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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at Ebenezer, Clapham  
Wednesday evening, 28th May, 1952

Text: "My Beloved is mine and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."  
Song of Solomon 2 v.16,17

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I have, as some of you may remember, attempted some consideration on the last Lord's Day of the 16th verse, and so deeply have I felt the nature of that language, that it has been with much conflict and soul exercise that I have ventured into the pulpit with it; so that I feel moved to say that, although there may be some here who may not feel that they could lay claim to such a relationship, it does not thereby imply that the relationship does not exist. It may be in this way; if in your own feelings you are ever favoured to feel a spark of real love to the dear Son of God who shed His precious blood to redeem your soul, then He must be your Beloved. Then surely there are some here who could witness at least to moments when a once crucified but now risen and exalted Saviour has been supremely attractive. And have you ever felt that you could say of Him "Thou are fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into Thy lips; therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever."? Not only hath God blessed Him for ever - and you will bless Him for that - but He has done such great things even for you. Truly it must be an amazing consideration

"That worms of earth should ever be  
One with incarnate Deity."

Yet it is in this ineffable union that all believers stand. They stand in Him, and are therefore free from condemnation.

It is a wonderful moment in the experience of a vessel of mercy when he can humbly say "My Beloved is mine and I am His." Mine to save my never-dying soul, mine to redeem me from hell, mine to wash my guilty stains away; mine to bring me up from the pit of corruption; mine to remove my filthy rags; mine to make me complete in Him; mine to bring me through this wilderness; and mine to receive me to the realms of eternal bliss. "'And I am His." His to serve, His to obey, His to follow, His to love. As I hinted on the Sabbath Day, where the first applies, the second applies too. Jesus cannot be your Jesus unless you are His child. While some of you, I realise, must feel that such language is far beyond you, yet, if that is the case and your soul is exercised upon that point, what would make you happy? Would it not be to hear the Saviour's voice speaking that relationship into your heart and affirming that He is your best Beloved? You would not have me to bring the standard down, would you?"

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but rather seek that you might be brought to it, to enjoy the comfort, the peace, the joy, the prospect, that such a relationship infers.

The Gospel has a wonderful fulness. It is perfectly complete and nothing can possibly be added to it and nothing taken from it. Every subject of divine grace, whatever they may feel of themselves, is complete in Him. It is true that they have a completeness that pertains to them as natural persons. We all have, whether children of God or not, in that we are all completely fallen by nature. We are completely ruined, completely lost, completely separated, completely dead; and nothing short of divine, sovereign, invincible grace can rescue us from such a helpless condition, in which we must perish for ever. But the free, unmerited, sovereign love of a covenant-performing God in Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost means that if we are His children, though in ourselves completely lost, we are completely saved, we are complete in Him, complete in His love, complete in His purposes, complete in His wisdom. If the Holy Ghost were to reveal this Saviour in our souls, how our hearts' affections would flow towards Him! He is lifted up, lifted up before the eye of faith. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

I do not purpose to go over the ground that I ventured upon on the Sabbath, but for a moment just to consider this, "He feedeth among the lilies." Who does? My beloved does, who is Himself described as the rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, that is to say as the Bridegroom of His chosen Bride, who has beauties that can never have a parallel. He is the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, is this best Beloved. It is under His shadow that His people sit down and receive of His sweet, reviving, refreshing fruits. But we have to realise that figures, descriptive figures, are used in this song, and all to set Him forth and to illustrate the fact that there are surpassing excellencies in Him. But there are excellencies also in His Bride. How beautiful! "among the lilies" - that is to say, He comes down, condescends to come down into the garden of His grace, the Church, and to commune with His children, to walk among them, to enjoy their company, to speak with them as it is so beautifully expressed later in the song, "Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits. I am come into My garden, my sister, my spouse." Now we may understand, I believe, by this descriptive figure, that believers are compared to lilies with whom the Redeemer comes and feeds. He feeds among the lilies. It does not say that He feeds upon them actually, but He feeds among them. That is to say, He comes among them by His gracious presence and receives what they have to give, and they receive what He has. It is so evidently the great desire of the Church in the first chapter where she says "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul

loveth, where Thou feedest, where thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon."

