

Song of Solomon

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Date: 01 January 1900

Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

- [0 : 00] As the Lord may help me, I will continue again this morning upon the second chapter of the Song of Solomon, reading the second verse.
- As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.
- It will be remembered that last Lord's Day I spoke upon the first verse of this chapter as setting forth the beauty and the fragrance or sweetness of the Lord Jesus Christ as he speaks of himself, to commend himself to the affection and esteem of his church and people, and to convey the sweetness of his name to their hearts.
- For there is nothing better than to have the sweetness and holy fragrance of the name of Jesus Christ conveyed to our hearts in and by his word.
- So he says, I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys. Which, to connect the subject, I will remind you, expresses the beauty and the fragrance of his spirit.
- [1 : 46] His humility of mind, his holiness of heart, and his love, and his grace. There is a spiritual beauty and a spiritual sweetness about the name of the Lord Jesus Christ because it expresses these holy things.
- And that the beauty and sweetness of his name and nature as he was in this world perfumed the righteousness that he brought out for his people's justification.
- It was not only a perfect righteousness with regard to that, it was a perfect obedience to God's law and God's will.
- But it was a righteousness that was fragrant with love, humility, and grace. If it could have been possible for the Lord Jesus Christ to have fulfilled in every jot and tittle, in the spirituality of it, God's holy law, only as a matter of obedience, well, that would have been righteousness, but it would not have been the righteousness that Jesus Christ has wrought out.
- His righteousness is fulfilled with his love, and it is beautiful with his holiness.
- [3 : 30] That his death, his sacrifice for sin, hath in it the sweet-smelling savour of the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley.
- That his heavenly intercession at the right hand of God has also in it the same beauty, fragrance, and glory.
- Now all this, if only the Holy Spirit would give us understanding in it, and the spiritual sense of it would greatly endear the Lord Jesus Christ to us, and attract our esteem to his precious name.
- And whatever does that does us the best good that it can do us. There is nothing more to be desired than that we should have clearer views of Jesus Christ, a higher esteem for his blessed name, and a deeper sense of his sweetness and his love.
- I know so well that no descriptions of these things of Jesus Christ of themselves can ever have that effect upon our heart.

[4 : 53] The Holy Spirit must inwardly reveal to us what is outwardly declared in the word of Jesus Christ.

It is what the Holy Spirit makes known of Jesus Christ in our heart that really affects us. And that does affect us, and affects us spiritually and eternally.

However, I mustn't allow my mind to go back again upon last Sunday's text and subject, but I felt it worthwhile to bring it back upon your minds this morning.

We are not to speak of the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys, one Lord's day, and then for it to pass out of our minds and memories and hearts and feelings afterwards.

But now I must come to the next verse. Here is the word of Jesus Christ concerning his church.

[6 : 07] For throughout this song of Solomon, this song of loves, we must understand by the bride or the beloved the church of Jesus Christ.

She stands spiritually considered in relation to Christ as his bride, and he in relation to the church as the bridegroom.

And the time will come when the marriage union will be consummated in its perfection of holiness and love in heaven itself.

But till then, Christ speaks of his bride as his love. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

Before I attempt to expound what our hope is the true purport of this text, there is one matter I must deal with.

[7 : 17] By the love of Christ, my love, we understand his church. And that his church is as the lily among thorns in this world.

Now, this must be understood in a general sense rather than in a personal one. What I mean is this. There are among the people of this world unquestionably some, perhaps many, who would hardly seem to bear the character of thorns, honour where honour is due, an appreciation where it is called for.

There are many who are kind-hearted, generous, helpful, well-disposed, that wouldn't do anybody any harm, that would do anybody good.

There are such amongst the daughters of this world that's not to be denied, that has often been mentioned. and it is sometimes added to it that such are more kindly disposed sometimes than those who profess the religion of Jesus Christ.

Well, you must make allowances for dispositions. Everyone has their disposition and there are some who naturally are of that kind benevolent disposition and that is all you can say for them.

[9 : 10] There's nothing more than that. There's no spiritual fruitfulness in them. There's no graciousness in their spirit. They bring no honour, no glory to God.

they're indifferent to his name. They have no regard for his word. They feel no love for his truth. But still they're well disposed.

But that doesn't make them to be the Lord's. It has pleased the Lord, perhaps all the more distinctly to show the sovereignty of his grace and how unmerited it is to call some by his grace who naturally have not that kindness of disposition who are difficult as we would say awkward not all that well disposed but it does seem as though God has chosen to call some of that disposition and character to show that it is not because of anything in man that God bestows the sovereign blessings of his grace but those who have that difficult disposition have it and always will more or less in this time state that all that is natural with them comes to its end.

