

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 17 February 1935

Text: Song of Solomon 5 verse 16

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

In response to the enquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem as to why the Church made so much ado about her husband, her beloved, she gives a description of Him which we have from the 9th verse. That description may appear to some not to be at all, in some particulars, proper. To the pure, everything is pure, but to the unbelieving nothing is pure. The last verse, about which I have spoken twice, is a beautiful description of what the church knew concerning Him, that "His mouth is most sweet". Not theoretically did she say this, but experimentally, for she had heard Him; she had received His testimony, and had felt the power and tasted the sweetness of His communications. Then she proceeds to declare that entirely He is lovely, altogether lovely, a truth which every child of God sooner or later becomes experimentally acquainted with. He is so to the seeker, the daughters of Jerusalem, seekers. And to them, as they see Him in Holy Scripture, and as they get faith's views of Him, given by the Holy Spirit, they see in Him loveliness, and long to partake of what He has, of what He is. O it is great to know Christ, wonderful to know Him. It swallows up all trouble, in the sense of trouble being destructive; it takes away all the destructive nature of affliction; it removes all the untoward appearance of affliction. The rod is profitable; afflictions are good tokens for good, evidences of the love of God. When you get Christ in the revealing light and power of the Holy Ghost, you will say what I have just said was not half the truth. No living tongue can adequately express the loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ, but one thing is certain, as the Father is pleased with Him, so you are pleased with Him, when He is seen by faith.

After this comes a declaration. She has described Him, her beloved; now she comes to a personal application of Him. This is my beloved. I have told you about Him, now I declare to you my relationship to Him; He is my beloved. O when you get this, when the Holy Ghost brings this, when you can say "He loved me and gave Himself for me"; when you can say, I have seen the Lord; He has spoken to me; He has shown Me His hands and His feet and His side, and I have had communion with Him, for when He spoke to me my heart melted; "This is my beloved."

Now there are two remarks I would make here. The first is, this is the language of faith. Second, this is the language of experience. Faith lays hold of a revealed Christ, revealed in two ways; first in Holy Scripture. You will always find when the Lord teaches you that His word will be a living word in your soul and Holy Scripture descriptions of the Lord Jesus, holding Him forth in this and that character, in this and that particular work of His, you will find in your very heart and soul. Faith is a wonderful grace; very remarkable in the gift of it and in the working of it, is faith. It is as much God's creation in the soul as the work of the creating of the world was God's work. "My beloved". He was God's beloved. Think of that in connection with your experience. He was God's beloved and He is. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." When your faith embraces Him you lay hold of Him as the church did here. She said when I found Him I held Him, I would not let Him go. When you get hold of Him you will want to keep Him, and although eternal wisdom ne'er designed to give you always joy, you will find that you want to keep Him. Woe unto us, that very quickly the hold of Him lessens. Some worldly care, some corruption will make you feel desolate. Yet the beloved is attractive and you want to lie before Him, taste that He is gracious, again, and to say in your heart "He is my beloved." O what a King is your beloved, what a Priest is your beloved, what a Prophet is your beloved. Full of all goodness, of infinite merit, of divine compassion, is this beloved of the people of God. Faith says there is no good elsewhere; this is the refuge for sinners; this is the hiding place for all in trouble. Here is the fountain of life for dead things; here is the fountain

opened for sin and for uncleanness, for all whose defilement has made a bar between them and their beloved and so they go after Him.

In the beginning of this Song, the church says, "draw me". She knew something of His drawing power and so, lacking it at the moment, she says, "draw me we will run after Thee". The Psalmist felt that. He said "I will run in the way of Thy commandments". When? Why, when God enlarged his heart. That is just how it is today. When you get enlargement in your heart, after Him you will begin to run. Wherever you believe He is you will run there. The disciples thought He was in the grave, and they ran there and found Him not. He came to them and that is what we need and what must be. He comes to His people; He allures them into the wilderness and gives them their vineyards from thence and there they sing. They see Him in the loveliness of His righteousness; "This is the name wherewith he shall be called the Lord our righteousness." Ah that is the dress; that is what in the Revelation is called clean, white linen, which is the righteousness of the saints, and the bride made herself ready for the marriage supper by putting on that clean, white linen. Not your own rags, patched up; not anything that you have washed of your own, even with nitre and much soap. No, the clean - if God calls it clean, it is clean - the clean, white linen. Christ's obedience, perfect; Christ's death, perfect, the Holy Spirit bringing it in a perfect revelation of it, not in measure, but in the thing itself. O what a mercy it is to know the righteousness of Christ. You say Ah He is a beloved Saviour to bring to me that righteousness, to take away my filthy garments and give me this change of raiment. Experimentally it is an amazing thing for a poor wretch, clothed with loathsome rags, brought into the court condemned in his conscience, the devil at his elbow and before God, to accuse him; then the Saviour, the beloved, appears and says "The Lord rebuke thee O Satan". This is Mine, I have bought him with My blood. And He gives a change of raiment. Can you do other than love Him when that is done? "My soul" said one who knew this beloved "shall make her boast in the Lord." The Apostle Paul had this in spirit when he said "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And

