

CHRIST'S ESTIMATE OF HIS PEOPLE

NO. 282

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AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

*“How fair is your love, My sister, My spouse! How much better is your love than wine!
And the smell of your ointments than all spices! Your lips, O My spouse,
drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under your tongue and
the smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”
Song of Solomon 4:10, 11.*

I shall not, this morning, attempt to prove that the Song of Solomon has a spiritual meaning. I am sure it has. It has been frequently said and, I believe, has commonly been thought, that this song was originally written by Solomon upon his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter. Now I am as sure as I am of my own existence, that this is one of the grossest mistakes that ever was committed. There is nothing about Pharaoh's daughter in it. It is, first of all, improbable that it was written of her. And in the next place I will go further and affirm that it is impossible that it could have been written by Solomon in honor of her. If you look all through the song you will find that this is so.

In the beginning she is compared to a shepherdess. Now all shepherds are abominations to the Egyptians—do you think, therefore, that Solomon would compare an Egyptian princess to the very thing which she despised? In the next place, all the scenery is in the land of Canaan, none of it in Egypt. And besides that, all the places that Solomon speaks of, such as Engedi, Lebanon, Amana and Damascus, were all out of the way. Not one of them would have been passed in coming out of Egypt into Jerusalem and very probably the Egyptian princess did not even know there were such places at all, so that if Solomon had wished to praise her he would not have compared her eyes to the fish-ponds of Heshbon, but would have spoken of the sweet waters of the Nile. Besides, it could not have been Pharaoh's daughter. Did Pharaoh's daughter ever keep sheep?—and yet the person who is represented here did.

Did the watchman ever follow her about the streets and try to take her veil away from her? Solomon would have shown them something if they had. Therefore, that is impossible. In one place, Solomon compares her to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot. Now, horses were, among the Israelites, common things. And what would Pharaoh's daughter have said, if Solomon had compared her to a company of horses? She might have well looked him in the face and said, “Have you not some better comparison for me than my father's horses?” It is very unlikely that Solomon perpetrated that folly. It is improbable, therefore and we may almost say, impossible, that it could be Pharaoh's daughter. She never came from Lebanon and from the top of Amana—most probably she never heard of those places, or, if she heard of them, she could not have come from them, for she came from Egypt.

The fact is, that this book has been a puzzle to many men for the simple reason that it was not written for them at all. Learned men and wise men find this a stone on which they are broken to powder, just because it was not written for them. Men who are disposed to laugh at Scripture find here an opportunity to exercise their profane wit, just because the book is not written for them. This book was called by the Jews, “the Holiest of Holies.” It was thought to be such a Sacred book that they never allowed anyone to read it till he was thirty years of age. Many a Christian who reads it cannot understand it. And as good Joseph Irons says, “This dwarfish age is not likely to esteem this book as it ought to be esteemed. Only those who have lived near Jesus have drunk out of His cup, have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood—only those who know the fullness of the word ‘communion,’ can sit down to this book with delight and pleasure. And to such men these words are as wafers made with honey—manna—angels' food. Every sentence is like gold and every word is like much fine gold.”

The true Believer who has lived near his Master will find this book to be a mass, not of gold merely, for all God's Word is that, but a mass of diamonds sparkling with brightness and all things you can conceive are not to be compared with it for its matchless worth. If I must prefer one book above another, I would prefer some books of the Bible for doc-

trine, some for experience, some for example, some for teaching—but let me prefer this book above all others for fellowship and communion. When the Christian is nearest to Heaven, this is the book he takes with him. There are times when he would leave even the Psalms behind, when standing on the borders of Canaan, when he is in the land of Beulah and he is just crossing the stream and can almost see his Beloved through the rifts of the storm-cloud—then it is he can begin to sing Solomon's Song. This is about the only book he could sing in Heaven, but for the most part, he could sing this through, these still praising Him who is his everlasting lover and friend.

