted with the statue, or have felt affection to the form which it represents.

There is no expression whatever in the features. Everything is so adjusted and proportioned that you need a divergence to relieve you. The materialism is so carefully measured out that there needs a stir, a break in the harmony to give it at least some semblance of a soul. Beauty, then, consists not in mere harmony, nor in balancing the features.

Loveliness surely is *attractiveness*. Yes, but that is another way of saying you do not know what it is. It is a something that attracts you, and compels you to exclaim, "Nothing under heaven so strongly doth allure." We feel its power, we become its slaves. But we cannot write with pen of cold steel, nor could we write even with a pen of lightning, a description of what it is.

How, then, can I—enamored, entranced, enraptured as I am with Him whom my soul loveth—how can I speak of Him? He is altogether lovely! Where shall I find words, terms, expressions that shall fitly set Him forth? Unless the Eternal Spirit shall upraise me out of myself I must forever be incapable of setting forth the Well-beloved.

Besides, were I baffled by nothing else, there is this, that the beauty of Christ is mysterious. It surpasses all the comeliness of human form. He may have had great beauty according to the flesh. That I cannot tell, but I should imagine that such a perfect soul as His must have inhabited a perfectly molded body.

Never yet did you or I gaze with satisfaction upon the work of any painter who has tried to picture our Lord Jesus Christ. We have not blamed the great masters, but we have felt that the effort surpassed their powers. How could they photograph the sun? The loftiest conceptions of great artists in this case fall far short of the mark.

When the brightness of the Father's glory is the subject the canvas glows in vain. Art sits at her easel and produces diligently many a draft of the sacred features, but they are all failures, and they must be. Who shall ever depict Immanuel, God-with-us? I suppose that, by and by, when our Lord had entered upon His active life, and encountered its struggles, His youthful beauty was marred with lines of sadness and sorrow.

Still His courage so overshadowed His cares, the mercy He showed so surpassed the misery He shared, and the grace He dispensed so exceeded the griefs that He carried, that a halo of real glory must ever have shone around His brow. His countenance must still have been lovely even when surrounded with the clouds of care and grief. How can we describe even the marred visage? It is a great mystery, but a sure fact, that in our Lord's marred countenance His beauty is best seen. Anguish gave Him a loveliness which else He had not reached. His passion put the finishing touches upon His unrivalled loveliness.

But brethren, I am not about to speak of Christ's loveliness after the flesh, for now after the flesh know we Him no more. It is His moral and spiritual beauty of which the spouse in the song most sweetly says, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." The loveliness which the eye dotes on is mere varnish when compared with that which dwells in virtue and holiness. The worm will devour the loveliness of skin and flesh, but a lovely character will endure forever.

I. THIS IS RARE PRAISE.

Let that be our first head. This is rare praise. What if I say it is unique? For of no other being could it be said, "Yea, he is altogether lovely."

It means, first, that *all that is in Him is lovely, perfectly lovely*. There is no point in our Lord Jesus that you could improve. To paint the rose were to spoil its ruddy hue. To tint the lily, for He is lily as well as rose, were to mar its whiteness. Each virtue in our Lord is there in a state of absolute perfection, it could not be more fully developed. If you were able to conceive of each virtue at its ripest stage it would be found in Him.

In the matter of transparent ingenuousness and sterling honesty, did ever man speak or act so truthfully as He? Ask, on the other hand, for sympathizing tenderness and love, was ever any so gentle as Jesus? Do you want reverence to God? how He bows before the Father. Do you want boldness before men? how He beards the Pharisees. You could not better anything which you find in Jesus. Wherever you shall cast your eye it may rest with satisfaction, for the best of the best of the best is to be seen in Him.

He is altogether lovely at every separate point, so that the spouse, when she began with His head, descended to His feet, and then lifting her eyes upward again upon a return voyage of delight, she looked into His countenance and summed up all that she had seen in this one sentence, "He is altogether lovely." This is rare praise.

And He is all that is lovely. In each one of His people you will find something that is lovely—in one there is faith, in another abounding love, in one tenderness, in another courage. But you do not find all good things in any one saint—at least not all of them in full perfection. But you find all virtues in Jesus, and each one of them at its best.

If you would take the best quality of one saint and the best quality of another—yea, the best out of each and all the myriads of His people, you would find no grace or goodness among them all which Jesus does not possess in the fullest degree and in the highest perfection. He combines all the virtues, and gives them all a sweetness over and beyond themselves.

