THE LORD'S OWN VIEW OF HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE

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A SERMON
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"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."
Song of Solomon 4:12

WE understand this sacred love song to be a Canticle of Communion between the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. He is the Bridegroom, and she the bride. Solomon furnishes the figure, as some think, and his Solyma is with him. But the type is dimly seen, it is the antitype which shines forth as the sun to the view of all spiritual minds.

At the very outset of the present discourse it is needful, for the sake of the less instructed, to say what the church is. A church is a congregation of faithful men—that is to say, of men who are believers in the Lord Jesus, men in whom the Holy Spirit has created faith in Christ—and the new nature of which faith is the sure index.

The one church of Jesus Christ is made up of all believers throughout all time. Just as any one church is made up of faithful men, so is the one church of Christ made up of all faithful churches in all lands—and of all faithful men in all ages.

The church was viewed as one in the purpose of God before the world was. The Eternal Father chose to Himself a people, and gave them over to His Son, that they might be His portion forever and ever. This is the church of which we read—"Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it." This is "the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

This is the church with which the marriage supper shall be celebrated when the Well-beloved shall come to take His own unto Himself forever. While we at this time speak of the church as a whole, it will be quite correct for each individual believer to take home to himself any truth, whether doctrinal, experiential, or practical, which we treat of as the heritage of the church.

Each saint may say, "This belongs to me." That which belongs to the redeemed family belongs to each member of that family. That which is true of light is true of each beam. That which is true of water is true of each drop, and that which is true of the church as a whole is true of each member of that mystical body.

The love of the Lord Jesus is to His church as a body—and it is the same to each believer as a member of that body. That which is true of the whole number is true of the units which make it up. He who invites a company to a feast virtually invites each person of the company. Jesus loves each one of His people with that same love wherewith He loves the whole of His people, insomuch that if you, my brethren, are Christ's beloved, and if you were the only persons that were ever born into the world—and all His love were yours—He would not then love you one atom more than He loves you now.

The love of Jesus is dispersed, but not divided. It flows to all with the same force with which it flows to one. To redeem a single soul, our Ransom must have laid down His life, and He loves each one with such a love that He did lay down His life for each one, as much as if there had not been another to redeem.

We shall not be presumptuous if we enjoy all the love of Jesus of which we are capable, enjoying and appropriating the words of love to ourselves as if they were meant for us alone. The invitation of the Bridegroom in this Song gives a permit to the largest faith, and to the most daring enjoyment. "Eat, O friends; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."

I shall call your attention to four things, with as much brevity and earnestness as possible. Come, gracious Spirit, and lead us into the sweetness of them!

I. The first is, THE NEARNESS OF KIN OF THE CHURCH TO CHRIST, AND CHRIST TO THE CHURCH.

He calls her in the text, "My sister, my spouse." As if He could not express His near and dear relationship to her by any one term, He employs the two. "My sister"—that is, one by birth, partaker of the same nature. "My spouse"—that is, one in love, joined by sacred ties of affection that never can be snapped. "My sister" by birth. "My spouse" by choice. "My sister" in communion, "My spouse" in absolute union with Myself. I want you who love the Savior to get a full hold of this thought of near and dear kinship under this head. Oh, how near akin Christ is to all His people!

But first, *do try to realize the person of Christ*. I am not going to speak to you at this time of a doctrine, or a mere historical fact that has vanished into the dim past. No, we speak of a real Person. Jesus Christ *is*. As Man and as God in the perfection of His nature, He still exists. He dwells at the right hand of God at this moment, and though He cannot be here in His corporeal Person, yet He is everywhere by His spiritual Presence, which is more real still.

Do not spirit Him away. Believe that He truly is, and that He truly is here—as much here and as really here as He was at Jerusalem, when He sat at the head of the table, and entertained the twelve at the last supper. Jesus is a real Man, a real Christ—remember that.

Then let this further truth be equally realized, that *He has so taken upon Himself our human nature that He may correctly call His church His siste*r. He has become so truly man in His incarnation, that He is not ashamed to call us brethren. He calls us so because we are so. No, He is not a deified man any more than He is a humanized God. He is perfectly God, but He is also perfectly man—and Man such as we are, touched with the feeling, not only of our attainments, but of our infirmities. Not only trusting in all points as we do, but tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin.