With these preliminary remarks, let us go at once to the text. I have said that this is Jesus speaking to His Church. Now when the Church praises Jesus, you do not wonder, for He deserves all she can say of Him and ten thousand times more. When she uses such large expressions concerning His loveliness, you feel that she falls far short of her mighty theme. She does but demean Him by her comparisons, for she can but compare the greater with the less and the beautiful and the eternal, with that which is mutable and transient.

But to hear Christ turn round upon His Church and seem to say to her, "You have praised Me, I will praise you. You think much of Me, I think quite as much of you. You use great expressions for Me, I will use just the same for you. You say My love is better than wine, so is yours to Me. You tell Me all My garments smell of myrrh, so do yours. You say My word is sweeter than honey to your lips, so is yours to Mine. All that you can say of Me, I say it to you. I see Myself in your eyes, I can see My own beauty in you. And whatever belongs to Me, belongs to you. Therefore, O My love, I will sing back the song—you have sung it to your Beloved and I will sing it to My Beloved. You have sung it to your Ishi, I will sing it to My Hephzibah, you have sung it to your Husband, I will sing it to My sister, My spouse."

Now note how sweetly the Lord Jesus sings to His spouse, First, He praises her love—"How fair is your love, My sister, My spouse! How much better is your love than wine!" Next He praises her graces—"The smell of your ointments is much better than all spices." Then He praises her words—"Your lips, O My spouse, drop as the honeycomb." Then He praises her thoughts, the things that do not come out of her mouth, but lie under her tongue—"Honey and milk are under your tongue." Then He finishes by praising her works, "The smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon."

I. Begin at the beginning then—Christ first PRAISES HIS PEOPLE'S LOVE. Do you love God, my Hearer? Do you love Jesus? If not, stand back! These things have nothing to do with you—if you love not Christ, you have neither part nor lot in the matter. You are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. But can you say as Peter did, when his Master asked him thrice—"Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" Can you say, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You. And You know, O my Lord, that my grief is that I do not love You more. I pant to have my little love increased, that my heart may be eaten up with love—that zeal of love to You may completely consume me?" Harken then, to what the Lord Jesus says to you tonight, by His Holy Spirit, from this song!

Your love, poor, feeble and cold though it is, is very precious unto the Lord Jesus—in fact it is so precious, that He Himself cannot tell how precious it is. He does not say how precious, but He says, "how fair." This is an expression that men use when they do not know how to describe anything. They lift up their hands, they put in a note of exclamation and they say, "How fair! How precious! How much better is your love than wine!" The fact is that Jesus values our love at such a price, that the Holy Spirit, when He dictated this Song of Solomon, could not see any word in all the human language that was large enough to set forth Christ's estimation of our love.

Have you ever thought of Christ's love to you till your heart has been melted—while your Beloved spoke to you till the tears have run down your eyes and you have believed you could do as Mary Magdalene did—could kiss His feet and wash them with your tears and wipe them with the hairs of your head? Now can you believe it? Just what you think of Christ's love, Christ thinks of yours. You value His love and you are right in so doing. But I am afraid that still you undervalue it. He values your love, if I may so speak—He sets a far higher estimate upon it than you do His. He thinks very much of little, He estimates it not by its strength, but by its sincerity. "Ah," He says, "He does love Me, he does love Me, I know he does. He sins, he disobeys Me, but still I know he loves Me—his heart is true, he does not love Me as I deserve—but still he loves Me."

Jesus Christ is delighted with the thought that His people love Him. This cheers and gladdens Him. Just as the thought of His love gladdens us, so the thought of our love gladdens Him. Notice how He puts it—He says, "How much better is your love than wine!" Now wine, when used in Scripture, frequently signifies two things—a great luxury and a great refreshment. Wine is a luxury, especially it is so in this country and even in the East, where there was more of it,

good wine was still a dainty thing. Now Jesus Christ looks upon His people's love as being a luxury to Him. And I will show you that He does. When He sat at the feast of Simon the Pharisee, I have no doubt there were sparkling wine cups on the table and many rich dainties were there. But Jesus Christ did not care for the wine, nor for the banquet. What did He care for, then? That poor woman's love was much better to Him than wine.

