

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday 13 February 1935

Text: Song of Solomon 5 v 16

"His mouth is most sweet, yea He is altogether lovely.
This is my Beloved and this is my Friend
O daughters of Jerusalem"

This divine Song teaches us that there is a wonderful familiarity between husband and wife. We have set before us here how infinitely condescending Christ is to His bride, who frequently treats Him basely. I expect the best Christian here will acknowledge that that has been the case often with them. You have not always treated Him as you should have done, have you? You have not always responded to His condescending knock at the door of your heart. Too easy you have been, too fond of the bed of ease and too pleased with what you thought were clean feet. And you declined to rise at His knocking. You could even tell Him what you had done; put off your coat; washed your feet; were comfortably settled in bed. Well, if He were not divine, He would not come again to some of us; if His love could change we should be lost; if His purpose could be altered, we should have no hope, but He wont break His covenant. If the ordinances of heaven, sun, moon and stars could be changed, then, says God, He will cast off His people. But these abiding ordinances say - so is My love to you, so is My covenant with you, I will not leave you. Israel hath not been forsaken of his God, nor forgotten though their land was full of sin. Very solemn, and yet, with all this treatment which He has received at our hands, He comes again and He says "Eat O friends". I have prepared a repast for you, I have prepared My wine, I have killed My fatted calf. Eat, take the gospel again; drink abundantly of My love.

This Song opens, as it has been observed by me, very abruptly. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth". No

introduction of the person, no preface; going straight to the business. I want the Lord; I want a communication from Him; I want to hear His voice. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth" means let Him speak to me, say something to me. Is that what we can say to Him, the Lord of lords? Let Him kiss me, speak to me, say something to me. This removes religion from an easy place, takes off from her bed the bride, because she wants Him. His love to her was better than wine. So it is to you, if you feel it. No love like it, nothing to be compared with it. Eternal, sovereign, free, immutable, is this love. The Lord look upon us.

A wonderful intercourse between Christ and His people we have set forth in this Book. You may feel at times too carnal to open this Book. It does seem to call for a spirituality of mind that it should be read properly; so pure, so holy, so divine; Christ and His bride. And He wont leave her to everlasting silence. On His part He speaks. The daughters of Jerusalem wondered at the earnestness of this bride of Christ because He affected her, He touched her. When He put His hand in by the hole of the door, He left myrrh on the handle, and that affected her heart and brought her off from her bed of idleness, made her willing to move, and she did move, and the virgins wondered at it. You who have been asleep, you who have treated the Lord you profess to know and love as you have done, what is there in Him more than any other beloved? "What is thy beloved more than another beloved O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved that thou dost so charge us?" Why all this ado about Him? You enter into it. Why all this ado about the Lord? And she answers "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood so is my beloved among the sons." I looked on Him, I delighted in Him. "I sat down under His shadow with great delight". He is "white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand". How often have you said that to Him and of Him? Some may say, never. Are you happy in that state? Can you be content? If the Holy Spirit is in you, you are not happy, you are not content. You want Him, and you may say "Tell me O thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock". "Why should

I be as one that turneth aside". "Blessed are ye poor" said the Lord Jesus to His disciples "for yours is the kingdom of heaven". "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." "His head is as the most fine gold" - the Head of His body, the Church. "His locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers. His lips are like lillies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl. His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet". These figures are not what are called hyperbole. Very great, they are not exaggeration. Do not think that. Can there be any description of Christ that is an exaggeration? Can there ever be a statement of Christ in holy writ or in the world that you can call an exaggeration? No! His mouth is most sweet.

The mouth is the means, the way of expressing the heart, the mind, the thoughts, the intention, the purpose of a person. "What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him?" Until a friend expresses to you his thoughts, his wishes, his purposes, they are, to all intents and purposes, non existent to you. When he opens his mouth and says I love you, I care for you, I will provide for you, do anything within my power to make you happy, then you know, by his mouth, his heart. That is what is here. You cannot know the heart, the thoughts, the purposes of Jesus Christ to you unless He opens His mouth and tells you. Very solemn. This cuts away all pretensions to find out God. You cannot find Him out by searching. The knowledge of God is high as heaven. What canst thou know? Deeper than hell; what canst thou do? Dear friends, Christ must speak before He can be known. When He does speak we need an understanding heart to understand what He says, and that understanding heart is His gift. He said to His Father - I have given them the word Thou gavest Me. I have given it to the men Thou gavest Me and they have known that all things whatsoever Thou gavest Me are Thine. They knew it because He taught them.

When He walked with the two disciples to Emmaus, He opened the scriptures to them. That made their heart burn within them. This may be drawn as an inference. You must hear Christ speak to get an understanding and to have a burning in your heart. You cannot pick it up; it must be given to you. I have given them the word Thou gavest Me, and they have known Thee; could not know before. They have known and that is just what you will do when Christ speaks to you. Then you will know.

