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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on
Sunday morning 30.1.75

Hymns: 23, 933, 187

Reading: Proverbs 8

Text: Song of Solomon 1.4

"Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee."

This beautiful Song of Solomon, appears to bring to light the experience of the church of God in general and a particular person's experience. To a great point the Song is an experience of the comfort and joy the church has in her union with Christ and her sense of unworthiness, being as she records it, black; "Look not upon me, because I am black"; not because she did not want the Lord, her Beloved, to look upon her, but this is a confession of her unworthiness that He should do so. What a wonderful thing it is for you and me that the Lord comes over our unworthiness and blesses a poor sinner who may not feel to have any more religion than the publican's prayer.

The Song records an experience that seems to unfold itself in three particular aspects. First of all there is a sense of her unworthiness "I am black" she says "Look not upon me"; although indeed that was just what she wanted. It may seem a strange kind of confession, but the Lord's dear people always pray for what they feel to lack, and desire and confess their unworthiness that any regard should be paid to them. If our desire is here we have a religion that will take us to heaven. "Draw me, we will run after thee". According to the verses here the prayer was soon answered, for she says, "The king hath brought me into his chambers". It is not "Draw me, we will run after thee", then it may be that thou wilt bring me into Thy chambers, but "The king hath brought me into his chambers". When the Lord blesses a poor sinner it does not stop him praying, but he does not know how to get low enough and can understand the language of the Song here, "Look not upon me, because I am black". The

first point here is the prayer "Draw me, we will run after thee". It is noticeable that she does not seem to make up her mind to do this of herself but she prays unto her beloved to draw her - "Draw me". What do you know about this? It seems to have one or two features in it, and one of them is there is life in the soul. I do not suppose any person is likely to wait upon the Lord for the Lord to draw him or her near to Himself that is dead in trespasses and sins. What does the world care about these things - nothing whatever - and why do we? Is it not because the Lord has had regard to us and brought us to feel our lost condition, our dependence upon His mercy, and implanted in our poor hearts a desire for His company. It is a poor religion where there is no longing desire for Christ. There may be moral religion, but this is an experience of a living soul, there is life in the soul. "Draw me, we will run after thee", not I can do it when I wish, or when I feel like it, but it is a confession of dependence upon the Lord. "Draw me" - one feels to be a long way off. Perhaps you can come in here some of you, "Draw me", I feel so far off, so distant, so hard, so cold, "Draw me". It is very expressive; there may be some of you here who have come to chapel like this; not, I will go to the service and that is all it will trouble me; it is Sunday and I had better go to the service somewhere. If there is life in your poor soul you will know something about this - "Draw me". It does not say draw us and we will run but "Draw me, we will run after thee", not draw me and I will run after thee though that of course can be properly applied. It is a great mercy, beloved friends, to have a religion that cannot be satisfied without Christ, and there is a blessing pronounced upon those who hunger and thirst after Him; but no blessing is pronounced upon those who feel they can do without Him. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness"; that is actually the blessing of the precious Gospel, not hunger and thirst after self righteousness, but for an interest in Christ who is the Lord our Righteousness.

"Draw me, we will run after thee". This indicates not only life in the soul but light in the understanding of a person. You know what you want, what you desire, you know what you lack and you may know how far off you are. I wonder how you have come to chapel. Have you come waiting upon the Lord for a crumb of mercy - it does not matter whether it is in the hymn, or the reading, or something the poor minister may say, as long as you get a crumb of mercy. I felt a little softening in the singing of the hymn 23 - "That same dear Man in heaven now reigns
That suffered for our sake."

