

Proverbs

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Date: 01 January 1900

Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[0 : 00] As the Lord may help me I will ask your attention again this afternoon to a further consideration of the word in the 16th chapter of the book of Proverbs the first verse the preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord the preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord This morning we considered the first part of this subject namely the heart and what is implied by the heart and then we spoke a little of the necessity of the heart being spiritually prepared that is for spiritual things and without taking any time

I will come at once to the point and continue as the Lord may help me our consideration of it it is then absolutely necessary that the heart in man should be prepared if the heart is not prepared it can bring forth nothing that is of a spiritual and acceptable nature and character and so the Lord in the parable of the sower showed the necessity of the preparation of the heart under the figure of the preparation of the ground to receive the seed of the word for the heart for the heart must be prepared to receive the word of the truth of the gospel how then does the Lord prepare the heart and what is the preparation of the heart to that end that it shall receive in a spiritual and believing way the word and truth of the gospel well now my friends the Lord works to no certain rule with regard to this work of his grace and I believe that every instance of the operations of the grace and power of God in the heart bears some distinctive feature that you won't find in any other case the Lord's work is so varied and yet so uniform it proceeds always along the same principles and yet operates in such different ways it invariably produces the same effects and yet produces those effects but such diversity of methods that we cannot possibly lay down any rule for the Lord to go by preparing the heart so we can only speak of this in a general way and the personal application of it must rest with everyone who has been the subject of this gracious work of God but if we consider very briefly the condition of the heart the heart in man in its natural that is in its unregenerate condition we can see very clearly how necessary it is that it should be prepared for in many cases the heart in man is very hard and unimpressed with regard to divine things the solemn nature of them passes over the surface of the mind and the heart is too hard to receive to any purpose the word of truth in its solemn and holy nature very well that hardness must be broken down that heart must be made sensitive it must be conscious of those things in their spiritual nature of which heretofore it was so indifferent and so casual and so unconcerned the preparation of the heart then is that the unconcerned hard heart shall be brought to a concern a sensitiveness a consciousness of the solemn and truthful nature of the word that is the preparation of the heart

it is to break down its hard its indifferent spirit for while that prevails it is impossible that the word of the gospel should have any saving entrance or effect but the way in which the Lord does that varies greatly and then again the heart of man is very unbelieving as I've said before in a man's natural condition it is natural for him not to believe it is supernatural for him to believe because unbelief is that prevailing nature of sin in the hearts of men that prevents the heart from receiving the word of the gospel for the word of the gospel can be no other way received than in a believing way it is by believing that the word of the gospel is received into the heart and if unbelief prevails there is no possible way in which the gospel in the truth of it could reach the heart unless that unbelief is overcome and the believing spirit is imparted there is a believing spirit and there is an unbelieving spirit now the preparation of the heart with regard to its spirit then is for that unbelief to be overcome for such convictions of truth to fasten effectively upon the conscience as overcome the opposition of unbelief the word of the truth of the gospel meets a dreadful opposition of unbelief amongst men it is the word of faith which we preach but the peril of unbelief prevails in the heart now the preparation of the heart then is to make it to be in that state and that frame and that spirit as to believe and this is of the

Lord there is nothing in a man's own heart that can ever overcome his own unbelief it will overcome him every time neither can anything that we can bring forward to prove that the truth is true no testimony that we can give as to our experience of it will ever overcome unbelief in the heart such as that it prevails this is the Lord's word and the preparation of the heart to receive the truth consists in this unbelieving spirit being overcome and a spirit to believe imparted and some they're very skeptical they're scornful and the longer I think general that people live and indulge that spirit the more it obtains upon them where a scornful spirit prevails in the heart it makes it that it's impossible that that scornful heart should receive the word of the gospel it only provokes its scorn therefore the work of God in preparing the heart is to make it serious to subdue its scornful spirit to give it to perceive and feel the folly and the worst than folly of the state of mind that it has indulged with regard to divine things and then again the spirit of the heart in man in some especially is very worldly the world has got their heart pills their heart attracts their heart and where this spirit prevails it is exactly as Jesus said in the parable the cares the riches and the pleasures of this world will choke everything of a spiritual nature the preparation then of the heart in man consists in subduing this worldly spirit and in causing the heart to be conscious effectually conscious that there are other things to be concerned about except what shall we eat and what shall we drink and where with all shall we be clothed truth expressed by the

