

"ALTOGETHER LOVELY"

"His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely." Song of Solomon 5:16.

The Song of Solomon is an eastern love-story written under divine inspiration to illustrate the mutual love which exists between Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, and the church, His bride. The four words, "He is altogether lovely," are the epitome or summary of all the graces the spouse gives in praise of her Lord. She has described in detail His various beauties. She now gathers up and condenses all her commendations in this short text, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." That is the quintessence of all that she says in praise of Him. None have ever gone beyond this in their description of Him. Jesus Christ is the only being of whom it can be asserted truthfully, "He is altogether lovely." All other greatness has been marred by littleness, all other wisdom has been flawed by folly, and all other goodness has been tainted by imperfection. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only person in the long annals of time to whom these rapturous words may be applied without the least suggestion of exaggeration. They truthfully describe Him.

Some may think that the language here is somewhat sentimental, especially in relation to a man. We must remember, however, that the Song of Solomon is a love letter. The theme of the book is the love of Christ for His own, the love of the Bridegroom for His bride, the love of the Shepherd for His sheep, and the love of the King for His Queen. Consequently, we find here all the mysteries of love tenderly expressed in terms of glowing affection as the Lord Jesus reveals Himself as the Bridegroom, the Beloved, the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley, the Chiefest among tenthousand, yea, the altogether lovely One.

This chapter contains a conversation between the Bride and the Daughters of Jerusalem. She tells how through her slothfulness she had turned her Lover away from the door. He had been away on a journey and when He returned late at night she had been too lazy to open the door, and when at last she did open it He had gone. The Daughters of Jerusalem, astonished at her anxiety, asked, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" "What is there about Him that makes Him so different, so unique, so wonderful, so superior to all others?" At once, in answer to this challenge, the Bride begins to describe her Bridegroom and she gives a full-length, detailed description of Him, in verses ten to sixteen, and she summarizes her whole testimony in the words, "Yea, He is altogether lovely." Altogether, in every respect, however you view Him, there is nothing about Christ which is not lovely. His perfections are incomparable, and His worth is unparalleled.

With humility I approach this text. It is so high that I cannot attain unto it; it is so deep that my plumb-line cannot fathom it; and it is so broad that I cannot expand it. However, I am comforted with the thought that though I cannot comprehend its measurements, nor weigh its mountains in scales, nor its hills in balances, yet it is all mine by the grace of God.

When you look at Christ from any direction or at any age, you can readily see that "He is altogether lovely." He is lovely beyond comparison. Flaws and faults are found in the best of men. Flaws and faults are found in the rarest of gems. Flaws and faults are found in the fairest of flowers. But in Christ there is no fault at all.

We do not highly regard people who do not see any beauty in God's vast creation; those who are blind to all loveliness in nature; and those who do not have any appreciation of moral perfections. But what of those who see no beauty in Him Who is "altogether lovely"? I invite you to look attentively and lovingly upon Him, and to center the affections of your heart upon Him for there is none like Him in all the world.

There is so much ugliness in this sinful world. God's masterpiece of creation was marred by the ugliness of sin. Wars with their devastating ugliness recur again and again, with all the ugliness of bloodshed, broken bodies, and blighted hopes. Death invades man's castle and steals away his loved ones, leaving behind the ugliness of bereavement. Frightening conditions and appalling circumstances bring the ugliness of despair. It is so good to be able to look away from all of these things and to fasten our eyes on Him Who is able to make the deserts to blossom as the rose, and to transform so much ugliness into beauty. Christ is beauty and loveliness personified. He is the Beloved of all the ages. Abraham, with inspired vision, saw His day and was glad. We, through grace, have entered into His day and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Led of the Holy Spirit, I ask you to think again of the Christ Who laid aside His crown of eternal glory, Who dropped the scepter of omnipotent power from His hand, Who left the bosom of the Father for this world of sin, Who willingly emptied Himself of the divine attributes and clothed Himself with the garments of humanity and was observed as a babe on the bosom of a virgin in Bethlehem.