It seemed so sweet. It is the same dear Man Who assumed our nature and suffered, bled, and died upon the cross that is now in heaven, that same Man, that same body. His disciples saw Him go up, it is not like that with us; but with the dear Redeemer it was necessary in the decrees of God that His risen body should be in heaven - there it is and will be and these three features seem to constitute the main doctrines that we hold - His incarnation; in the fulness of time He was born at Bethlehem. O blessed Bethlehem when we can view it like this. I know we notice it more or less periodically but there is no profit in it if it is merely a formal matter. It is sweet when one has a sight of the blessed reality, whatever time of the year it is, if He shall reveal Himself in your soul, He reveals Himself as your Saviour. He was born at Bethlehem, assumed your nature to stand in your place, bore your sins away, rose again and ascended up into glory. "Draw me" Lord, I feel such a long way off; so many things seem to come between; my mind is so taken up with mundane things, and to some point it is necessary for things to be attended to in our lives and vocations in life; but it may be like this sometimes that in your heart although you have to be taken up with the concerns of this life - "Draw me" Lord, I feel so far off, so cold, so hard. It is a wonderful mercy to have a religion in which you cannot do without Christ. Helpless, dependent, to Thy cross I cling.

This is a prayer - "Draw me, we will run after thee". There is sure to be an effect if the Lord is at work in your poor heart, He will empty you from vessel to vessel, bring you to feel what you need, make you wait upon Him for it; and we shall not have much peace in our souls until we hear from Him. Is this in your religion, "Draw me"? There is a sense of distance in this, you are a long way off. How many of us can say we are where we would be in that sweet communion with the Lamb? But this is a desire and it appears to be answered as you can see, although the language is figurative, "the king hath brought me into his chambers". There is a beautiful connection you see. This is an answer to the prayer, the King has answered it, no one else can, no minister can, only as the Lord might be pleased to use him as an instrument. "The king hath brought me into his chambers". There is something so sweet about it. Here is the poor thing feeling a long way off; here is a poor, dark, cold soul longing to feel something. "Draw me", he says, and this may seem to be as far as his religion can go - "we will run after thee". There is no doubt about that. In the prophecy by Jeremiah we find the Lord saying, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". What kind of a poor sinner is it that is brought like this? "Draw me, we will run after thee". He is one who was loved with an everlasting love. What a profound thought it is, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore - because of this - with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". This lovingkindness seems to be the Lord's favour to us in our trials, our hard things, our bitter things, He comes into them, it is the lovingkindness of the Lord as we have it so beautifully in one of our hymns - this lovingkindness. They are loved with an everlasting love, they are loved from all eternity in the blessed covenant of grace and that is demonstrated by His lovingkindness. It is the Lord's dealings with your poor soul that are the proof of His love to you.

"Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". You may look at some things, some trials, some disappointments, and things that may come into your life in different ways and say, I cannot see any lovingkindness in this trial, this disappointment, this loss, this hard or bitter thing; but even so there is because of His love to thee, therefore with lovingkindness He has drawn thee, supported thee.

"Draw me, we will run after thee : the king hath brought me into his chambers". This appears to be the second feature in the subject, the prayer is answered, He has responded to the desire of one here, "Draw me"... "the king hath brought me into his chambers". Attached to the temple, as you know, were a number of chambers all round about it but they were part of the temple. They were places where at times communion was held with different people. In a spiritual sense here by the chambers we may understand that spot and place where the Lord brings His people into a feeling sense of His lovingkindness and mercy to them. Old Testament customs differ from ours, but that makes no difference to the truth and value of the Scriptures. There are chambers, it does not say just one. The Lord has answered the prayer here, "Draw me", and brought the poor sinner into His chambers. But what may we understand by this? I would understand that as these chambers were part of the temple in the olden days so are they places where the Lord brings His people to hold communion with them. They are chambers of communion. "He hath brought me into His chambers" to commune with me, to hold some fellowship with Christ.

We may take it like this first of all, there is the chamber of peace. The Lord said to His disciples "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you". I do not know if you can understand me, but there may have been times when you have been in some trouble, some difficulty, in some painful thing, something that may have tried your faith and brought you into a state of confusion; but the Lord has appeared to you in it; He has brought into your heart a sweet peace, a quietness, He has brought you into this chamber of

peace, He has brought a quietness into your soul, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee". You are in the chamber then, I know it can be like this, I know how true it is, that however disturbed you may be because of some circumstance, or difficulties, the Lord may have graciously appeared to you and brought such a sweet peace into your heart that has enabled you to cast your care upon Him, and put your trust in Him, cast your burden upon Him. You have been trying to carry it yourself and made the difficulty greater than ever perhaps, but now He has taken it from you, brought a peace; you have been in the chamber of peace.