Lord Jesus Christ enters into the heart to purpose what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul and be cast away the Lord prepares the heart in man to receive the word by bringing such solemn considerations to bear upon it with weight and effect and as I have often said it's only the Lord and his power can ever make such considerations have effect upon the heart but he can and he does and when he does they do have effect on the heart they do indeed and besides that the heart of man is so full of folly the very solemn nature of the things of

[11 : 49] God is sufficient of itself to provoke them and the enemy of truth blinds their understanding so that to them spiritual things look gloomy unattractive depressing but the work of the Lord in preparing the heart is to give it quite a different apprehension of the things of God to have such an effect upon the heart that the very solemn nature of the things of God begins to influence them and attract them well the Lord prepares the heart the Lord prepares the heart by convincing effectively the heart of its condition sometimes he uses the law those ten commandments and fastens their condemnation on the conscience sometimes he gives a soul a sense of its sinfulness without any distinct application of the commandment but he gives it to feel its lost condition and what a preparation that is to receive the gospel and sometimes the

Lord prepares the heart in a very gracious manner without causing it to enter into the depths of distress and trouble and fear that some pass through especially I think when the Lord deals early in life perhaps before the heart has naturally become hardened and insensitive and worldly before these conditions grow in the heart it pleases the Lord to implant his holy and his tender fear in the conscience and causes desires after spiritual things to spring up in the heart he gives an ear to hear the truth a desire to know it to believe it to understand it and to experience it before other conditions are permitted to obtain such a hold on the heart why does he begin this preparing work so early in life why does he leave it sometimes so long so very long even until old age why does he leave some perhaps children of godly parents to wander so far away and others he never permits to wander at all outwardly well my friends the lord giveth no account of these matters these are questions we have no right to answer they're all within the councils of his eternal mind and will but I believe he does it to show the sovereignty of his grace and the certainty of his purposes and in some way or other

I believe every case where the lord has prepared the heart will have some feature about it that glorifies him the preparations of the heart in man to receive the word of the gospel are of the lord now when the word of the gospel then is received into a heart prepared to receive it what a blessed word it is felt to be perhaps in its first reception it is in a certain sense more so even than afterwards perhaps I ought not to say that but what I mean is this the first dawning of light upon the mind revealing the nature of the gospel the preciousness of Jesus Christ the wonderful way of redemption through his blood and the deep mystery of his sufferings for sin can you forget when the light of the gospel and the word of truth began to bring into your heart an understanding and a feeling of these deep and precious things well I cannot

I cannot surely the light is sweet always but never sweeter than it's in its first dawning upon the darkness of the soul and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun always but very pleasant to behold the sun of righteousness when he first rises upon our poor souls with healing in his beams now the preparations of the heart in man in this matter and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord now when the gospel and the truth of it is brought into our hearts the Lord having prepared our heart to receive it believingly and thankfully and lovingly what then does the answer of the tongue we may understand this I think in two ways we can take it whichever way you feel best applies to you now when the

Lord in his first preparation of the heart to receive his word and the first feelings that spring up in our heart with regard to it we are usually very good hearers we want to hear the Lord speak to hear his voice we have difficulties in our minds we want an answer to them we have desires in our heart we want an answer to them they are those things that exercise our spirit and we want an answer to them who can give this answer who can meet the case who can speak the word that the Lord will own and bless well it must come from the Lord mustn't it the answer to the questions of your heart must come from the Lord and it is surprising for those of us now who have had long experience here the

[19:18] Lord does give an answer sometimes through the word preached or otherwise but we will say the word preached the Lord gives an answer to matters that we ourselves in speaking are by no means aware of we like to know to some extent of course what are the feelings and exercises of mind of our hearers but perhaps if we did and tried to form an answer that wouldn't have very much effect but when you get an answer through the ministry and you know that the minister knows nothing at all about your case but he speaks to it he gives an answer you feel that's from the Lord that's from the Lord for the answer of the tongue is from the

Lord or you may take it another way now the apostle Peter says that we ought to be able to give an answer to him that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and godly fear an answer to the question well perhaps some might feel very reserved about this and hardly know what they could say if they were asked but then this answer too is from the Lord for if he has given you any hope in his mercy he can give you an answer for instance if the question were asked now what is the reason of the hope that is in you what answer could you feel you could give from the