He could say to Simon the Pharisee, if He had chosen, "Simon, put away your wine cups, take away your dainties. This is My feast, the feast of My people's love." I told you also that wine was used as an emblem of refreshment. Now, our Savior has often been refreshed by His people's love. "No," says one, "that cannot be." Yes! You remember once He was weary and thirsty and sat upon the well of Samaria? He needed wine then, indeed, to refresh Him, but He could not get so much as a drop of water. He spoke to a woman whom He had loved from before all worlds—He put new life into her—and she at once desired to give Him drink. But she ran away first to tell the Samaritans what she had heard. Now the Savior was so delighted at her wishing to do good, that when His disciples came, they expected to find Him fainting, for He had walked many a weary mile that day. When they saw Him, though, they said, "Where did He get meat?" And Jesus said, "I have meat to eat that you know not of."

It was that woman's love that had fed Him. He had broken her heart, He had won her to Himself and when He saw the tears roll from her eyes and knew that her heart was set upon Him, His spirits all revived and His poor flagging strength grew strong. It was this that encouraged Him. No, I will go farther—when Christ went to His Cross there was one thing that cheered Him even in the agonies of death—it was the thought of His people's love. Are we not told by the Apostle Paul in the Hebrews, that our blessed and Divine Husband, the Lord Jesus, "for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame?" What was that joy? Why, the joy that He should see His seed and that seed should love Him and that He should have His love written in their hearts, in remembrance of His dying pains and agonies.

Jesus was cheered, even in His death agonies, by the thought of the love of His people. When the bulls of Bashan roared upon Him and the dogs bayed Him. When the sun was put out in darkness, when His Father's hand was heavy upon Him—when the legions of Hell compassed Him, when the pangs of body and the tortures of spirit all beset him—it was this that cheered Him, "My people, they are dear to Me, for them I stretch these bleeding hands. For them shall this heart be pierced, and oh, how they will love Me, how they will love Me on earth! How they will love Me spiritually in Paradise!" This was the wine the Savior had to drink—this was the cup of His delightful joy that made Him bear all these pains without a murmuring. And this was the meaning of these words of Jesus—"How much better is your love than wine!"

Pause here, my Soul, to contemplate a moment and let your joy rest awhile. Jesus Christ has banquets in Heaven such as we have never yet tasted—and yet He does not feed there. He has wines in Heaven richer far than all the grapes of Eshcol could produce, but where does He seek His wine? In our hearts, my Friends, in our hearts. Not all the love of angels, nor all the joys of Paradise are so dear to Him as the love of His poor people, sprinkled with sin and compassed with infirmity. Is not that a thought! I may preach about it, but I can only speak it to you—read it, mark it, learn it and inwardly digest it. And oh, if you saw Him standing here tonight and looking into your eyes and saying to you personally—"You love Me, I know that you love Me, your love is to Me better far than wine"—would you not fall at His feet and say, "Lord, is my love so sweet to You? Then shame upon me that I should give You so little of it." And then you would break out into the Song of Krishna, which we sung this morning—

*"O now, my Soul, forget no more
The Lord who all the misery bore,
Nor Him forget who left His throne,
And for your life gave up His own."*

This is the first point—the love of the Believer is sweet to Christ.

II. Do not imagine, however, that Christ despises our faith, or our hope, or our patience, or our humility. All these GRACES are precious to Him and they are described in the next sentence under the title of ointment. The working of these graces, their exercise and development, are compared to the smell of ointment. Now both wine and ointment were used in the sacrifice of the Jews—sweet smelling myrrh and spices were used in meat offerings and drink offerings before the Lord. "But," said Jesus Christ to His Church, "all these offerings of wine and all that burning of incense is nothing to Me compared to your graces. Your love is My wine, your virtues are My sweet smelling ointments."