There will be a feeding then, and this is a receiving of what is given mutually. "He feedeth among the lilies." But how can they be so described? They may be so compared for their purity. The lily, you see, is so pure in its colour. It is not spoiled by anything. It is just in its innocent, native purity. So it is with the Church of Christ in her union with her Beloved. He says so and it is a wonderful word: Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." A wonderful truth this, but how can it be so? Does she not say "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me."? Yes, but not in her union with her Beloved. That sinful defilement is removed, and she is seen to be clothed in the righteousness which He has provided for her. She is not only pure in this sense, but may be so described for her beauty, as it is in the 45th Psalm: "Hearken O daughter, and incline thine ear, 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." I believe that it could be said that her beauty consists very largely in that worship. "He is thy Lord and worship thou Him." Truly the Church in this sense is never so attractive as when in the dust before Him, adoring the riches and the wonders of His grace and love towards her and putting the crown upon His head. It is sweet to worship, and in worship the different exercises of grace are brought forth and mingle together. Here it is in this holy exercise that He reveals Himself in His own beauty and receives of her graces and accepts them, eats His pleasant fruits and feeds among the lilies. May they not be so compared for fragrance? There is the smell which we frequently read of in this song. "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb, honey and milk are under Thy tongue and the smell of thy garments is as the smell of Lebanon." There is a wonderful scent, a fragrance, a sweet smell, and when He comes down and feeds among the lilies, His children, their faith is fixed on Him and their affections are towards Him and His affection towards them. There is a mutual flowing together, a one-ness, and truly it is a sweet experience. "He feedeth among the lilies." If indeed it should be compared to a visible church, it is a wonderful mercy when the Saviour condescends to come into the garden of a visible church, to receive of their worship in the assembly, to presence Himself with His people, to own His appointments, to command His rich blessing, to sanctify the place, so that the company can say, under the heavenly inshinings of His gracious presence, "Truly this is the house of God and the gate of heaven."

"He feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break and the shadows flee away..." It appears to me, to take the last verse as it stands by itself more particularly, rather than in connection with the 16th verse, like this - "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn my Beloved and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether". Just for a moment I would like to put it like this - "Until the day break and the shadows flee away", that is, until the shadows of change and trouble and affliction and darkness and suffering flee away, and the dawn of heaven breaks upon my soul, turn my Beloved until that time, until the day break, turn my Beloved, not turn away from me, but turn towards me. O, it is a wonderful thing to have grace enough to be discontented and miserable without Him. O the attraction! Turn my Beloved, as though He were quite a distance away just then. Perhaps He is. Perhaps some of you here feel like that, as though He were right over some way away from you, beyond the mountains of Bether, that is the mountains that separate us, mountains of division, the mountains that hide Him from our view, the mountains that cause these dark shadows. Is it like that with you? What then, what is your plea? This, you see, is such an affectionate appeal, as though, if anything would move Him, an appeal to the affections of His heart would. "Turn my Beloved." Not, 'Turn, the Beloved of the Church', though that is true; but "Turn my beloved." O, are there some here who really long for the light of His countenance? Are there such as say in their hearts "Turn my Beloved"? Why do you want Him to turn towards you? Because He is your Beloved. If He were not your Beloved He could go where He liked. If he were not your Beloved would you desire His company? Would His presence be so enjoyable? No "Turn my Beloved." It is His face you want to see, as Rutherford says,

"The bride eyes not her garment,  
But her dear Bridegroom's face."