It is to be acknowledged then with appreciation that there are many of this world personally considered who are of a kindly disposition and character good natured and affectionate well disposed but are they all like that?

Are they all like that? Is it characteristic of the ungodly that they are kind well disposed tender spirited affectionate?

[11 : 19] No it is not and you must remember that in this matter our judgment is not to be governed by those that come within our immediate and comparatively narrow circle if you could take in your minds a wide sweep of the world and the world as it is today and you might say well it's a world of thorns thorns there's bitterness war unkindness persecution law pride there's far more of that you set the whole case as it is amongst the ungodly than of kindness and love so that the fact that there are some who are not the lords who are kind and well disposed doesn't make any other than that the church of

God as such in this world as such is a lily among thorns but it isn't only in a general and universal sense that this word is true it is true especially in some cases in a very personal sense there is one perhaps in a community in a family that the Lord is pleased to call by his grace and to bring to repentance and the acknowledging of the truth and to bear witness perhaps by their lives if they do know more to their spiritual feelings and affections and what sort of treatment do they often meet with even in their own immediate circle scorn reproach temptation unkind words and aspersions that's personal and you know that is just as true as it is to say that here and there you will find someone who is well disposed you will find others who are not so so that even in a personal sense in some cases it is true that one who fears the Lord is like a lily among the thorns of those who reproach and despise him well now

I felt I must deal with this point because it is often brought up and needs to be fairly and impartially considered it is not to be taken as a reproach upon the people of God that here and there there are one or another who are difficult and it is not to be taken that the world does not abound with thorns because here and there you will find someone who is kindly disposed otherwise whence have come the persecutions that have been so prevalent and are still going on whence comes the bitterness against the things of God and the ways of truth if it is not because this world is still bringing forth thorns well now this considered may the

Lord help me to expound my text as the lily among thorns so is my love among the daughters and it suggests these considerations first of all here is Christ's regard for his church she is his love there is secondly Christ's description of his church she is as a lily there is thirdly the distinction of Christ's church she is as a lily among thorns as the lily among thorns so is my love among the daughters we we commence with a very beautiful point in the text the church is

Christ's love the church is Christ's love in an special personal way and manner whatever affection there may be in the nature of Jesus Christ in general for all that which is in its nature commendable there is a love in Christ's heart to his church that is a very distinct and a very deep and blessed character Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it now let us consider for a few moments the love of Christ to his church for he speaks of her as my love that is the objective of my love and the love of Christ is in every way a most blessed and a most supreme theme for our consideration the love of Christ to his church be it considered is a love that originates in his own heart towards her entirely the cause of this love to his church and it is a love that while it embraces the church as a whole and the church in every generation as a whole embraces personally every member of that church individually

[18 : 13] I might say that Christ loves every member of his church as though that particular person was the sole objective of his love he loves each one with all the richness and fullness of his greatness of love but with the love that he loves each one he loves all in one spiritual unity the unity of the church which is his body the fullness of him that filleth all in all the love of Christ originates from his own heart it is not so with the love of the church to Christ that is an effect in her heart of his love to her and of the knowledge and the influence and the attraction of it there is everything in

Christ to attract the love of the church there is nothing in the church originally considered to attract the love of Christ the cause of this love is in himself he alone knows why he should have felt and does still feel such love for his church that he should call her my love and this should be encouraging and helpful to such as feel so very conscious that there is nothing in themselves they can conceive could attract the love of Christ you see the two things always have gone together in this matter there is first God's choice of a bride for

Jesus Christ and of God Christ's love to the bride of the father's choice they both go together if God chooses a soul to salvation Christ loves that soul because he is chosen to salvation and it is entirely upon the principle of grace itself there is no reason why Christ should love any of you and there is no reason why he shouldn't that's the position there is no reason why he shouldn't no one can say that there is anything in them that could merit his esteem or attract his affection no one can say that all that they feel in themselves is of such a nature that they couldn't believe Christ could ever love them no my friends the love of Christ is sovereign and it is self originating and be it considered further that it is a very deep it is a very intense love it is a very full love it is such love as only

Jesus Christ could possibly feel towards anyone there is no person like Jesus Christ in his in his person as God and man and therefore there can be no love like his love because it has all the infinitude of divinity in it which no human love can possibly have and it has all the tenderness of humanity in it the love of Jesus Christ is a very deep it is a very rich it is a very holy love and with that love Christ loved the church but mark you this although there is nothing in the church as a whole nor in any individual member of the church personally that attracts the love of Jesus