Lord well now this is the answer I could give from the Lord my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness I dare not trust the sweetest train but wholly lean on Jesus name that's the best answer that I could give for the hope that's in me can you give a better if you can give a better the Lord help you to give it that's the best answer I can give now the answer of the tongue is from the Lord for he who raises up a hope in your heart through his word can give you an answer for it to any that asks now I must come to other considerations because of the time the next of the preparations of the heart that I want to bring before you and which are of the Lord is this way the preparations of the heart for the ways of

God and all his appointments for believers are of him now there are appointments there are the Lord and it is his will and purpose that those who fear his name and desire his honour and glory and have been brought to believe in and love the truth should walk in his appointments these are very plain there is no question about that but let it not be thought that because there are plainly set before us in the scriptures there is no need of any preparation there really is there is a need of preparation of the heart to walk in the ways of God and with regard to divine appointments and I will use that term because it is very expressive with regard to divine appointments we must recognise a distinction there are those appointments that are appointed for all that fear the Lord have received his word in faith and love as I very briefly described have come to feel that hope raised up in their souls upon that one sure and blessed foundation there are appointments that are appointed for them all there are appointments that are appointed for some and not for all and there is this to be observed in regard to this matter that divine appointments that are set before us in the scriptures as being intended and appointed for all believers and lovers of Jesus

Christ we need no special word with regard to them but we need a preparation of the heart but divine appointments that do not apply to all for them those for whom they are appointed need some special word or some direction that they can feel comes from the Lord but if they have that special word or direction from the Lord that does not in any way do away from the necessity of a preparation of the heart now that I've sketched that out briefly let me fill it in a little now take the matter of gospel ordinances there they stand in the scriptures the new testament is exceedingly clear about them whatever difficulty there may be in the mind it is in the mind itself the general command is this whatsoever he has said unto you do it but to do it without a preparation of the heart is not good what is the preparation of the heart with regard to gospel ordinances well it lies this way first of all it consists in having the heart graciously disposed

[26 : 43] I mentioned this morning that the alternative rendering of this word preparation is disposing things I said then I should have a word to say about that now it is a great thing to feel the heart disposed that is for such an influence of grace to be exerted upon the heart as leans it inclines it disposes it towards the way of the Lord now this is of the Lord to force things on anyone's mind unless the Lord disposes their heart is more likely to hinder them to help but if the Lord disposes the heart well then that's another matter but that is of the Lord he gives the heart the desire there too he brings the heart into a willingness with his word and his will it all comes within the reach of that selm thy people shall be willing in the day of my power and what is more he gives the heart an understanding and a discernment in these matters that is a very gracious preparation the psalmist often in the 119th psalm expresses this incline my heart unto thy testimonies that means incline my heart unto thy testimonies by disposing my heart to walk in them to cleave to them and then again give me understanding and

I shall keep thy law and again let my heart be sound in thy statutes that I be not ashamed this disposing of the heart is something that we should be very careful over it may be very tender we may apply that word of Joseph heart to this very sintably so gentle sometimes is the flame but if we take not heed we may unkindly quench the same we may my friends indeed and if we quench the same we quench the Holy Spirit in that particular the preparations of the heart in man to walk in the Lord's appointments are of the Lord he must give that willingness to the mind that understanding to the heart that disposing of the will and desire thereunto that sweet influence upon the heart that constraint of love the love of

Christ constraineth us this is the disposing of the heart which is of the Lord and if the Lord disposes the heart he will give the answer of the tongue come and hear all ye that fear God and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul now let me take another consideration that comes with the scope of this far reaching text the preparation of the heart in man for any appointment that the Lord may desire determine and appoint is of the Lord now take the ministry of the word this is not an appointment for all it is an appointment for some the Lord has appointed it that the word shall be preached that is his ordinance and a very prominent one and a very useful one but there can be no ministry without ministers and there can be no ministers unless the

Lord raise them up fit equip qualify and call them forth now my friends the preparation of the heart for the ministry is very important very for if the Lord calls he prepares and a mere urge to preach is not necessarily a preparation of the heart for the ministry the Lord has ways and means of preparing the hearts of those he designs for this solemn work and privilege in his name sometimes it may be an unexpected preparation Isaiah's case comes into the mind not that I would say it is in every case the same Isaiah was called to some further exercise of his ministry the