In flowers you have a separate beauty belonging to each. No one flower is just like another, but each one blushes with its own loveliness. But in our Lord these separate and distinct beauties are found united

in one. Christ is the posy in which all the beauties of the garden of perfection are bound up. Each gem has its own radiance, the diamond is not like the ruby, nor the ruby like the emerald. But Christ is that ring in which you have sapphire, ruby, diamond, emerald, set in choice order, so that each one heightens the other's brilliance.

Look not for anything lovely out of Jesus, for He has all the loveliness. All perfections are in Him making up one consummate perfection. And all the loveliness which is to be seen elsewhere is but a reflection of His own unrivalled charms.

In Jesus Christ—this, moreover, is rare praise again—*there is nothing that is unlovely*. You have a friend whom you greatly admire and fondly esteem, of whom, nevertheless, I doubt not you have often said to yourself in an undertone, "I wish I could take away a little of the rough edge of his manners here and there." You never thought that of Christ. You have observed of one man that he is so bold as to be sometimes rude, and of another that he is so bland and amiable that he is apt to be effeminate. You have said, "That sweetness of his is exceedingly good, but I wish that it were qualified with sterner virtues." But there is nothing to tone down or alter in our divine Lord. He is altogether lovely!

Have you not sometimes in describing a friend been obliged to forget, or omit, some rather prominent characteristic when you wished to make a favorable impression? You have had to paint him as the artist once painted Oliver Cromwell, the great wart over the eyebrow was purposely left out of the portrait. Cromwell, you know, said, "Paint me as I am, or not at all."

We have, however, often felt that it was kind to leave out the warts when we were talking of those we esteemed, and to whom we would pay a graceful tribute. But there is nothing to leave out in Christ, nothing to hold back, or to guard, or to extenuate. In Him is nothing redundant, nothing overgrown. He is altogether lovely. You never need put the finger over the scar in His case, as Apelles did when he painted his hero. No, tell it all out, reveal the details of His private life and secret thoughts, they need no concealment.

Lay bare the very heart of Christ, for that is the essence of love and loveliness. Speak of His death-wounds, for in His scars there is more beauty than in the uninjured comeliness of another. And even when He lies dead in the tomb He is more comely than the immortal angels of God at their best estate. Nothing about our Lord needs to be concealed. Even His cross, at which His enemies stumble, is to be daily proclaimed, and it will be seen to be one of His choicest beauties.

Frequently, too, in commending a friend whom you highly appreciated, you have been prone to ask for consideration of his position, and to make excuse for blemishes which you would fain persuade us are less actual than apparent. You have remarked how admirably he acts considering his surroundings. Conscious that someone would hint at an imperfection, you have anticipated the current of conversation by alluding to the circumstances which rendered it so difficult for your friend to act commendably. You have felt the need of showing that others influenced him, or that infirmity restrained him.

Did you ever feel inclined to apologize for Christ? Did He not always stand unbending beneath life's pressure, upright and unmoved amidst the storms and tempests of an evil world? The vilest calumnies have been uttered against Him, in the age just past which produced creatures similar to Thomas Paine, but they never required an answer. And as for the more refined attacks of our modern skepticism, they are, for the most part unworthy even of contempt. They fall beneath the glance of truth, withered by the glance of the eye of honesty.

We never feel concerned to vindicate the character of Jesus, we know it to be safe against all comers. No man has been able to conjure up an accusation against Jesus. They seek false witnesses, but their testimony agrees not together. The sharp arrows of slander fall blunted from the shield of His perfectness. Oh, no, He is altogether lovely in this sense—that there is nothing whatever in Him that is not lovely. You may look, and look, and look again, but there is nothing in Him that will not bear scrutiny world without end.

Taking the Lord Jesus Christ as a whole—this is what our text intends to tell us—He is inexpressibly lovely—*altogether* lovely. The words are packed as tightly as they can be, but the meaning is greater than the words.

Some translate the passage, "He is all desires," and it is a good translation too, and contains a grand truth. Christ is so lovely that all you can desire of loveliness is in Him, and even if you were to sit down and task your imagination and burden your understanding to contrive, to invent, to fashion the ideal of something that should be inimitable—ay, (to utter a paradox), if you could labor to conceive something which should be inconceivably lovely, yet you would not reach to the perfection of Christ Jesus. He is above, not only all we think, but all we dream of.

Do you believe this? Dear hearers, do you think of Jesus in this fashion? We speak what we know, and testify what we have seen. But no man among you will receive our witness until he can say, "I also have seen Him, and having seen Him, I set to my seal that He is altogether lovely."