I. Christ Was Altogether Lovely In His Birth.

Human language is utterly inadequate to describe this event of events. He was born as no other was ever born. The miracle of all miracles was the one which took place when God became incarnate in human flesh. That incomparable event was a fulfillment of what the angel had said unto Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Christ identified Himself with humanity. He was pleased to call Himself "the Son of Man." He claimed to be of the royal line of David. He was "altogether lovely" in His birth. Let human voices repeat it in song, and story, and sermon. Let hearts rejoice the world around. The virgin-born Son of God was "altogether lovely" in His birth.

II. Christ Was Altogether Lovely In His Character.

Our Lord was tempted in all points as we are, but He never sinned. Shrewd men have brought His life under microscopic examination but have never found a single flaw in Him. As all the colors of the spectrum meet and blend and produce a spotless white, so all graces, goodness, purity, and perfections meet in Him and manifest His spotless character. No other person has ever been able to say truthfully, "The Prince of the world cometh and hath nothing in me." No other person could ask, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" As all the stars pale and fade before the absolute purity, the holy virtues, and the eternal perfections of the Son of God. As a mountain towers high

above a grain of sand, so Christ towers above all humanity in His spotless holiness and untainted perfections.

The most bitter enemies Christ ever had never dared accuse Him of any impurity. Nobody ever dared to make a stain on His fair escutcheon. Amid the wrecks that litter the shores of life's sea, the character of Christ stands out like a marble column in the midst of a ruined city.

An outstanding Brahmin scholar, disturbed by the progress of the Christian religion among his own people, determined to do all in his power to combat it. After careful consideration, he decided to prepare a pamphlet for wide-spread distribution, which would set forth the weakness and failings of Jesus Christ, thus exposing the fallacy of believing in Him.

With this purpose in mind, he purchased a New Testament and commenced a careful reading of it. For eleven years he pursued the search for some weakness or inconsistency in the life of Christ. Not only was he unsuccessful, but he was finally convinced that the One Whom he had sought to discredit was none other than the Son of God. He accepted Him as his Saviour and enthroned Him as the Lord of his life, and made a public acknowledgment of his faith in Christ.

Thus it will be with all honest seekers after the truth concerning Christ, for His moral perfection is patent to any candid and unbiased reader of the gospels. In the pages of the four gospels the evangelists solute perfection at every stage of development and in every circumstance and relationship of life. The character of our Lord was without flaw or contradiction. Throughout His earthly life His every virtue remained unsullied. His perfection does not glitter, but it glows. His perfect life attracts and inspires.

III. Christ Was Altogether Lovely In His Self-sacrifice.

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave up the eternal mansions of glory for the manger, the paradise of joy for the Gethsemane of suffering, the scepter of universal power for the ignominious reed, the waters of the crystal sea of life for the vinegar and gall, the crown of glory gemmed and jeweled from heaven's fair mineral fields for the crown of shame and dishonor, and the most glorious throne for the most cruel cross. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The widest sweep of poetic imagination has never scaled the heights of self-sacrifice that the Lord Jesus made, dying on the cross of shame, the just for the unjust, and the innocent for the guilty.

Christ came into the world to suffer in order that we might be saved. He came to do something infinitely greater than merely live an ideal life and teach us how to live it. The birth of the Christ-child in Bethlehem was merely the first step toward the cross of Calvary. His birth was necessary in order that the cross might become a reality in the redemptive program of God.

IV. Christ Was Altogether Lovely In His Desire To Share With Others.

We are coming into the season for sharing with our loved ones. What a delight when the heart of a child is made glad by the gifts received! How the poor

rejoice when friends minister the gifts of food and clothing to them! All who avail themselves of the opportunity of sharing are blessed in doing so. But the generosity of Christ our Saviour is far above and beyond all human kindness. He gave Himself as the ransom for our sins. He gives His presence here to comfort us in our troubles. He has provided for us a home in heaven. Oh, what a welcome when He shall call, "Come ye blessed of My Father," and we shall reach home at last! "He is altogether lovely" in sharing heaven with His beloved.

Let us as Christians resolve to resemble more our Lord as we advance in years. Let us do our best to bring our loved ones and friends, those who are now strangers to His marvelous grace, to Christ and introduce them to Him. He can and will bless those who believe on Him with salvation and satisfaction. Then, when He at last shall receive us, we shall see Him as He is, and we shall say with the writer of our text, "Yea, he is altogether lovely."