For now you have a little faith, but oh, how little it is. You seem to have got just enough faith to know how unbelieving you are. You have got love, but somehow you have only got love enough to let you know how little you love Him. You have some humility, but you have only enough humility to discover you are very proud—you have some zeal for Christ, but you have only zeal enough to make you chide yourself that you are so cold. You have some hope, but you have only hope enough to lead you to see how despairing and desponding you often are. You have some patience, but you have only patience enough to teach you how often you murmur when you ought not.

“I confess,” you say, “that all my graces are a stench in my own nostrils and all the good things I trust I have, I cannot look upon them with any pride or self-congratulation. I must bury myself in dust and ashes. And even those things, I can but weep over them, for they are so marred by my own evil nature.” But now then, the very things that you and I very properly weep over, Christ delights in. He loves all these. The smell may seem to be but very faint and feeble, yet Jesus observes it. Jesus smells it, Jesus loves it and Jesus approves it. Yes, Believer, when you are on your sick bed and are suffering with patience. When you go about your humble way to do good by stealth. When you distribute of your alms to the poor. When you lift up your thankful eyes to Heaven. When you draw near to God with humble prayer, when you make confession of your sin to Him—all these acts are like the smell of ointment to Him, the smell of a sweet savor and He is gratified and pleased.

O Jesus, this is condescension indeed, to be pleased with such poor things as we have! Oh this is love, it proves Your love to us, that You can make so much out of so little and esteem so highly that which is of such little worth! Have you ever known a little child when he feels love in his heart, go into the garden or the field and bring you a little flower? It may be but a little buttercup or a daisy, a great thing to him, perhaps, but a trifle to you—worthless in fact—you have taken it and you have smiled and have felt happy because it was a token of your child's love. So Jesus esteems your graces, they are His gift to you. Mark, first of all, they are very poor things in themselves—till He esteems them as tokens of your love and He rejoices in them and declares they are as sweet to Him as all the spices of Arabia and all the rich odors of the merchant. This is the second thing.

III. Now we come to the third, “Your lips, O My spouse, drop as the honeycomb.” Christ's people are not a dumb people. They were once, but they TALK now. I do not believe a Christian can keep the secret that God gives him if he were to try. It would burst his lips open to get out. When God puts grace into your heart you may try to hide it, but hide it you cannot. It will be like fire in the bones and will be sure to find its way out. Now the Church is a talking Church, a preaching Church, and a praising Church. She has got lips and every Believer will find he must use his lips in the service of Christ.

Now it is but a poor, poor matter that any of us can speak. When we are most eloquent in our Master's praise, how far our praises fall beneath His worth! When we are most earnest in prayer, how powerless is our wrestling compared with the great blessing that we seek to obtain! When our song is loudest and it begins to be something akin to the chorus of the angels, even then how marred it is with the discord of our unbelief and of our worldliness! But Jesus Christ does not find any fault in what the Church speaks. He says, “No, your lips, O My spouse, drop as the honeycomb.” You know the honey that drops out of the honeycomb is the best—it is called the life-honey. So the words that drop from the Christian's lips are the very words of his life, his life-honey and they ought to be sweet to everyone. They are as sweet to the taste of the Lord Jesus as the drops of the honeycomb.

A little caution to some of you that talk too much. Some of you do not let your words drop as the honeycomb—they gush out as a great stream that sweeps everything before it, so that others could not thrust in a word edgeways. No, not if it were squeezed together and sharpened at one end could it get in. They must talk, their tongue seems set on a hinge, like a pendulum, forever going on—swing, swing, swing! Now Christ does not admire that. He says of His Church in His commending, her lips “drop as the honeycomb.” Now a honeycomb, when it drops, does not drop so much even as the drops that fall from the eaves of houses. For the honey is thick and rich and therefore it takes some time. One drop hangs for a time. Then comes another and then another and not all come in quick succession.