II. And now, secondly, as this is rare praise, so likewise IT IS PERPETUAL PRAISE.

You may say of Christ whenever you look at Him, "Yea, He is altogether lovely." He always was so. As God over all, He is blessed forever, Amen. When, in addition to His godhead, He assumed our mortal clay, was He not inimitably lovely then? The babe in Bethlehem was the most beautiful sight that ever the world beheld. No fairer flower ever bloomed in the garden of creation than the mind of that youth of Nazareth gradually unfolding, as He "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him."

All the while He lived on earth, what moral perfections, what noble qualities, what spiritual charms were about His sacred person! His life among men is a succession of charming pictures. And He was lovely in His bitter passion, when as the thick darkness overshadowed His soul He prayed, in an agony of desire, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

The bloody sweat did not disfigure, but adorn Him. And oh, was He not lovely when He died? Without resentment He interceded for His murderers. His patience, His self-possession, His piety, as "the faithful martyr," have fixed as the meridian of time the hour when He said, "It is finished," and "bowed his head," and "cried with a loud voice, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

He is lovely in His resurrection from the dead, beyond description lovely. Not a word of accusation did He utter against His cruel persecutors, though He had risen clothed with all power in heaven and in earth. With such tender sympathy did He make Himself known to His sorrowing disciples, that despite the waywardness of their unbelief their hearts' instinct told them it was "*the same Jesus*." *He is altogether lovely*.

He will be lovely when He comes with solemn pomp, and sound of trumpet, and escort of mighty angels, and brings all His saints who have departed with Him, and calls up those that are alive and remain on the earth till His advent, to meet Him in the air. Oh, how lovely He will appear to the two throngs who will presently join in one company! How admirable will His appearance be! How eyes, ears, hearts and voices will greet Him! With what unanimity the host redeemed by blood will account their highest acclamations as a trivial tribute to His honor and glory!

"He is altogether lovely." Yes, and He shall be lovely forever and ever when your eyes and mine shall eternally find their heaven in beholding Him. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever," is always worthy of this word of praise—"altogether lovely."

Let us retrace our steps for a minute. The more we study the four Gospels, the more charmed we are with *the Gospel*. For as a modern author has well said, "The Gospels, like the Gospel, are most divine because they are most human." As followers of Jesus, rank yourselves with those men who companied with Him all the time that He went in and out among them. And you shall find Him *lovely in all conditions*.

Lovely when He talks to a leper and touches and heals Him. Lovely by the bedside when He takes the fever-stricken patient by the hand and heals her. Lovely by the wayside, when He greets the blind beggar, puts His finger on his eyes and bids him see. Lovely when He stands on the sinking vessel and

rebukes the waves. Lovely when He meets the bier and rekindles the life that had expired. Lovely when He visits the mourners, goes with the sisters of Bethany to the newly-made grave and weeps, and groans, and—majestically lovely—bids the dead come forth. Lovely is He when He rides through the streets of Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of an ass. Oh, had we been there, we would have plucked the palm branches, and we would have taken off our garments to strew the way. Hosanna, lovely Prince of Peace!

But He was just as lovely when He came from the garden with His face all besmeared with bloody sweat. Just as lovely when they said, "Crucify him, crucify him." Just as lovely, and if possible more so, when down those sacred cheeks there dripped the cursed spittle from the rough soldiers' mouths. Ay, and loveliest, to my eyes loveliest of all, when mangled, wounded, fainting, bruised, dying, He said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" uttering a plaintive cry of utmost grief from the felon's gibbet whereon He died.

Yes, view Him where you will, in any place soever, is He not—I speak to you who know Him, and not to those who never saw Him with the eyes of faith—is He not, in the night and in the day, on the sea and on the land, on earth and in heaven, altogether lovely?

He is lovely in all His offices. What an entrancing sight to see the King in His beauty, with His diadem upon His head, as He now sits in yonder world of brightness! How charming to view Him as a priest, with the Urim and Thummim, wearing the names of His people bejeweled on His breastplate!

And what a vision of simple beauty, to see Him as a prophet teaching His people in touching parables of homely interest, of whom they said, "Never man spake like this man!" The very tones of His voice, and the glance of His eyes, made His eloquence so supreme that it enthralled men's hearts. Yes, He is lovely, altogether lovely in any and every character. We know not which best beseems Him, the highest or the lowest positions. Let Him be what He may—Lamb or Shepherd, Brother or King, Savior or Master, Foot-washer or Lord—in every relation He is altogether lovely.