He was, when He was here, evidently man and eminently man—and He now so remembers all that He passed through while here below that He remains in perfect sympathy with us at this very moment. Change of place has made no change of heart in Him. He, in His glory, is the same Jesus as in His humiliation.

No man is so fully a man as Jesus Christ. If you speak of any other man, something or other narrows his manhood. You think of Milton as a poet and an Englishman, rather than as a man. You think of Cromwell rather as a warrior, than as a man. Either his office, his work, his nationality, or his peculiar character, strikes you in many a man rather than his manhood. But Jesus is *the* Man, the model Man—in all His deeds and words—to the fullness of manhood, in its purest and truest state. The second Adam is, *par excellenc*e, man.

We may not think of Him as one amongst a vast number who may be distantly akin to us, as all men are akin to one another by descent, but *the Lord comes near to each individual*. He takes each one of His believing people by the hand, and says, "My brother." In our text He salutes the whole church as "My sister."

He says this with tender emphasis. The love between brothers, if those brothers are what they should be, is very strong, and peculiarly unselfish and admirable. A brother is born for adversity. A true brother is one upon whom you can rely in time of need. One heart in two bodies is the realization of true brotherhood.

Such is, emphatically, the relationship of the Redeeming Lord to each believer. He is your Brother. "The man is next of kin to us." You may have the joy of saying, "I know that my near Kinsman lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Happy man who, without presumption, can feel the ties of kinship with the Son of Man, and can sing with the poet of the sanctuary—

"Jesus, our Kinsman and our God,
Array'd in majesty and blood,
Thou art our life; our souls in Thee
Possess a full felicity."

As we have already observed, the first term, "sister," implies kinship of nature, but *the second term,* "*my spouse,*" *indicates another kinship—dearer, and in some respects, nearer*—a kinship undertaken of choice, but once undertaken, irrevocable and everlasting. This kinship amounts to unity, insomuch that the spouse loses her name, loses her identity, and to a high degree, is merged in the greater personality to which she is united.

Such is our union to Christ, if indeed we be His, that nothing can so well set it forth as marriage union. He loves us so much that He has taken us up into Himself by the absorption of love. We may henceforth forego our name, for "this is the name wherewith *she* shall be called, The LORD our righteousness."

Wonderful that the very name which belongs to our Lord Jesus—and one of the most majestic of His names—should yet be used as the name of His church. The Lord Jesus Christ's name is now named upon her, and she is permitted to make use of His name whenever she draws near to the throne of the heavenly grace in prayer. "In His name"—this is to be her great plea whenever she intercedes with heaven. She speaks in the name which is above every name, the name at which angels bow.

The Bridegroom calls His church, "my sister, my spouse." Now come, renewed heart, you that have learned to trust your Savior, see how near, how dear, you are to Him! If He says, "My sister, my spouse," answer to Him, "My Brother, my Husband." If He is not strange to you, oh, be not cold to Him! Think not of Him as of some great one to whom you may not approach.

Have you in your memory that great text, "It shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi (my Husband), and shalt call me no more Baali, (my Lord). For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name." We feel no dreadful lordship now. Though He is Master and Lord, yet it is such a loving lordship which He exercises towards us that we rejoice in it. We hear a voice full of music, saying, "He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him." But His commandments are not grievous. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

When we bow before Him, it is not because we fear with servile trembling, but because we rejoice and love. We rejoice in His rule and reign. Perfect love has cast out fear. We live in such joyful fellowship with Him as a sister has with a brother, or a wife with a husband. Be not backward towards your own Betrothed. Be not stiff and cold. Set not a boundary around the mount, for it is not Sinai—there are no bounds to the hill of Zion.

Hang not up a curtain, for He has rent the veil. Think not of Him as though He were far divided from you—when He is exceeding near to you, and has taken you up unto Himself, to be one with Him forever.

"Lost in astonishment I see,
Jesus, Thy boundless love to me:
With angels I Thy grace adore,
And long to love and praise Thee more.