Another of these chambers is the chamber of His love. This is the front room in the chambers. It is a beautiful chamber where the Lord meets with His people and sheds His love abroad in their hearts. Also there is the chamber of hope. You are in troublesome difficulties in your life, in your circumstances, but the Lord appears to you, brings a word into your heart, it is the King that does it. "The King hath brought me into His chambers", not a distant relative, but the King. There is something very sweet, He has answered your prayer and this is a chamber of His peace, of His love to you poor unworthy sinner. There is a chamber of hope too. There are a number of chambers, more than I can mention, but they constitute the experience of a living, exercised child of God, "Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers" and if the King brings you in, no-one can keep you out, His Word is with power, there is a subjection to His divine blessed will. "The king hath brought me into His chambers".

Is this not profoundly sweet? The king hath brought me into His chambers, the chamber of peace, the chamber of His love, the chamber of hope, the chamber of divine support and most particularly the chamber of communion. These are those who stand in a union with Christ. The Lord's dear people all stand in the same union, all are loved with an everlasting love as we have it recorded in the divine purpose of God. They are in a union that nothing can break.

"In union with the Lamb,
From condemnation free"

No, all the devils in hell can never break that union, but you are not always in that sweet frame of mind when you are having communion with Him, are you? O, far from it, say you; I seem corroded with things that drag me away from where I would be, I am not what I would be, nor where I would be. What do you need, poor thing? You need the King to get hold of you and bring you into His chambers. He does not drive you with a whip, He brings you with a sweet touch of His love. He has the power to do it. A poor minister might try to encourage His people, a friend might try to encourage another, and not be able to accomplish it; but this King has power to accomplish it. "The king hath brought me into his chambers". This is a blessed experience that sometimes the Lord's people are favoured with.

In the text is another chamber - a chamber of joy. "We will be glad and rejoice in thee". Now I know the Apostle Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always" but can you manage that? Would you say 'I sing a lot of lovely hymns', so you may; but you need something more, you need the Lord to draw you into this chamber of joy, sweet joy. "We will be glad and rejoice in Thee", if the King, King Jesus brings you into these chambers He will fill your heart with peace and love and joy. What a joy it is! It is said that the children of Israel had great joy and sang praises to the Lord when they were brought back and established in their own land. We do not know much about this joy. It is not a natural joy, but the joy of the soul when a little communion is felt in the heart with the King of kings - O mercy of mercies - when these two parties come together. If the Lord is pleased to come and favour you and melt your heart a little with a sense of His goodness He has brought you into His chamber. Has there ever been anything of this? O, say you, I long for it, but I do not feel I can say much about it.

It is an experience, He brings you in and it may be you confess your unworthiness as the church here did. "I am black...

as the tents of Kedar", as the curtains of Solomon". Black but comely; so in a sense there was something very comely about this blackness. How can these two things be connected? How does a poor sinner come to Christ? Burdened with his sin and guilt and feeling such a sense of his unworthiness. He is black, not has a spot somewhere - he is black - but comely. "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar", that were all begrimed with the dirt in the desert; "as the curtains of Solomon" that were a wonder for people to look upon. But the black tents and the grand curtains were linked together in the same person and you will feel them both in your own soul's experience when the Spirit of the Lord convinces you of sin and discovers to you your ruined condition. You have to say "I am black"; but when the Lord by His good Spirit comes and brings a sense of pardon, reveals to you the loveliness of Christ the Mediator, His righteousness, you say "I am comely", beautiful to look upon. You are black in yourself but comely in Christ; that is where all beauty is. He is "the chiefest among ten thousand", the altogether lovely.

What a beautiful Song it is if there is life in your soul. Sometimes I have known people to have lived in this Song when the favour of the Lord has been with them for a while. There are these confessions of the church, of her admiration of her Lord which I have mentioned sometimes; "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood so is my Beloved among the sons". There is only one tree in the wood if you are lively in your soul and that is the apple tree. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste". "He brought me to the banqueting house". How it links with my subject, "The king hath brought me into his chambers" "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love". "I sat down under the apple tree", - that is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. I sat down under the shadow of it. "Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee". Amen.