Get a view of Him, my brethren, from any point and see whether He is not lovely. Do you recollect the first sight you ever had of Him? It was on a day when your eyes were red with weeping over sin, and you expected to see the Lord dressed in anger coming forth to destroy you. Oh, it was the happiest sight I ever saw when I beheld my sins rolling into His sepulcher, and when looking up I beheld Him my substitute bleeding on the tree. Altogether lovely was He that day.

Since then, providence has given us a varied experience and taken us to different points of view that we might look at Christ, and see Him under many aspects. We look at statues from several standpoints if we would criticize them. A great many in London are hideous from all points of view—others are very well if you look at them this way, but if you go over yonder and look from another point the artist appears to have utterly failed.

Now, beloved, look at Jesus from any point you like, and He is at His best from each and every corner. You have been in prosperity, God multiplied your children and blessed your basket and your store—was Jesus lovely then? Assuredly He was the light of your delights. Nothing He had given you vied with Himself. He rose in your hearts superior to His own best gifts.

But you tell me that you have been very sick, and you have lost one after another of your dear ones. Your means have been reduced, you have come down in the world, say, then, is Jesus lovely now? I know that you will reply, "Yes, more than ever is Christ delightful in mine eyes."

Well, you have had very happy times, and you have been on the mount of hallowed friendship. The other Sunday morning many of us were up there, and thought like Peter that we should like to stay there forever. And is not Jesus lovely when He is transfigured and we are with Him? Yes, but at another time you are down in the depths with Jonah, at the bottom of the sea. Is not Christ lovely then, too? Yes, even there He hears our prayers out of His holy temple, and brings us again from the deep abyss.

We shall soon lie dying. Oh, my brethren, and what brave talk God's people have often given us about their Lord when they have been on the edge of the grave! That seems to be a time when the Well-beloved takes the veil off His face altogether and sits by the bedside, and lets His children look into His

face and see Him as He is. I warrant you the saints forget the ghastliness of death when their hearts are ravished with the loveliness of Christ.

Yes, hitherto, up to this point Jesus has been lovely. And now, let us add that He will always be so. You know there are persons whom you account beautiful when you are young, but when you grow older in years, riper in judgment, and more refined in taste, you meet with others who look far more beautiful. Now, what think you think of your Lord? Have you met with anyone, in fact or in fable more beautiful than He? You thought Him charming when you were but a babe in grace. What think you of Him now?

Taste, you know, grows, and develops with education, an article of vertu which fascinated you years ago has no longer any charms for you because your taste is raised. Has your spiritual taste outgrown your Lord's beauties? Come, brothers, does Christ go down as you learn truth more exactly and acquaint yourself more fully with Him? Oh no. You prize Him a thousand times more today than you did when the first impression of His goodness was formed in your mind.

Some things which look very lovely at a distance lose their loveliness when you get near to them. But is it not true (I am sure it is), that the nearer you get to Christ the lovelier He is? Some things are only beautiful in your eyes for their novelty, you admire them when you have seen them once. If you were to see them a dozen times you would not care much about them. What do say you about my Master? Is it not true that the more you see Him, the more you know Him. And the more familiar your communion with Him, the more He rises in your esteem? I know it is so, and well, therefore, did the spouse say, "He is altogether lovely."

Christ is altogether lovely in this respect—that when men reproach Him and rail at Him, He is often all the lovelier in His people's eyes. I warrant you Christ has been better known by the Burn-side in Scotland by His covenanting people than ever He has been seen under the fretted roof of cathedral architecture. Away there in lonely glens, amid the mosses and the hills, where Covenanters met for fear of Claverhouse and his dragoons, the Lord Jesus has shone forth like the sun in his strength.

We have nowadays to be satisfied with His moonlight face, but in persecuting days His children have seen His sun face, and oh! how glad they have been. Hear how the saints sing in prison! Listen to their charming notes, even on the rack, when the glory of His presence fills their souls with heaven on earth, and makes them defy the torments of the flesh.

The Lord Jesus is more lovely to the soul that can bear reproach for Him than He is to any other. Put the cross on His back if you will, but we love Him all the better for that. Nail up His hands, but we love Him all the better for that. Now fasten His feet, ay, but our soul melts with love to Him, and she feels new reasons for loving Him when she beholds the nails.