Lord will prepare his heart for it and to prepare his heart for it he gave him a most impressive vision of the glory of the Lord and Isaiah was so struck with it and so overcome by it and with the holiness of it that he said woe is me for I am undone I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of the people of unclean lips he would have said I am the last man to ever speak in the name of the Lord anymore he was reduced to silence to an overcoming sense of his own sinfulness and uncleanness but that wouldn't have prepared Isaiah's heart not if it stopped at that but there came a live coal from there came a cherubim with a live coal from off the altar and touched his lips and said lo this has touched thy lips and thine iniquity is purged and

[33 : 46] I heard a voice saying whom shall I send and who will go for us and of all the angelic spirits none answered not one of their hearts was prepared to go but Isaiah said Lord here am I here am I send me send me why the Lord has so prepared his heart that he was quite willing to go and yet you see to prepare his heart he was plunged into such a sense of his uncleanness as put a woe upon his lips the preparations of the heart in man are of the Lord and the answer of the tongue you may be sure that if the Lord prepares anyone's heart for the work of the ministry he will give them the answer of the tongue that is to say their tongue will answer to the preparation of their heart now

I've just time left for one or two closing considerations there's another preparation of the heart I must mention before I close this afternoon the preparations of a hearty man for heaven are of the Lord now it is very certain that there can be no entrance into that blessed state unless our heart is prepared for it I know that is an apt trite saying but very true that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people heaven is that holy happy place where sin no more defiles where all is holiness and love and praise and thanks giving and who could enter into heaven unless their heart was prepared for it and

I was glad that hymn opened our service this afternoon it exactly expressed what was on my mind aren't you thankful that you haven't prepared your own heart for heaven you would say that would have worked too great for me I could never do it I could never prepare my own heart for heaven you're not called upon to the preparation of the heart in man for heaven is of the Lord you wouldn't question would you you wouldn't question but that the Lord could prepare your heart for heaven of course he could and how much you might feel of yourself how far off you are from that holy state and the like well think you that the Lord could not bring your case out right in the end could not he cleanse you from all uncleanness and make you fit with

Christ to sit and be the guest of God is not the blood of Christ sufficient to fit you for heaven is not the righteousness of Christ sufficient to clothe you for heaven is not that perfect robe good enough for heaven and is not the holiness of Christ imparted to you in wrought in you by the sanctifying work and grace of the Holy Spirit isn't the holiness of Jesus Christ think you good enough to fit you for heaven the preparation of the heart in man for heaven is of the Lord king what you can do is to pray prepare me gracious God and he will surely do it but it isn't only a matter of the preparation of our state there's a preparation of our mind and

I think it lies very much this way when the Lord prepares the heart for heaven he weans it more and more from earth for there are many natural ties that bind us to earth and not wrongly and not improperly so and it might seem to us as though we could hardly break away from them and we probably couldn't until the time comes for the Lord to do Jischen Jan the bloats God Oh, this angel's love is so above.

[39 : 38] And true is not in here.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[42 : 13] 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.

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.

[44 : 19] And that the beauty and sweetness of his name and nature as he was in this world perfumed the righteousness that he wrought 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.

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.

[45 : 51] 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 never have that effect upon our heart.

The Holy Spirit must inwardly reveal to us what is outwardly declared in the word of Jesus Christ.

[47 : 15] 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. As the lily among thorns so is my love among the daughters.

Here is the word of Jesus Christ concerning his church. For throughout this song of Solomon this song of loves we must understand by the bride or the beloved the church of Jesus Christ.

[48 : 31] 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 I hope is the true purport of this text there is one matter I must deal with.

by the love of Christ my love we understand his church and that his church is as the lily among thorns in this world.

[49 : 44] 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 only where honour is due and 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 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 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 kindliness 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 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 it's a world of thorns there's bitterness war unkindness persecution wrath 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

[57 : 27] 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 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 why it embraces the church as a whole and the church in every generation as a whole embraces personally every member of that church individually

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 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

[64 : 41] Christ is a very deep it is a very rich it is a very holy love and with that love Christ loved the church 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

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 inwrought 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 called 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

[71 : 20] 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 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 intercommunion 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 Christ than 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 thus I will lock in see us and see you and thank you