"Since Thou wilt take me for Thy bride,
Oh, keep me, Saviour, near Thy side!
I fain would give Thee all my heart,
Nor ever from my Lord depart."

I do not know how to preach upon this subject. Who can? Is it a subject for exposition in a mixed assembly? If it were, who could compass it? I beg you, O believers, to sit in your pews, and let holy thought occupy you—let this choice subject saturate your willing minds.

If you are true believers, if you have been born again, if you are really looking to Christ alone for salvation, He has brought you into a condition of the utmost conceivable nearness with Himself. He has participated in *your* nature, and He has made you a partaker of *His* nature, and in so many words He says, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD."

Can you grasp it? It will make your heart dance for joy if you can. Never did a more joyful thought illuminate a human mind. One with Jesus! By eternal union, one with Jesus! Is not this heavenly? There can be no divorce between Christ and His church, for thus it is written, "The LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away." He will have nothing to do with putting away.

Having espoused us, He declares the thing done. "I am married unto you, says the Lord." He has taken our nature, and made us "partakers of the divine nature." And after He has done that, who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Neither height, nor depth, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to effect a breakup of this most complete, perfect, mystical union between Christ and His people.

Again I pray the Holy Ghost to make every believer feel this, and then we shall go home from this house glad in spirit. My heart will be as a wedding feast, and the joy-bells of my soul will ring out the words—

"White and ruddy is my Belovéd,
All His heavenly beauties shine;
Nature can't produce an object,
Nor so glorious, so divine;
He hath wholly
Won my soul to realms above.

"Such as find Thee find such sweetness
Deep, mysterious, and unknown;
Far above all worldly pleasures,
If they were to meet in one;
My Belovéd,
O'er the mountains hasten away."

II. To a second thought I would call your attention. See in the text THE SECURITY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN CONSEQUENCE OF BEING WHAT THEY ARE. "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."

We are not only like a garden, but a garden *enclosed*. If the garden were not enclosed, the wild boar out of the wood would bark the vines, and uproot the flowers. But infinite mercy has made the church of God an enclosure, into which no invader may dare enter. "For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her."

Is she a spring? Are her secret thoughts, and loves, and desires like cool streams of water? Then the Bridegroom calls her "a spring shut up." Otherwise, every beast that passed by might foul her waters, and every stranger might quaff her streams. She is a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, like some choice cool spring in Solomon's private garden around the house of the forest of Lebanon—a fountain which he reserved for his own drinking, by placing the royal seal upon it, and locking it up by secret means, known only to himself.

Legend has it that there were fountains which none knew of but Solomon—and he had so shut them up that, with his ring he touched a secret spring, a door opened—and living waters leaped out to fill his

jeweled cup. No one knew but Solomon the secret charm by which he set flowing the pent-up stream of which no lip drank but his own. Now, God's people are as much shut up, and preserved, and kept from danger by the care of Christ, as the springs in Solomon's garden were reserved expressly for himself.

Beloved, this is a cheering thought for all believers, that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself. He has taken measures to *preserve* all His chosen from all those who would defile and destroy them. He walled them round about with His divine decree of old, saying, "This people have I chosen for Myself."

He then issued His command that none should injure them, saying, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." He sets a hedge about them in providence, so that nothing shall by any means harm them. He has shut them up from the enemy, and sealed them up for perpetual preservation. The wandering Bedouins in the East plunder the open fields—but a king's garden, enclosed and protected, is safe from their ravages.

So are the saints enclosed from all invading powers. Specially has the Lord walled them about with grace. While angels keep watch and ward around this sacred garden to drive off the powers of darkness, the invincible grace of God is ever like a wall about the plants of the Lord's right hand planting, so that neither sin nor the world shall be able to uproot them.

You are a garden, and a garden is a tender thing, soon destroyed. But the Lord, who planted you, has seen to your protection and provision. A garden in the East is a very needy place. One day's burning sun might suffice to wither all its verdure, but the Lord has declared of His church, "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." "I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

A garden is a dependent thing, requiring perpetual care from the husbandman, and that care the church of God shall have, for it is written, "He careth for you." Jesus says, "My Father is the husbandman"—and surely that is enough.