Now stand you around the cross, you worldlings, and mock Him if you will. Taunt and jest, jeer and jibe—these do but make us love the better the great and glorious One, who "made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Beloved, you shall keep on looking at Christ from all these points of view till you get to heaven, and each time you shall be more enamored of Him. When you reach the celestial city and see Him face to face, then shall you say, "The half has not been told us," but even here below Christ is altogether lovely to His people.

III. I leave that head just to notice, in the third place, that though this praise is rare praise and perpetual praise, yet IT IS ALSO TOTALLY INSUFFICIENT PRAISE.

Say you that He is altogether lovely? It is not enough. It is not a thousandth part enough. No tongue of man, or tongue of angel, can ever set forth His unutterable beauties. "Oh," say you, "but it is a great word, though short, very full of meaning though soon spoken—*altogether lovely*." I tell you it is a poor word. It is a word of despair. It is a word which the spouse uttered because she had been trying to describe her Lord and she could not do it. And so she put this down in very desperation, as much as to say, "There, the task is too great for me. I will end it. This is all I can say. 'Yea, he is altogether lovely.'"

I am sure John Berridge was right when He said—

"Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ."

Brethren, the praise of the text is insufficient praise, I know, because it is praise given by one who had never seen Him in His glory. It is Old Testament praise this, that He is altogether lovely. Praise uttered upon report rather than upon actual view of Him. Truly, I know not how to bring better, but I shall know one day. Till then I will speak His praise as best I can, though it fall far short of His infinite excellence.

Our text is cloth of gold, but it is not fit for our Beloved to put the sole of His feet upon. He deserves better than this, for this is only the praise of a church that had not seen Him die, and had not seen Him rise, and had not seen Him in splendor at the divine right hand.

"Well," say you, "try if you can do better." No, I will not, because if I did praise Him better, the style would not last long, for He is coming quickly, and the best thing the best speaker could ever say of Him will be put out of date by the majesty of His appearing. His chariot is waiting at His door now, and He may soon come forth from His secret chambers and be among us, and oh! the glory—oh! the glory!

Paul, you know, stole a glance through the lattices one day when he was caught up into the third heaven. Somebody said to me, "I wonder Paul did not tell us what he saw?" Ay, but what he saw he might not tell, and the words he heard were words which it were not lawful for a man to utter, and yet to live among this evil generation. We shall hear those words ourselves soon, and see those sights not many days hence, so let it stand as it does, "He is altogether lovely."

But when you have thus summed up all that our poor tongues can express, you must not say, "Now we have described Him." Oh no, sirs, you have but held a candle to this glorious sun, for He is such an One as thoughts cannot compass, much less language describe.

I leave this point with the reflection that God intends to describe Him and set Him forth one day. He is waiting patiently, for longsuffering is part of Christ's character. And God is setting forth the longsuffering of Christ in the patient waiting of these eighteen hundred years. But the day shall presently dawn and usher in the everlasting age when Christ shall be better seen, for every eye shall see Him, and every tongue confess that He is Lord. The whole earth will one day be sweet with the praise of Jesus.

Earth, did I say? This alabaster box of Christ's sweetness has too much fragrance in it for the world to keep it all to itself. The sweetness of our Lord's person will rise above the stars, and perfume worlds unknown. It will fill heaven itself. Eternity shall be occupied with declaring the praises of Jesus. Seraphs shall sing of it, angels shall harp it, the redeemed shall declare it. He is altogether lovely.

The cycles of eternity as they revolve shall only confirm the statement of the blood-redeemed that He is altogether lovely. O that the day were come when we shall bow with them and sing with them! Wait a little while and be not weary, and you shall be home, and then you shall know that I spoke the truth when I said that this was insufficient praise. Earth is too narrow to contain Him, heaven is too little to hold Him, eternity itself too short for the utterance of all His praises.

IV. So I close with this last thought, which may God bless, for practical uses. This praise is VERY SUGGESTIVE.

If Christ be altogether lovely it suggests a question. Suppose I never saw His loveliness. Suppose that in this house there should be souls that never saw anything in Christ to make them love Him. If you were to go to some remote island where beauty consisted in having one eye and a twisted mouth, and a sea-green complexion, you would say, "Those people are strange beings." Such are the people of this world. Spiritual beauty is not appreciated by them. This world appreciates the man who makes money, however reckless he may be of the welfare of others while scheming to heap up riches for himself.