Now when people are often talking a great deal, it is poor and thin and good for nothing. But when they have something good to say, it drops by slow degrees like the honey from the honeycomb. Mark, I do not want you to say one good word less. They are those other words, those awkward ones. Oh that we could leave them out! I am as guilty of this myself, I fear, as many others. If we could talk half as much, it would be, perhaps, twice as good. And if we were to say only

a tenth of what we do, perhaps we should be ten times better. He is a wise man that knows how to speak well, but he is a great deal wiser man that knows how to hold his tongue. The lips of the true Church, the lips of the true Believer, drop like the honeycomb, with rich words, rich thoughts, rich prayers, rich praises.

“Oh,” says one, “but I am sure my lips do not drop like that when in prayer. Sometimes, even, I cannot get on at all and when I am singing I cannot put my heart into it and when I am trying to instruct others, I feel I am so ignorant that I know nothing myself.” That is *your* estimate—I am glad you are so humble as to think that. But Christ does not think so. “Ah,” He says, “that man would preach if he could. That man would honor Me better if he could.” And He does not measure what we *do*, but what we *want* to do. And so it is that He reckons that our lips drop like the honeycomb. What is sweeter in the world than honey from the honeycomb? But whatever may be the sweetest thing to the world, the words of the Christian are the sweetest things to Christ.

Sometimes Believers are privileged to sit down together and they begin to talk about what Jesus said and what He suffered for them here below. They begin to speak of His exceeding glories and His boundless and matchless love. They begin to tell one another what they have tasted and handled of the good Word of Life and their hearts begin to burn within them when they speak of these things. Do you know that Jesus is in that room, smiling? Jesus is there and He is saying to His own soul, “It is good to be here, the lips of these, My Brethren, drop as the honeycomb and their words are sweet to Me.” At another time the Christian is alone in his chamber and he talks with his God in a few broken words and with many sighs, many tears and many groans. Little does he think that Jesus Christ is there, saying to such an one, “Your lips, O My Beloved, drop with honey like the honeycomb.”

And now Christians will you not talk much about Jesus? Will you not speak often of Him? Will you not give your tongue more continually to prayer and praise and speech that ministers to edifying, when you have such a Listener as Jesus, such an Auditor who stoops from Heaven to hear you and who values every word you speak to Him? Oh, it is a sweet thing to preach when the people listen to catch every word. I would give in if I had to preach to an inattentive audience. And yet I do not know. Plato, we are told, was once listening to an orator and when all the people had gone away but Plato, the orator went on with all his might. Being asked why he proceeded, he replied that Plato was sufficient audience for any man.

And surely if in preaching, or in praying, all the world should find fault and all the world should run from it, Jesus is enough to be the Hearer for any man! And if He is satisfied—if He says our words are sweeter than the honeycomb, we will not stop. All the devils in Hell shall not stop us. We could continue to preach, and praise and pray, while immortality endures. If this is honey, then the honey shall drop. If Christ prizes it, we set His opinion against all the opinion in the world. He knows better than any others. He is the best judge, for He is the last and final Judge—we will go on talking of Him, while He goes on to say our lips drop as the honeycomb.

“But,” says one, “if I were to try to talk about Jesus Christ, I do not know what I should say.” If you wanted any honey and nobody would bring it to you, I suppose the best way, if you were in the country, would be to keep some bees, would it not? It would be very well for you Christian people if you kept bees. “Well,” says one, “I suppose our thoughts are to be the bees. We are always to be looking about for good thoughts and flying on to the flowers where they are to be found—by reading, by meditation and by prayer—we are to send bees out of the hive.” Certainly, if you do not read your Bibles you will have no honey, because you have no bees. But when you read your Bibles and study those precious texts, it is like bees settling on flowers and sucking the sweetness out of them.

There are many other books, though the Bible is the chief one, that you may read with great advantage—over which your thoughts may be busied as bees among flowers. And then you must attend the means of grace continually—you must listen often to the preaching of the Word. And if you hear a minister who is a plant of the Lord's right hand and you listen—in what you hear, you will be like bees sucking sweetness out of flowers and your lips will be like the honeycomb. But some people have nothing in their heads and they are never likely to have, for they are so wise that they cannot learn and they are such fools that they will never teach. Some waste the time they have. Now I would have my people read much the Word of God and study it and then read such books as shall illustrate it.