In a garden, weeds spring up, and alas! in the church, and in our hearts, the weeds of sin are plentiful. But there is One who will take care to pluck up evil growths, and cut away all rank shoots, that none of the precious plants may be choked or overgrown. In all ways every single plant, however feeble, shall be tended with all-sufficient skill.

It is very precious to see how the Lord lays Himself out to preserve His own beloved. We are too dear to Him to let us perish. Yet, O tender plant, you are often fearful! Did you say the other day that He had left you? How can this be? Do you know at what a price He bought you? Leave you! Will the husband forget his beloved spouse, and will the Husband of your soul forget you?

Let not the thought tarry with you for a moment, for it is dishonoring to your Lord's love. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." You are as safe as Jesus, for on His heart He bears your name. You are as safe as He is, for on the arm of His strength He wears your name, as the high priest wore the names of the tribes upon his shoulder, as well as upon his breastplate. "I give unto my sheep," says He, "eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

I want you to enjoy a sense of this security. I will not preach upon it much, but I will ask you to believe it, and to rejoice in it. Are you really in Christ? If so, who is to pluck you thence? Are you really trusting Him? How can He fail you? Have you been begotten again into the divine family? How can that new life be quenched? Do not let anything drive from your mind a sense of your security in Christ.

I hear somebody say that this might lead men to carnal security. Far from it—the security of the Spirit is a death-blow to the security of the flesh. I tell you, sirs, that it is most needful that you should not believe in Jesus Christ half way, as some do who trust the Lord to put away the sin of the past, but cannot trust for the future. I believe in Him to put away all my sins that ever shall be, as well as all the sins that have been.

To believe in Him only to obliterate the years of former sin is but a limping half-way faith. Believe in Him for all the years that shall be. What says He? "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a

well of water springing up into everlasting life." Do you believe in Him to give you life for a little time, so that you venture to take a quarter's ticket of membership? I am glad that you believe even so much, but why limit His power?

Believe in the Lord Jesus for the whole of life, yea, for eternity. "According to your faith be it unto you." Do you believe in Him to give you a sip of the living water to stay your thirst for a while? Believe in Him a great deal more than that, and accept Him as quenching your thirst forever. For, "Ye are complete in him." "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life."

I look upon this sense of security in a Christian as being the mainspring of unselfish virtue. What is that perpetual anxiety to save yourself? What is that daily hungering and perpetual thirsting? It is only a spiritualized selfishness. Only when a man is really saved does he forget self. When I know that I am saved, I am able to glorify God.

The thought of saving myself by anything that I shall do, or be, or feel—I hurl to the winds, for I am already saved as a believer in Christ. Now is there scope for virtue. Now is there an opportunity to love God, and to love one's fellow men from a pure, unselfish motive.

A man is drowning, the ship is going down from under him—he is not a likely man to be looking after the interests of those about him. Once let him grasp an oar in the lifeboat, and he is the man to be the savior of others. I want you to be out of the wreck, and in the lifeboat, that you may be a hearty worker for the salvation of the perishing. I want you to get out of that "if," "perhaps," "peradventure," "may be," into certainty and full assurance—for then your undivided zeal will go for the glory of God.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life," says the apostle, speaking in the name of the saints in his day. And when you once know this, then you will rejoice to proclaim life to those around you. When you are assured that you are not only a garden, but a garden enclosed, not only a spring, but a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed against all adversaries—then you will give all your strength to Him who has thus secured you.

A happy and holy security in Christ will put spirit into you, and cause you to do exploits. For the love you bear His name, you will be ready to live to this sole end—to magnify and glorify the Lord Jesus, whose you are, and whom you serve.

I leave the thought, but I pray the Holy Spirit to breathe over His people a delicious sense of perfect security in Christ Jesus.

III. Thirdly, THE MOST STRIKING IDEA OF THE TEXT IS THAT OF SEPARATION—"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."

A garden is a plot of ground separated from the common waste for a special purpose—such is the church. The church is a separate and distinct thing from the world. I suppose there is such a thing as "the Christian world," but I do not know what it is, or where it can be found. It must be a singular mixture.