As for the man who slays his fellow creatures by thousands, they mount him on a bronze horse, put him on an arch, or they pile up a column, and set him as near heaven as they can. He slew his thousands, He died blood-red, he was an emperor, a tyrant, a conqueror, the world feels his power and pays its homage. As for this Jesus, He only gave His life for men, He was only pure and perfect, the mirror of

disinterested love. The vain world cannot see in Him a virtue to admire. It is a blind world, a fool world, a world that lieth in the wicked one.

Not to discern the beauties of Jesus is an evidence of terrible depravity. Have you, my dear friend, frankly to confess that you were never enamored of Him who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and went about doing good? Then let this come home to you—the question is not as to whether Christ is lovely or not, the mistake is here—you have not a spiritually enlightened eye, a fine moral perception, nor even a well-regulated conscience, or you would see His loveliness at once. You are dark and blind. God help you to feel this.

Do you not love Christ? Then let me ask you why you do not? There was never a man yet that knew Christ that could give a reason for not loving Him, neither is there such a reason to be discovered. He is altogether lovely. In nothing is He unlovable. Oh I wish that the good Spirit of God would whisper in your heart, and incline you to say, "I will see about this Christ. I will read of Him. I will look at the four portraits of Him painted by the evangelists, and if He be indeed thus lovely, no doubt He will win my heart as He appears to have won the hearts of others." I pray He may.

But do not, I pray you, continue to deny Christ your love. It is all you can give Him. It is a poor thing, but He values it. He would sooner have your heart than all the gold in Europe. He would sooner have the heart of a poor servant girl or of a poor humble laborer upon the soil than the Queen's diadem. He loveth love. Love is His gem—His jewel. He delights to win it, and if He be indeed altogether lovely, let Him have it.

You have known people, I dare say, whom you could not help loving. They never had to say to you, "Love me," for you were captivated at once by the very sight of them. In like manner many and many have only received one beam of light from the Holy Spirit, and have thereby seen who Jesus was, and they have at once said of Him, "Thou hast ravished my heart with one look of thine eyes," and so it has been that all their life they have loved their Lord.

Now, the praise is suggestive still further. "Is Christ altogether lovely? Then do I love Him? As a child of God, do I love Him as much as I ought? I do love Him. Yes, blessed be His name, I do love Him. But what a poor, cold, chill love it is. How few are the sacrifices I make for Him. How few are the offerings that I present to Him. How little is the fellowship that I maintain with Him."

Brother, is there a rival in your heart? Do you allow anyone to come in between you and the "altogether lovely"? If so, chase out the intruder. Christ must have all your heart, and let me tell you the more we love Him the more bliss we shall have.

A soul that is altogether given up to the love of Christ lives above care and sorrow. It has care and sorrow, but the love of Christ kills all the bitterness by its inexpressible sweetness. I cannot tell you how near a man may live to heaven, but I am persuaded that a very large proportion of the bliss of heaven may be enjoyed before we go there.

There is one conduit pipe through which heavenly joy will flow, and if you draw from it you may have as much as you will. "Abide in me" says Christ, and if you do abide in His love you shall have His joy fulfilled in yourselves that your joy may be full. You will have more capacious vessels in heaven, but even now the little vessel that you have can be filled up to the brim by knowing the inexpressible loveliness of Jesus and surrendering your hearts to it.

Oh that I could rise to something better than myself. I often feel like a chick in the egg. I am pecking my way out, and I cannot get clear of my prison. Fain would I chip the shell, come forth to freedom, develop wings, and soar heavenward, singing on the road. Would God that were our portion. If anything can help us get out of the shell, and to begin to rise and sing, it must be a full and clear perception that Jesus is altogether lovely.

Come, let us be married to Him afresh tonight. Come, believing hearts, yield again to His charms. Again surrender yourselves to the supremacy of His affection. Let us have the love of our espousals renewed. As you come to His table think you of the lips of Christ, of which the spouse had been speaking before she uttered my text—"His mouth is most sweet." There are three things about Christ's

mouth that are very sweet. The first is His Word, you have heard that. The second is His breath. Come, Holy Spirit, make Your people feel that. And the third is His kiss. May every believing soul have that sweet token of His eternal love.

Forgive my ramblings. May God bless to all His people the word that has been spoken. May some that never knew my Master ask to know Him tonight. Go home and seek Him. Read the Word to find Him. Cry to Him in prayer and He will be found of you. He is so lovely that I should not live without loving Him. And I shall deeply regret it if any one of you shall spend another four-and-twenty hours without having had a sight of His divine face by faith.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 JOHN 3

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—782, 793, 785

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