"His mouth is most sweet". He opens it; He tells secrets. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." The world does not know; He tells His disciples. He has told some of you some things, has He not? Yes, He has made some things known to you. O blessed people to whom Christ opens His mouth and makes it sweet. When He was surrounded by a multitude and His disciples were with Him, we are told by Luke, that He lifted up His eyes on His disciples and said "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven". Was not that sweet to them? What could be compared with that, that Christ should say to His disciples whom He had drawn from their ships and their parents "Blessed are ye poor". Yours now, not ships, not nets, but the kingdom of heaven. That made His mouth very sweet to them and should the Lord say to any of us - you are poor, you are poor in spirit, you are poor in this world, comparatively, if not absolutely. What next? You desire Me; My grace has made you hunger for Me; My grace has taught you that there is a kingdom; you are born again and you can see it; you are born of the Spirit and of water and you believe it, and that kingdom you have seen is yours. O what a mouth Christ has. Grace was poured into His lips. That grace poured into His lips was the Covenant of Grace, the blessed words of God which He was to speak, as He says in the Psalms - I have preached unto them Thy righteousness. I have not hid it in My heart. I have preached it to the great congregation. The Lord gave the word; He does give His word.

"His mouth is most sweet". When He said, as a risen Saviour, to His sorrowing and unbelieving disciples, "Behold Me", what a sight they got of Him. "Behold My hands and My feet" I am that Jesus you saw crucified. "Behold Me". Ah dear friends,

if the Lord Jesus says that to us, His mouth will be very sweet, that is, the communications He makes will be very sweet to us. When they were mourning about His departure from them, He opened His mouth and made a very sweet communication to them. He said "I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice". Again, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am there ye may be also." Could anything be sweeter from the lips of Jesus than that He should tell that to a poor worm of earth? He said you shall have tribulation in this world, but I will be with you and you shall have peace in Me. "His mouth is most sweet".

When His people are in affliction, how sweet His mouth becomes to them as He speaks. He says "If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not" So, if you have on you the chastening hand of God, see what it means - that God is your Father, and Christ your Elder Brother, Intercessor, High Priest, Advocate, King, everything. So when the Lord Jesus is pleased to open His mouth, this is true, it is most sweet; He tells sinners that He loves them. That is an amazement is it not? If the Lord tells you that He loves you, you will hardly be able to bear it, or to believe it. So great, so wonderful, because it is a communication of divine love made to a vile wretch, made to one who sings, perhaps sadly sometimes, that his guilt is as black as the confines of hell. Yet Jesus will make this communication, speak this great word "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

"This is my Friend." He makes some communication to you which will make you say "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." When you feel lost, out of the way, and do not know which way to take, how to turn yourself here or there, He may say to you "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." Can anything be sweeter than that to a poor wanderer who feels, perhaps, that he has lost the way, out of the way altogether. Now the Lord comes to him in the sweet, gracious, powerful communication, and as it were says "Fear not" you are not going the wrong way. "I am the Way". Walk up and down in My Name. That makes the heart glad. You ask who our beloved is. Ah poor

creature, you look on, and say, who is this that you boast of? Who is this you make such an ado about? Who is this you talk about as being your beloved, the chiefest among ten thousand? O, says the bride, He is my beloved Jesus and He speaks to me, and I have heard His voice. "His mouth is most sweet". His communications and sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. They revive my faith; they strengthen my hope; they excite and warm my love; they draw out my confidence. Sweet are the words of the Lord Jesus. He said to Abram "I am thy shield and exceeding great reward". A shield implies an enemy or some danger, and the Lord says (does not say you have got no danger) but He says when you are in danger "I am your shield, I am your exceeding great reward". You have left your father's house, you have forgotten your own people according to My commandment, and now I will not leave you. I will be a shield to you in the rough way, the dangerous way you have to travel and I will be your great reward at the end, for I give you a kingdom that fadeth not away; I reserve it for you. Now while you are in the wilderness it shall not fade; your interest in it shall not die. "His mouth is most sweet" when a poor, tried child of God wonders how he will come to the end and is afraid he may fall short as Paul says "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." This poor child of God says, I am afraid I shall come short. Then Jesus says this - I will never leave you, I will never forsake you. What can be compared with this for sweetness? O how acceptable it is, how it moves the affections, how it draws out the confidence of a poor, trembling, soul. Even he gets so bold as to sing

Yes, I to the end shall endure
As sure as the earnest is given
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven

