

Love's Vigilance Rewarded

(No. 2485)

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 4, 1896.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1877.

"Scarcely had I passed by them, when I found Him whom my soul loves. I held Him and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him to my mother's house and into the chamber of her that conceived me." Song of Solomon 3:4.

WHEN I look upon this great assembly of people, I think to myself—there will be many here to whom these chapters that we have read out of Solomon's Song will seem very strange. Of course they will, for they are meant for the inner circle of Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! This sacred Canticle is almost the central Book of the Bible. It seems to stand like the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden of Eden, in the very center of the Paradise of God. You must know Christ and love Christ, or else many of the expressions in this Book will seem to you but as an idle tale.

The subject on which I am about to speak will be very much of the same character. Outsiders will not be able to follow me, but then we are coming to the Communion Table so I must, for a while, forget the unsaved among my hearers, and think only of those who do know the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him. To my mind, it is a very melancholy thought that there should be any who do not know the sweetest thing in all the world, the best and happiest thing beneath the stars—the joy of having Christ in their heart as the hope of Glory! While I may seem to forget you, dear Friends, for a while, I cannot really help remembering you all the time and it is the earnest desire of my heart that while I am speaking of some of those delights which are enjoyed only by the people of God, you may begin to long for them—and I remind you that when you truly long for them, you may rest assured that you may have them! Around the garden of the Lord there is no wall so high as to keep out one real seeking and trusting soul—and in the wall, itself, there is a gate that always stands ajar—no—that is always wide open to the earnest seeker.

I am not going to try so much to preach a sermon as to talk out freely from my heart some of those delightful experiences which belong to the children of God. I want this service to be a time not of carving meat, but of eating it—not of spreading tables, but of sitting at them and feasting to the full on the bounteous provisions that our Lord has prepared for us.

I. First, before we actually come to our text, we may notice THREE PRELIMINARY STEPS IN THE SPOUSE'S PROGRESS.

The first one is implied in the words, "I love Him." She refers to her Beloved under the title of, "Him whom my soul loves." Can you, dear Friend, give the Lord Jesus that title? If He were to come here just now as He came to the Lake of Galilee and pass along these crowded ranks and say to each one of us, "Do you love Me?" what would be your answer? I am glad that I speak to many whose answer would be, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." I can at this moment think of many reasons why I should love the Christ of Calvary, but I cannot think of one reason why I should not love Him. If I turn to what I read about Him in this blessed Book, it all makes me love Him. If I recall what I have experienced of His Grace in my heart, it all makes me love Him. When I think of what He is, what He did and what He is doing, and what He will yet do—it all makes me love Him! I am inclined to say to my heart, "Never beat again if you do not beat true to Him." It were better for me that I had never been born than that I should not love One who is, in Himself, so inconceivably lovely—Who is, indeed, perfection's self!

Yet there is one reason that rises above all others why you and I should love the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." It used to be said by the old metaphysicians that it was impossible for love not to be returned in some measure or other. I do not think that statement is universally true, but I hope it is true concerning our Lord's love to us and our heart's love to Him. If He has loved us with an everlasting love. If He loved us even when we were His enemies and loved us so as to take upon Himself our nature—if this dear Son of God loved us so that He became Man for our sakes and, being found in fashion as a Man, humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross—oh, then, we must love Him in return! We would be worse than the beasts that perish if, conscious of such love as this, we did not feel that it melted us and that, being melted, our soul did not bow down in love to Him, alone! Can you stand at the foot of the Cross and not kiss the feet of Him who was wounded for your transgressions? Can you see Him dead and taken down from the Cross—and not wish to wrap Him in your fine linen—and bring your sweet spices to embalm His precious body? Can you see Him risen from the grave, and not call Him, "Rabboni," and long, as Mary did, to hold Him by the feet? Can you, by faith, see Him in our assemblies saying, "Peace be to you," and not feel that you delight in Him in your inmost soul? It cannot be! Surely, it cannot be! We must and will say, and we feel that we may appeal to the Searcher of all hearts while we say it, "I love Him, I do love Him because He first loved me."

Then, in the spouse's progress, there came another step, "I sought Him." Notice how the chapter begins—"By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves," for love cannot bear to be at a distance from the Loved One. Love longs for communion, love will do anything to get at the object of its affection. Where there is true love to Jesus Christ, we cannot bear to be away from Him and since we must be so, from His Presence, for a while—till the day breaks and the shadows flee away—we long to be with Him in heart and to feel that He is

also with us in spirit according to His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

"I sought Him." Can you put your finger on that sentence and say, "That is true, too"? Have you been seeking Him this Sabbath? Are you coming to His table, tonight, seeking Him? Were you at the Saturday night Prayer Meeting, or at this morning's early gathering, seeking Him with His people? Or, in your private devotions, did you make a point of crying, "Lord, let me meet with You, let me find You"? If not, begin now! Seek Him with your whole heart! Let your soul breathe out its burning desires after Him.

"I sought Him." He is not far from any of us. You sought Him once, when you were burdened with your sin, and then you found Him. He cast that sin of yours into the depths of the sea. Come and seek Him, again, and your fears, your doubts, your distresses of mind shall be buried in the same deep grave!