I will tell you where I have been sipping a bit just lately and I have often sipped much from—it is this book of Solomon's Song. It is a favorite book of mine. And there is a sweet little book of Joseph Irons', called “Nymphas,” a blank verse explanation of it. If any of you have that little book, set your bees to work on it and if you do not suck honey out of

it I am very much mistaken. Then let the bees bring the honey to the hive of your memory and let it be added to the stores of your mind. And in this way you will get rich in precious things, so that when you speak, the saints will be edified, your prayers will be full of marrow and fatness and your praises will have something in them, because you have sent your bees well abroad and therefore your lips will drop as the honeycomb.

IV. This brings us to the next topic—"Honey and milk are under your tongue." I find it necessary when I preach to keep a good stock of words under my tongue as well as those that are on it. It is a curious operation of the mind in the man who continually preaches. It sometimes happens while I am speaking to you that I am thinking about what I am going to say at the close of my sermon and when I am thinking about people downstairs or in the gallery and how I shall hit Mr. So-and-So, I am still talking right on, speaking with all my heart on the subject on which I am addressing you. It is because by continually preaching we get into the habit of keeping words under our tongue as well as those that are on the top and sometimes we find it necessary to keep those words under our tongue altogether and not let them come further.

Very often I have got a simile just ready to come out and I have thought, "Ah, that is one of your laughable similes, take that back." I am obliged to change it for something else. If I did that a little oftener, perhaps it would be better, but I cannot do it. I have sometimes a whole host of them under my tongue and I am obliged to keep them back. "Honey and milk are under your tongue." That is not the only meaning.

The Christian is to have words ready to come out by-and-by. You know the hypocrite has words upon his tongue. We speak about solemn sounds upon a thoughtless tongue, but the Christian has God's Words first under the tongue. There they lie. They come from his heart. They do not come from the top of his tongue—they are not superficial service work, but they come from under the tongue—down deep—things that he feels and matters that he knows. Nor is this the only meaning. The things that are under the tongue are thoughts that have never yet been expressed. They do not get to the top of the tongue, but lie there half formed and are ready to come out. But either because they cannot come out, or we have not time to let them out, there they remain and never come into actual words.

Now Jesus Christ thinks very much even of these. He says, "Honey and milk are under your tongue." And Christian meditation and Christian contemplation are to Christ like honey for sweetness and like milk for nourishment. Honey and milk are two things with which the land of Canaan was said to flow. And so the heart of a Christian flows with milk and honey, like the land which God gave to His ancient people. "Well," says one, "I cannot find that my heart is like that. If I do sit down and think of Jesus, my thoughts turn upon the glories of His Person and the excellency of His office. But oh, Sir, my thoughts are such dull, cold, useless things—they do not feed me or delight me."

Ah, but you see, Christ does not estimate them as you do. He feeds on them—they are like honey to Him and though *you* think little of your own thoughts and are right in so doing, yet, remember, such is the love of Jesus, such is His abundant condescension and compassion, that the very least things that you have He values at a great price. The words you are not speaking—the words you cannot utter, the groans you cannot bring out—these the Holy Spirit utters for you and these Jesus treasures up as choice and peculiarly precious things. "Honey and milk are under your tongue."

V. And then, last of all, "the smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon." The odoriferous herbs that grew on the side of Lebanon delighted the traveler and, perhaps, here is an allusion to the peculiarly sweet smell of the cedar wood. Now, the garments of a Christian are two-fold—the garment of imputed righteousness and the garment of inwrought sanctification. I think the allusion here is to the second. The garments of a Christian are his EVERYDAY ACTIONS—the things that he wears upon him wherever he goes. Now these smell very sweet to the Lord Jesus. And here let us speak to some of you present who manifestly are not God's children—for you smell of the garlic of Egypt rather than of the cedar of Lebanon. And there are some professors and, perhaps some now present, whose smell is anything but like that of Lebanon.