I know what is meant by a worldly Christian, and I suppose the Christian world must be an aggregate of worldly Christians. But the church of Christ is not of the world. "Ye are not of the world," says Christ, "even as I am not of the world." Great attempts have been made of late to make the church receive the world, and wherever it has succeeded it has come to this result—the world has swallowed up the church.

It must be so. The greater is sure to swamp the lesser. They say, "Do not let us draw any hard and fast lines. A great many good people attend our services who may not be quite decided, but still their opinion should be consulted, and their vote should be taken upon the choice of a minister, and there should be entertainments and amusements, in which they can assist."

The theory seems to be that it is well to have a broad gangway from the church to the world—if this be carried out, the result will be that the nominal church will use that gangway to go over to the world, but it will not be used in the other direction.

It is thought by some that it would perhaps be better to have no distinct church at all. If the world will not come up to the church, let the church go down to the world—that seems to be the theory. Let the Israelites dwell with the Canaanites, and become one happy family. Such a blending does not appear to

have been anticipated by our Lord in the chapter which was read just now—I mean the fifteenth of John. Read verses eighteen and nineteen—"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

Did He ever say—"Try to make an alliance with the world, and in all things be conformed to its ways"? Nothing could have been further from our Lord's mind. Oh, that we could see more of holy separation—more dissent from ungodliness, more nonconformity to the world! This is "the dissidence of Dissent" that I care for—far more than I do for party names, and the political strife which is engendered by them.

Let us, however, take heed that our separateness from the world is of the same kind as our Lord's. We are not to adopt a peculiar dress, or a singular mode of speech, or shut ourselves out from society. He did not so. He was a man of the people, mixing with them for their good. He was seen at a wedding feast, aiding the festivities. He even ate bread in a Pharisee's house, among captious enemies.

He neither wore phylacteries, nor enlarged the borders of His garments, nor sought a secluded cell, nor exhibited any eccentricity of manner. He was separate from sinners only because He was holy and harmless—and they were not. He dwelt among us, for He was of us. No man was more a man than He, and yet, He was not of the world, neither could you count Him among them. He was neither Pharisee, nor Sadducee, nor Scribe.

And at the same time, none could justly confound Him with publicans and sinners. Those who reviled Him for consorting with these last did, by that very reviling, admit that He was a very different person from those with whom they went. We want all members of the church of Christ to be, manifestly and obviously, distinct persons, as much as if they were of a separate race, even when they are seen mingling with the people around them.

We are not to cut ourselves off from our neighbors by affectation and contempt. God forbid. Our avoiding of affectation, our naturalness, simplicity, sincerity, and amiability of character, should constitute a distinction. Through Christians being what they seem to be, they should become remarkable in an age of pretenders. Their care for the welfare of others, their anxiety to do good, their forgiveness of injuries, their gentleness of manner—all these should distinguish them far more than they could be distinguished by a livery, or by any outward signs.

I long to see Christian people become more distinct from the world than ever, because I am persuaded that, until they are so, the church will never become such a power for blessing men as her Lord intended her to be.

It is for the world's good that there should be no alliance between the church and the world by way of compromise, even to a shade. See what came to pass when the church and the world became one in Noah's day—when "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair," and were joined with them. Then came the deluge. Another deluge, more desolating even than the former, will come, if ever the church forgets her high calling, and enters into confederacy with the world.

The church is to be a garden, walled, taken out of the common, and made a separate and select plot of ground. She is to be a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed, no longer open to the fowl of the air, and the beasts of the field. Saints are to be separate from the rest of men, even as Abraham was when he said to the sons of Seth, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you."

Come now, my dear friends, are you of this sort? Are you foreigners in a country not your own? You are not Christians, remember, if you are not so. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." That is the Lord's own word to you. Did not He Himself suffer outside the gate that you might go forth unto Him without the camp?

Are you at one with the rest of mankind? Could anybody live with you, and never see that any alteration had taken place in you? Would they think that you were just the same as any other man? Then, by your fruits you shall be known. If there is no difference of life between you and the world, the text does not address *you* as the "sister" and the "spouse" of Christ.

Those who are such are enclosed from the world, and shut up for Christ. "I wish I were more so," cries one. So do I, my friend, and may you and I practically prove the sincerity of that desire by a growing separateness from the world!