when he was told that he must suffer if he went to Jerusalem and they entreated him not to go - what mean ye, he said, to break my heart. I am ready not only to go to Jerusalem but also to suffer, to lay down my life for His sake. And when the disciples, the Apostles Peter and John were forbidden to preach and the others were persecuted, when they were let go they went to their own company and Jesus was there and this we read of them, the suffering ones, they rejoiced, not only that they were counted worthy to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake because He was the beloved of their souls. What is there you would not give up when you have this beloved with you? What is there that you would retain when He, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him, comes to fill you with the fulness of God. "This is my beloved". Oh happy, happy the people who are led here, to stand here and desire to live here, saying here is all my soul needs, here is all the Lord can give. Here would I constantly abide, and every moment live.

"And this is my Friend". It would seem a little more familiar. "This is my Friend". Some of you may be saying, we shall never reach that. You will, if Jesus comes. "My Friend". It speaks several things. First given, it speaks the language of faith. Yes, never will anyone rightly call Him his Friend without faith and if you have got faith and the Spirit gives you a living faith's view of this great God, Jesus, then you will say "this is my Friend". A wonderful word is in the chapter which I read when the Lord Jesus speaking to Mary said "Go, tell My brethren". O what a word for the great God in our nature to say that "Go, tell my brethren, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, to My God and your God". Some of you may be, even at this moment, all but leaping in your hearts with desire for such a word to be given over to you. "My Father and your Father, My God and your God" which intimates the familiarity, the close relationship there is between the Lord's people and their Redeemer. If He is your Friend, you will make some use of Him. What use can you make of Him? Well, you will make use of Him as your great High Priest. He is a Friend in heaven. Christ is the Friend of sinners and He calls them to Himself and by faith they will use His Priesthood, asking Him to speak for them in heaven,

to make intercession for them. They will use Him as their Advocate. They will put their cases into His hands to deal with them seeing they cannot manage themselves. This is what you do when you know that Christ is your Friend. Corruptions will rise and darken your soul and darken the sky of your prospects but though it be so, faith in your heart will begin to speak well of Him and say go to Him. And faith is an obedient grace as we read of the obedience of faith. So when faith obeys the motions of the Spirit and moves according to the state and the desires of the heart, this is the course it takes; it goes to the High Priest of our profession. No acceptance but by that High Priesthood and the sacrifice our great High Priest made; no clearing of the conscience but by this sacrifice; no sustaining of hope but by a sight of that blessed offering by which He perfected for ever them that are sanctified. "This is my Friend." A Friend in heaven. A great thing it is in certain cases to have a friend on earth. That earthly friend may fail you; this Friend in heaven loveth at all times; He is a brother born for adversity and O when you get the adversity of sin, of corruption, of unbelief, of hardness of heart, of many objections against Christ, then to find, by the Holy Ghost, that there is one in heaven who is a brother born for your adversity and you can look on Him as a Friend and go to Him in that familiarity, that is a wonderful experience.

"This is my Friend". It was the church that spoke and God does listen to the churches, visible churches on earth, for they are His, His glory by Christ Jesus world without end. He dwells in the church; "This is My resting place, here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Christ, desiring the church, made up of sinners, and the church desiring Him, and these two mutual desires meet and beget a wonderful experience such as one reads "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write Jesus of Nazareth." Sometimes there is a real, solemn, sweet feeling of influence and movement of faith among the people of God when assembled when one heart goes after Him and another heart goes after Him and He comes to them and when He is pleased to give a word to a minister to speak that influences the people then there is a running after this One the Beloved and the Friend