Take heed, you that do not live up to your profession. You have sad evidences within that you have not *possession*. If you can dishonor Christ's holy Gospel by living in sin, tremble—lest when He shall come in the terror of judgment, He should cry, "Depart, you cursed. I never knew you." But if you are humble lovers of Christ and really have your hearts set upon Him, your daily actions are observed by Him and the smell of it is to Him as sweet as the smell of Lebanon. What should you think if Jesus should meet you at the close of the day and say to you, "I am pleased with your works of today"? I know you would reply, "Lord, I have done nothing for You." You would say like those at the Last Day, "Lord, when did we see we You hungry and feed You? When did we see You thirsty and give you drink?"

You would begin to deny that you had done any good thing. He would say, "Ah, when you were under the fig tree I saw you. When you were at your bedside in prayer I heard you. I saw you when the tempter came and you said, 'Get you gone, Satan.' I saw you give your alms to one of My poor sick children. I heard you speak a good word to the little child and teach him the name of Jesus. I heard you groan when swearing polluted your ears. I heard your sigh when you saw the iniquity of this great city. I was there when your hands were busy, I saw that you were not an eye-servant or a man-pleaser, but that in singleness of purpose you did serve God in doing your daily business. I saw you, when the day was ended, give yourself to God again. I have marked you mourning over the sins you have committed and I tell you I am pleased with you." "The smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon."

And, again, I hear you say, "But, Lord, I was angry, I was proud," and He says, "But I have covered up this, I have cast it into the depths of the sea. I have blotted it all out with My blood. I can see no ill in you. You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you." What would you do then? Would you not at once fall down at His feet and say, "Lord, I never knew love like this. I have heard that love covers a multitude of sins, but I never knew a love so broad as to cover all mine. And then to declare that You can see no sin in me at all—ah, that is love!" It may melt our hearts and make us seek to be holy, that we might not grieve Christ—make us labor to be diligent in His service, that we might not dishonor Him.

I dare say some of you think when ministers preach or go about to do their pastoral duty, that of course Christ is very much pleased with them. "Ah," says Mary, "I am only a poor servant girl. I have to get up in the morning and light the fire, lay out the breakfast things, dust the parlor, make the pies and puddings for dinner and clear away the things again and wash them up—I have to do everything there is to do in the house—Christ cannot be pleased with this." Why Mary, you can serve Christ as much in making beds, as I can in making sermons! And you can be as much a true servant of Christ in dusting a room as I can in administering discipline in a Church.

Do not think for a single moment that you cannot serve Christ. Our religion is to be an everyday religion—a religion for the kitchen as well as for the parlor—a religion for the rolling pin and the jack-towel, quite as much as for the pulpit stairs and the Bible—a religion that we can take with us wherever we go. And there is such a thing as glorifying Christ in all the common actions of life. "Servants be obedient to your masters, not only to those who are good and gentle, but to the mean." You men of business, you need not think that when you are measuring your ribbons, or weighing out your pounds of sugar, or when you are selling, or buying, or going to market and such like, that you cannot be serving Christ.

Why a builder can serve Christ in putting his bricks together and you can serve Christ in whatever you are called to do with your hands, if you do it as unto the Lord and not unto men. I remember Mr. Jay once said that if a shoeblick were a Christian, he could serve Christ in blacking shoes. He ought to black them, he said, better than anyone else in the parish. And then people would say, "Ah, this Christian shoeblick, he is conscientious. He won't send the boots away with the heels half done, but will do them thoroughly." And so ought you. You can say of every article you sell and of everything you do, "I turned that out of my hands in such a manner that it shall defy competition. The man has got his money's worth. He cannot say I am a rogue or a cheat. There are tricks in many trades, but I will not have anything to do with them. Many get money fast by adulteration in trade, but I will not do it, I would sooner be poor than do it."