IV. Lastly, I think THE TEXT BEARS EVEN MORE FORCIBLY ANOTHER IDEA, NAMELY, THAT OF RESERVATION.

The church of God is "a garden enclosed." What for? Why, that nobody may come into that garden to eat the fruit thereof, but the Lord Himself. It is "a spring shut up," that no one may drink of the stream but the Lord Jesus. I beg you to consider this for a few minutes, and then practically to remember it all your lives.

A church exists only for the Lord Jesus to accomplish His ends and purposes among the sons of men. Never may this be forgotten. May the Spirit of God daily sanctify us unto the Lord to be a peculiar people! I am persuaded that if any church desires to be much honored of the Lord in these days, both as to internal happiness and external usefulness, it will find that the nearest way to its desire is to be wholly consecrated to the Lord.

The church is not formed to be a social club, to produce society for itself—not to be a political association, to be a power in politics. Nor even to be a religious confederacy, promoting its own opinions. It is a body created of the Lord to answer His own ends and purposes—and it exists for nothing else.

The heavenly Bridegroom says to His church, "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy LORD; and worship thou him." Churches which fail of their high vocation shall be cast forth as salt that has lost its savor. If we do not live for the Lord, we are dead while we live. If we do not bring glory to His name, we cannot justify our existence. If we are not as a garden enclosed for Jesus, we are mere bits of waste land. If we are not fountains sealed for Jesus, we are mere brooks in the valley, and shall soon run dry.

"But," cries one, "are we not to seek the good of our fellow men?" Assuredly we are to do so for Christ's sake. "Are we not to seek to help on sanitary, educational, purifying processes, and the like?" Yes, so far as all can be done for His sake. We are to be the Lord's servants for the blessing of the world, and we may do anything which He would have done.

In such a garden as the text speaks of, every plant bears flowers for its owner, every tree yields fruit for him. I pray God that this church, whether it carries on its Orphan houses, or its College, or its Colportage, or whatever else it does, may do it all for Christ. Keep this thought to the front as a church and people. You are not to bear fruit for the markets, but fruit for the Master's table. You are not to do good that you may have honor as an industrious and energetic community, but that glory may be given to Jesus, to whom you belong. "All for Jesus" is to be our motto.

No one among us may dare to live unto himself, even in the refined way in which many are doing it—who even try to win souls that they may have the credit of being zealous and successful. We may so far degenerate as even to attempt to glorify Christ that we may have the credit of glorifying Him. It will not do.

We must be truly, thoroughly, really living for Jesus. We must be a garden enclosed, reserved, shut up for Him. O brother, your life is to be a stream that flows for the refreshment of Him who poured out His life for you! You are to let Him drink of the deep fountains of your heart, but no one else may rival Jesus there. You are a spring shut up, a fountain sealed for Jesus, for Jesus only, and that altogether, and always. Should self come forward, or personal advantage, you are to bid them be gone. They must have no admission here. This garden is strictly private. Trespassers beware!

Should the world, the flesh, or the devil leap over the wall, and stoop down to drink of the crystal fountain of your being, you are to chase them away, lest their leprous lips should defile this spring, and prevent the King from drinking there again. Our whole being is to be a fountain sealed for Jesus Christ alone.

All for Jesus—body for Jesus, mind for Jesus, spirit for Jesus, eyes for Jesus, mouth for Jesus, hands for Jesus, feet for Jesus, all for Jesus. The wall must wholly enclose the garden, for a gap anywhere will admit an intruder everywhere. If one part of our being be left under the dominion of sin, it will show its power everywhere.

The spring must be sealed at the very source, that every drop may be for Jesus throughout the whole of its course. Our first thoughts, desires, and wishes must be His—and then all our words and deeds. We must be "wholly reserved for Christ that died, surrendered to the Crucified."

Brethren, do we belong to Jesus? Does He know the walks of our garden, and the secret springs of our nature? Here is an evidence by which you may judge whether Jesus fully possesses you. Is there anything, my brethren, that ever stirs you like the name of Jesus?