Christ he will make his church attractive he will make his church attractive and you have that in these words Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it that he might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word that is by the sanctifying effect of the gospel of his redeeming blood upon their hearts he will sanctify the church and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word and present it to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blame before him in love you see my friends although the church is in no way at all worthy of the love of

[24 : 05] Christ and in no way attractive of the love of Christ but Christ will make her attractive of his love and the attraction of his love in his church will be his own spirit his own grace it will be in this that he who is the lily of the valley in his own personal purity will make her to be a lily too by that same purity in wrought and imparted to her Jesus Christ can make you and he can make me to be such as that he can love he can love with a love to purity and love he can make us such as the lily among thorns so is my love among the daughters my love and the love of Christ to his church that is expressed in this word my love is unchangeable whom once he loves he always loves and you can feel from that that if once the love of Christ has come into your heart and you have felt the special the especially holy sweet influence of his love if it has come to you through a word it may be like this

I have loved thee with an everlasting love or through a word like this thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee or any word of that nature that may have brought upon your heart a sense and feeling of the love of Jesus Christ then you may be sure of this that his love to you is always the same if once even if it's only once but it's usually more than once but if once the love of Christ we feel upon our hearts impressed the mark of that celestial seal can never be erased it is a comforting consideration that the love of Jesus Christ is unchangeable because we are conscious in ourselves of so much change in our feelings and in our spirit hot and cold dark and light dead and lively distant and near comfortable and distressed peaceful and tempted our spiritual life is really a life of continual change but through all this that is true his love no variation knows with all the love that his heart of all hearts is capable of he loves his church and he calls her my love and the love of Christ to his church is a love that will own his church always and claim her my love she is his his because redeemed by his precious blood from sin and death and his because he has caught her by his grace brought her to himself attracted her heart to him he has made her his and it's a love that claims my love mine and however it may be perhaps that as one of the hymn writers has put

God the church of Christ that men their fairest claims deny that doesn't matter Jesus Christ will claim and own his church let the world and the people of it say and think what they may their words anyway and their thoughts are just nothing worth about this Jesus Christ will not be ashamed of his love and he will own her at the last before assembled worlds my love and you can be sure of this that Jesus Christ will have his love to be with him he and the love of his heart will not be always separated he in heaven and his love upon earth among the thorns the time is coming when Jesus

Christ will come for his love part of his church he will bring with him because they have departed this life and their spirits are already with him for when he comes we read then those that are asleep in Jesus he will bring with him this part of his love in heaven with him now and when he comes they will come with him this part of his love on earth and there will be part when he comes in that great and that to the church of God most glorious day but he will gather together in one all his church in every individual member he will gather together in one blessed eternal unity of love with himself and then that word in the revelation will be fulfilled the marriage of the lamb is come he has gathered his love to himself and what an embrace of this love that I tried to set before you this morning with what an embrace of that love we receive openly and blessedly to himself the whole body of the redeemed church of Christ he has loved her died for her redeemed her opened for her a fountain in his own precious blood to cleanse her brought out for her a perfect righteousness to clothe her and at the last he will claim her as his love love these considerations in their spiritual nature and application if the

Holy Spirit give them application are very beautiful to contemplate and to ponder over and still more beautiful to feel in our own hearts well I hope you can see some beauty in Jesus Christ to love because if you can it is certain that he can see some beauty in you to love that you cannot is no matter it's what he can see not what we can see if there's anything in Jesus Christ that attracts us to him that very attraction in our hearts is sweet to him love love wants response nothing can satisfy it but reciprocation it is the happiness of love to be responded to in the affections of its objective if it is not love is disappointed frustrated and becomes a torment in the affections perhaps there's hardly anything that is more distressing than frustrated affections but where the affections are responded to reciprocated and there's a mutual fellowship of love in all the sweet intercommunications of it there's nothing sweeter and so it is with Christ and the church his love is not frustrated there's nothing sweeter to Jesus

[34 : 03] Christ and the love of his church and people I wish that that could be really received this morning there's nothing sweeter to Jesus Christ than that there should be love to him in your heart nothing that anyone can do perhaps in a spectacular way in a way that attracts attention and perhaps admiration and maybe thought and may really be very influential in different ways I mean in the Lord's service and the like that nothing is so sweet to him as that there should be love in our hearts to his name because there is nothing sweeter to love than that it should be responded to and love to

Jesus Christ is a response of his love it is a response of the love of the lily among thorns to that sweeter and holier and purer lily the rose of Sharon now I must leave the subject this morning