Why, the world says, "there is a sermon in that grocer's window—look, you don't see him telling lies to puff his goods—there is a sermon there." People say as they pass by, "It is a godly man that keeps that shop, he cannot bring his conscience down to do what others do. If you go there, you will be well treated and you will come out of his shop and say, I have spent my money well and I am glad that I have dealt with a Christian man." Depend upon it, you will be as good preachers in your shops as I shall be in my pulpit, if you do that. Depend upon it, there is a way of serving Christ in this manner—and this is to comfort you and cheer you—upon all the actions of your daily life the Lord Jesus looks down from Heaven and says, "The smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon."

I know you can hardly believe that Jesus Christ takes notice of such little things as that, but He does. You say, "Oh, but they are too trifling." But don't you know the God that wings an angel guides a sparrow? Don't you know, "the very hairs of your head are all numbered"? God not only wings the whirlwind and gives an edge to the lightning flash, but He guides the chaff from the hand of the winnower and steers the grain of dust in the evening gale. Do not think anything too little for you. He observes the mighty orbs as they whirl through space, but He notices you, too, as you go

about your business. And those little cups of cold water you give to His people—those little services you do for His Church—those self-denials that you make for His honor and those conscientious scruples which you foster and which will not allow you to act as the world acts—all these He observes and He says, “The smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”

And now to conclude, what shall we say to this? I was reading sometime ago, an article in a newspaper, very much in my praise. And you know, it makes me sad, so sad that I could cry, if ever I see anything praising me. It breaks my heart. I feel I do not deserve it. And then I say, “Now I must try and be better so that I may deserve it. If the world abuses me, I am a match for that—I begin to like it. It may fire all its big guns at me, I will not return a solitary shot—but just store them up and grow rich upon the old iron. All the abuse it likes to heap upon me I can stand. But when a man praises me, I feel it is a poor thing I have done, sad that he praises me for what I do not deserve. This crushes me down and I say I must set to work and deserve this.

I must preach better. I must be more earnest, more diligent in my Master's service. Now, will not this text produce just the same effect on you? When the Lord comes to you and begins saying, “You are not so humble, nor so prayerful, nor so believing as you ought to be.” You say, “I do not care about this whipping.” But when He comes and begins to praise you and tells you, “Your lips drop as the honeycomb,” that all your actions “smell of myrrh” and that your love is “better than wine” and that the thoughts under your tongue are better to Him than “wine and milk,” what will you say? Oh, Lord, I cannot say You are mistaken, for You are infallible. But if I might say such a thing, if I dared so think You are mistaken, I should say, “You are mistaken about me.”

But Lord, I cannot think You are mistaken—it must be true. Still, Lord, I do not deserve it. I am conscious I do not and I never can deserve it—still if You will help me, I will strive to be worthy of Your praise in some feeble measure. I will seek to live up to those high encomiums which You have passed upon me. If You say, “My love is better than wine.” Lord, I will seek to love You better, that the wine may be richer and stronger. If You say, my graces are like the smell of ointment, Lord, I will try to increase them, so as to have many great pots filled with them.

And if my words drop as the honeycomb, Lord, there shall be more of them and I will try to make them better, so that You may think more of such honey. And if You declare that the thoughts under my tongue are to You like honey and milk, then, Lord, I will seek to have more of those Divine thoughts. And if my daily actions are to You as the smell of Lebanon, Lord, I will seek to be more holy, to live nearer to You. I will ask for grace, that my actions may be really what You say they are.

You that love not God, I can weep over you, for you have nothing to do with this text. It is a frightful thing that you should be shut out of such praise as this—may Christ bring you in! You must first be brought to feel you are nothing. You must then be led to feel that Christ is everything and then, after that, you shall understand this text and these words will be spoken to you.

[Owing to the accidental absence of the Reporter, we are unable to publish last Sunday Morning's Sermon and we have substituted a discourse, up to now unpublished, preached on a former occasion.]

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