Whatever you had, if you had not Him with it, of what value would it be? Turn my Beloved! It is an affectionate appeal, an earnest plea. Turn, be with me, be near me, keep me close to Thy wounded side. Keep close to me, my Beloved, until the day break, until that wonderful morning come when I shall see Thee without a veil between. Here we see through a glass darkly, and very darkly too. For the most part our Beloved seems very far away from us. But do we want Him? Would it be your greatest joy if He would come in response to this appeal and touch your poor heart with His love? Turn my Beloved! It is an anxious look at Him, an anxious pressing look, a longing desire to embrace Him in the arms of faith. It is what you would desire Him to do, to turn and come over the mountains of Bether, the mountains that divide us. You don't want

anything between, do you? If you really love Him in a desire, O you would, as exercised, remove everything that might hinder His coming. And O, how sweet are the embraces of faith when He comes! Turn my Beloved. It is such an intimate appeal. Why, it would move anyone's heart, wouldn't it?

"O come Thou much expected Guest!"

That is it. Turn my Beloved! Lord Jesus, quickly come! Quickly, not any time will do. Come like a roe or a young hart. It does not take them long to get over the mountain pass. They are swift and sure of foot. But it does not take Him long, either. No, He can come, and mercifully He does come, over the mountains of Bether, and like a roe for swiftness comes and touches the tender chord of your heart with His sweet embraces, puts His hand in through the hole of the door. "I rose up to open to my Beloved; my Beloved put His hand in by the hole of the door" He had just come over those mountains of Bether. There He is, just in the doorway. He puts His hand in. O, it is so expressive! He puts His hand in by the hole of the door as much as to say "You called for Me. I am here. My bowels were moved for you." Is that altogether strange? Have there not been moments when a word has broken your heart, or just a faint sight of Him through the lattice, a putting His hand in through the hole of the door? "And my hands dropped with myrrh and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock." O, there was that about Him that moved her very soul's feelings in attractiveness. Why? Because He was her Beloved. If not, He might go away again. Is it strange? "My bowels were moved for Him." I wish I could express it. But you might be lying upon your bed and find your heart softened, and it may be a trickling tear. Why? His hand is by the hole of the door, not far away. "Turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bether."

"Until the day break" - this is one point then, it is an appeal to our best Beloved to be very close to us, not to keep far away on the other side of the mountains, but very close, until the day break. There will be no more shadows then. For the last shadow will be the shadow of death and there will be no shadows after, the day will break then, an eternal day. But there are one or two other things. 'Until' indicates a certain time or period when there will be a breaking of day. This is like saying "O Lord, help me to hold on until the shadows flee away, the shadows that cover my poor dark soul. Help me to hold on until I shall see Thy hand in the hole of the door, in other words, help me to hold on and press my case until the day break and the sweet heaven of Thy smile dawn upon my poor dark soul, until the day break and the shadows flee away." Some look upon this as applicable to the Jewish dispensation, before the

Saviour came in the flesh, and so it is according to the Scripture, for we read that the Law was a shadow of the good things to come, that is, the shadow of heavenly things. But when the angel appeared to Mary saying "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" the shadows fled away. When the dear Redeemer came, He was the Anti-type of all types and the substance of all shadows. It was a long, weary time of shadows, there was no perfection, but when the Saviour was born at Bethlehem it was the breaking of the Gospel day and the shadows of legal bondage fled away. "Until the day break and shadows flee away.

Then there is just this point - the dark conflict of the soul through which one passes in that secret pressing after a revealed Saviour, the long weary period of uncertainty, bondage, darkness, fear, doubt and temptation, like a lot of shadows these all flee away when the day breaks upon the soul, when the beloved Redeemer says, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." Or this - "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Are the shadows dark and thick? If so, O that the day might break upon your soul. It would be a wonderful day. Then it is, as I have already hinted, the shadow of death, and as we read in the 23rd Psalm, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Still, in itself death is a dark shadow; there is no curse in it for a believer, but still it remains a divine appointment. It is a shadow, the shadow that hangs over us all, more or less; but when the last breath is drawn and the redeemed spirit is free from its tenement of clay and appears before the throne of God, the day has broken and every shadow has gone for ever, fled away never to return. Then just this, the glorious Resurrection - what a day-break that will be, when in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, it shall be as we read: "The trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Then every shadow will be gone. Then will the day break to the spouse of Christ. And O what a glorious day it will be! "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bether." Amen.

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