of their souls. Some of you may stop me here and say but we are not in the church. You may not be in the visible church by profession but you may be in the invisible church by divine life in your soul and that is the thing to notice. To be united to Christ by a living union, a union of life, a union of life I repeat. "I am the vine, ye are the branches". What made them branches? The sap that was in the root. What makes you a member of Christ? The life Christ conveyed to your soul. So this is the church I speak particularly of, yet also the visible church, when poor troubled people meet together and find Christ's word good, fulfilled, "Wheresoever two or three of you are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of you." Oh but the church is not perfect. There were seven churches in Asia and Christ walked in the midst of them and this is a mystery. If you turn to the Revelation you will find that the Lord speaks to John and says - It is given to Him to show the mystery of the seven stars. The seven stars mean the ministry of the gospel and that is a mystery, and the mystery of the seven churches, the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the seven ministers; the seven candlesticks are the seven churches. Well what would the church be without the Beloved and without the Friend, the God Man, Jesus? Nothing but bones, dry bones; nothing better. But when Christ says I am come into My garden My sister, I have come and I have gathered My myrrh with My spices; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk: Eat O friends; He becomes the host. He has got the provision; He brings the provision; He sees these people hungering and thirsting; He hears them confess their unworthiness and their sinfulness. Then He says - Now My friends, eat. Eat what? My flesh. What is the drink? My blood. "Eat O friends and drink, yea drink abundantly O beloved." "This is my Friend". He comes to entertain a sinner, to entertain a church. There is in a church and in a gospel service, when God sends a minister, an influence and it is felt, not by one, but by the church as such. It is felt. "This is my beloved; He has come. "I have come into My garden" I have come to gather My myrrh with My spice and to gather lillies. O what a blessed thing it is to belong to the Lord Jesus.

Now look at the last word "O daughters of Jerusalem". Throughout this Song the daughters are addressed and they are taken to be seekers, and they are all to come into the fold in God's time. One fold and one shepherd. Here is a direct address to them as if the church said - now you seekers this is the Friend you need; this is the beloved you are seeking. O why should you turn aside; there is no centre for you but Christ, no end for you that is good, but Christ. All your misery, your bondage, your sin, your corruptions, He and He alone can take away. "O daughters of Jerusalem". I believe there are some here, I believe there are daughters of Jerusalem here, and if you speak honestly and answer mentally my question, do not you want Him, you will say, O yes. When I say, is He everything to you in your desire; you will say, yes indeed He is; do you wish you could say for yourself "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee", would you not say, yes indeed. O you may say, my soul longs to say that, that He is mine, that I am His. If I were to say to you, do you want His righteousness, has it ever shone in your eyes, have you ever felt a longing to be covered and clothed with that, justified in that; well, you say, indeed I have. And when you read in the scripture or heard in the ministry of the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, what have you thought? Why the hymn will tell you

Plunge me in with Thy own hand
And that will make me well

Well then if these be your answers to my simple questions I will say O daughters of Jerusalem, come to this feast. "Ho everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters and he that hath no money come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Why stand you without. Hart has a good word; he says

Close in with Christ by saving faith
And God's your friend for ever

There are two ways of closing with Christ. The first is when your faith cannot lay hold on Him as you desire. You say there

is none that I long for, none that I seek after, none that my soul desires, but Christ; and there is in that the very nature of closing with Him and I expect that some of you, if you were to speak the truth, and did not deny your right, if you spoke against your corruptions, your objections, if you spoke against every bit of your corrupted reason and all its confusions, you would say, under all, through all, my soul desires Jesus Christ. And if that is so, the day is coming when you will say, I have Him. That is the second way of closing when He comes and the arms of your faith open. You receive Him; you clasp Him in the arms of your faith as the antidote of death, the death of your soul, the death you have often felt in your heart, the death that is often on your affections; all death swallowed up.

O daughters of Jerusalem. The gospel is a wonderful gospel, the glorious gospel of Christ. And Paul speaking of this and speaking of the devil, the god of this world blinding the minds of unbelievers, says "But God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." What a word; may the Lord speak to you daughters of Jerusalem, earnest, simple-hearted seekers, hindered by a sense of sin; hindered by guilt; hindered by the devil; hindered by unbelief. "This is my beloved, this is my Friend O daughters of Jerusalem." I will close with this assertion; if you read carefully, prayerfully, the whole Word of God, the gospel of the grace of God, you will not find one syllable to discourage you, not one.

AMEN.