I recollect, some years ago, when I was very weary, faint, and heart-sore, I was vexed with the question as to whether all was right between my Lord and my heart. I went into an obscure country meeting house, where a brother who preached did me a great service. There was not much in the preaching of itself, but it was all about Jesus Christ, and I found myself within a few minutes weeping freely. The Gospel had found out the secret fountains of my being, and set them flowing. The name of Jesus acted on me like a charm. Ay, I thought, my Lord knows how to get at my heart as nobody else does.

Depend upon it, He must have been there before! I was quite sure that my Lord had the key that could open the sealed fount of my being, for I was stirred to the innermost depth of my soul. Then I knew that He was no stranger to me. There is a secret drawer inside my soul that nobody ever can open except Jesus. He made that drawer, and knows the secret spring which shuts and opens it. My Lord, and my Lord only, can play upon the strings of my heart as a minstrel on his harp, and therefore I know that I belong to Him.

Beloved, I am sure that many of you can thus assure yourselves of your interest in Christ. He holds the clue of the maze of your soul, and can enter the sacred chamber of your spirit. Can He not? Do you ever feel so happy as when He is near? Why, you love the very place where His honor dwells.

It happens at times that you are sick and sorry—and begin to doubt your interest in Christ. But if anybody begins extolling the Savior, you are ready to cry out with delight. Oh how I love to hear Him praised! It sets my heart a-dancing. I cry with Herbert, "Oh, for a well-tuned harp!" for I want to make music too.

When Jesus is set forth in all His glories and beauties, you can hardly contain yourself—you want to be singing His high praises. No wonder that the Methodist cries, "Bless the Lord!" You, who are very proper and quiet, half wish that you had courage enough to shout, "Hallelujah!" You may freely do so if you like.

Well now, if the Lord Jesus Christ holds the reins of your soul at that rate, I feel persuaded that you are His. If His name awakens the echoes of your whole being as nothing else does, then it must be because there are certain secrets between you and Himself which none else can know.

My heart is often like the captive king, who sat pining in a lonely tower, with nothing to relieve his sadness, as he remembered his native land, and his vacant palace, and the malice of the enemy who kept him in exile. Nothing aroused him from his dreamy melancholy. Many were the voices within and without the castle, but they were nothing to him. The serenade of troubadours only mocked his misery.

But one day a tender voice thrilled him. He listened to the verse of a song. It was even as life from the dead. None knew the next verse but himself. See what effect that sonnet has had on the monarch! His eyes, how they sparkled! His whole frame, how it is reanimated! He sang in response. With what rapture he pours forth the lay! He is a fine singer surely!

We did not know that the King had such a voice. How charmed he is as a third stanza is sung by the minstrel below! And why? Because it is Blondel, his friend, who has at last found him out, and thus salutes him. They knew, but nobody else in the world knew that song.

Even thus, the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. My Lord knows what it is that can move me, and my heart melts when He speaks. My heart has a song which it sings to her Beloved, and He has a song for me. I feel that I must be His, for nobody stirs my soul as He does.

Dear friends, if you know that this is so, be happy in His love. See to it that you live wholly to Him, and for Him. As you have a good hope that He is altogether yours, *be* altogether His. Honor Him in your families, and honor Him in the outside world. Serve the Lord wherever you are, whether you are most found in the kitchen, the parlor, the workshop, the street, or the field.

Make it your delight that you are reserved unto Him. Acknowledge that the vows of the Lord are upon you. You are His sister and His spouse—give Him love in both forms—find in Him, Brother and Bridegroom. You are His garden enclosed, His spring shut up, His fountain sealed—then yield your all to Him, both of fruit and flow, of work of hand and warmth of heart. Be yours the honor, the bliss of being altogether your Lord's.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 15

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—663, 658

DEAR FRIENDS—I have issued this sermon rather than the discourse of last Lord's-day, because I am greatly occupied by preparing for the Conference of the ministers who have been educated in our College. They come together on Monday, the 18th, and spend the week in holy convocation. Will my sermon readers pray that the Lord may be with us?

On Wednesday evening, April 20th, is *the Annual Supper for the College*, when friends are accustomed to aid our funds largely. Will not some who cannot be present nevertheless cheer me by sending aid?

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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.