Do you covet this? Do you say "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth?" Do you cry to Him - Lord let some of that grace that was poured into Thy lips without measure fall into my heart. Remember, the grace was not poured into His lips for Him to keep and never dispense. It was given to Him to speak. The

words My Father gave Me I speak; the righteousness which I came to work out, I am to preach, and will preach in the great congregation. So Jesus makes this known. This meets hungry people, thirsty people. "Ho everyone that thirsteth" - this is the Lord speaking - "come ye to the waters". Then you object because you are poor and have no money. Legal pride this, legal pride coupled with sad ignorance; but He meets it. O what a mercy it is, let me say by the way, that He is not offended with these things in us. So He meets the case and He says "buy wine and milk without money and without price," What a paradox. You have no money, come and buy "buy wine and milk without money and without price." Forsake your way, your legal way; forsake your things, your inability and all these things; forsake your prejudice against sovereign grace and eat and drink. "Eat O friends". The Church calls Him her Friend; He calls His people, His friends. "Eat O friends and drink, yea drink abundantly O beloved."

He says one thing, I would like to have realised soon in my own case, if it were His will. I hope that I may, with some of you who have seen His beauty. "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty" But what will it be to see Him without the weary veil of the flesh? O what will it be? Here we are burdened in this tabernacle; we are burdened, burdened with mortality, sin procured; burdened often with guilt; burdened with many vile affections; burdened with worldliness and cares. Oh but to be free. Do you look forward to it sometimes? In my early days I had not so much thought of this as I have now. Sometimes I think O I would welcome the summons. It would be a glad sound as I feel sometimes. Come away from the mountains; come away from the lions' den; come away from the cares of this life; come away from your burdensome mortality; come away from your sinfulness; come away from your disposition to sin.

When He promises help, it is a sweet thing, is it not? When He promises to guide with His eye, it is a sweet thing, is it not? When He says He will support you, that is very sweet. When He says "I will help thee", that is very sweet. And all these sweet things come from His mouth, that is to say, He communicates

them; they are in His heart, as are His people, and He communicates these great things to them. Paul, in that chapter from which I quoted, "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him", says "Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." What? He makes them known. Well that man is rich who has got one word from the mouth of Christ; one gospel word has heaven in it, not to the experience of the person who hears it; the one word makes him long for another. But a single, merciful, message that Christ sends has heaven in it.

Well, dear friends, He said to His disciples, "Lift up your heads for your salvation draweth nigh", and the Apostle Paul has the same in the spirit of it "Lift up your heads". O what a word, for Christ to come to a drooping heart, to a burdened soul to one in affliction and trouble and perplexity - Lift your head up. The Psalmist had this mercy; he was cast down and mercy came. I believe he got a communication from heaven even while he was deploring his depression, saying "Why art thou cast down O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" Just as if the Lord dropped some good word into his heart or gave him a bright inshining from the very Person of Jesus, he turned round and said to his soul, "Why art thou cast down?" What reason hast thou for this depression? Unbelief would say, I have got plenty of reason. "Why art thou cast down?" I am a sinner. "Why art thou cast down?" I am guilty. "Why art thou cast down?" I am burdened. Faith says, "Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

All this does declare sweetly that the mouth of the Lord Jesus is most sweet. Is not it sweet when He says to a sinner "Thou art Mine. I have redeemed thee." O what a sound - a captive, a slave, a poor wretch in chains, chains of legality and fear and bondage - for the Lord to come and say "I have redeemed thee, thou art Mine;" for one who is utterly without any goodness, for Christ to come and bring His righteousness and mercy. He takes our badness and gives us His goodness; takes our rags and gives us His spotless robe. If one asks you (when you are making some, I was going to say, noise, about Christ,

saying there is none but Jesus can do me good; no refuge have I but the Lord; no hope have I but that which is derived from Him) what do you make such a noise about Him for; what is there in Him more than another (and the modernist does ask such questions) you, by faith, say - my beloved is God, God incarnate; my beloved was hanged on the tree, the accursed tree; He took my sin away. Then my beloved opened a fountain, a living fountain to cleanse and to refresh. This is my beloved; He is altogether lovely; this is my Friend. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Can you say it? Sometimes you can say it. You look around; nothing here to be my inheritance; nothing here to enrich me; nothing here to give me solid satisfaction. And who is in heaven? Angels, elect angels, spirits of just men made perfect. These are all in heaven. Yes, but there is one above them all, the King in His beauty. This is my beloved. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth" for "His love is better than wine".

Now I have made these observations on this first clause of this beautiful scripture, His mouth. I have described His person; He communicates good to my soul and I find that His communications are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. What is this to us? How many of us are able, out of an experience, to say - we know that His mouth, the means of communication is most sweet, sweet to us; sweet to the conscience; sweet to the heart; sweet to the will; sweet to the understanding. May the Lord grant we may understand what this is.

AMEN.