So the spouse sings of her Beloved, "I sought Him."

Then comes in a little minor or mournful music, for the next clause is, "I sought Him, but I found Him not" The spouse is so sad about it that she tells of her woe twice, "I sought Him, but I found Him not." Do you know that experience? I hope you are not realizing it at this time, but many of us have known what it is. If we have been indulging in any sin, of course we could not find Him, then! If we have been cold-hearted, like the spouse who sought Him on her bed—like she, we have not found Him. We have had to rise, we have had to stir ourselves up to lay hold of Him, or else we have not found Him. You have known what it is to go to the public service of the sanctuary, where others have been fed, yet you have had to come away and say, "There has not been a morsel for me." Have you not ever turned to the Bible and to private prayer—and still you have had to say, "I sought Him, but I found Him not"? This is a very sad experience, but if it makes you sad, it will be good for you. Our Lord Jesus Christ would not have us think little of His company and, sometimes, it is only as we miss it that we begin to appreciate the sweetness of it! If we always had high days and holidays, we might not be so thankful when our gala days come round.

I have even known some of Christ's people get so pleased with the joy of His company that they have almost forgotten Him in the joy! If a husband gave his wife gold rings and ornaments and she was so gratified with the presents that she took but little note of him, but only prized the jewels that he gave her, I can well understand what would be the jealousy of his heart. It may be that this is why your Lord hides His face, for you never know His value so much as when the darkness deepens and the Star of Bethlehem shines not. When real soul-hunger comes on and the Bread of Heaven is not there. When you feel the pangs of the thirst of the spirit and you are like Hagar in the wilderness and cannot find the well of water, then will your Lord teach you His true value! And when you really know Him and know Him better than you formerly knew Him, then you shall no longer have to sigh, "I sought Him, but I found Him not," but you shall change your dolorous ditty for the cheerful

language of the text, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves."

So I have brought you back to the text. These are the three steps by which we have ascended to the holy gate—first, "I love Him." Next, "I sought Him." And then, "I found Him not."

II. Secondly, inside the text there are THREE FURTHER STEPS—"I found Him," "I held Him," "I brought Him into my mother's house and into the chamber of her that conceived me."

This is the first of the second series of steps, "I found Him." I do not wish to stand here and speak for myself, alone, but I want, Beloved, that you should, each one of you, also say, "I love Him," "I sought Him" and now "I have found Him." Notice what the spouse said, "I found Him." She was not satisfied with finding anything else—"I found Him." If she had found her nearest and dearest friend. If the mother of whom she speaks had met her, it would not have sufficed. She had said, "I love Him, I sought Him," and she must be able to add, "I found Him." Nothing but Christ consciously enjoyed can satisfy the craving of a loving heart which once sets out to seek the King in His beauty!

The city watchmen found the spouse and she spoke to them. She enquired of them, "Saw you Him whom my soul loves?" She did not sit down and say to any of them, "O watchman of the night, your company cheers me! The streets are lonely and dangerous, but if you are near, I feel perfectly safe and I will be content to stay a while with you." No, but she leaves the watchmen and goes along the streets until she finds Him whom her soul loves! I have known some who love the Lord to be very happy while the preacher is proclaiming the Truth of God to them, but they have stopped with the preacher and have gone no further. This will never do, dear Friends! Do not be content to abide with us who are only watchmen, but go beyond us and seek till you find our Master! I would groan in heart, indeed, if any of you believed simply because of my words, as if it were my words, alone, that led you to believe, or if you should look merely to me for any-thing you need for your soul. In myself I am nothing and I have nothing—I only watch that if I can, I may lead you to my Lord, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to unloose.

O you who love Christ, go beyond the means of Grace! Go beyond ordinances, go beyond preachers, go beyond even the Bible, itself, into an actual possession of the living Christ! Labor after a conscious enjoyment of Jesus, Himself, till you can say with the spouse, "I found Him whom my soul loves." It is good to find sound doctrine, for it is very scarce, nowadays. It is good to learn the practical precepts of the Gospel. It is good to be in the society of the saints, but if you put any of these in the place of communion with your Lord, Himself, you do ill! Never be content till you can say, "I found Him." Dear Souls, did you ever find Him? Have you yet found Him? If you have not, keep on seeking, keep on praying

till at last you can say, "Eureka! I have found Him whom my soul loves. Jesus is, indeed, mine!"

What is meant by the words, "I found Him"? Well, I think a soul may say, "I found Him," in the sense employed in the text when, first of all, it has a clear view of His Person. My Beloved is Divine and Human, the Son of God and yet the Son of Man. My Beloved died, yet He is alive again. My Beloved was on earth, but He is now in Heaven and He will shortly come again. I want thus to find Him, myself, and I want each one of you to do the same. Picture Him on Calvary, see Him risen from the dead. Try, if you can, not so much by imagination as by faith, to behold Him as He now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, where harps unnumbered tune His praise! Yet, even there, He bears the wounds He received for us here below. How resplendent shine the nail-prints! The marks of His death on earth are the Glory of His Person above—

"This is the Man, the exalted Man,

Whom we unseen adore. But when our eyes behold His face,

Our hearts shall love Him more!" Let your soul picture Him so plainly that you can seem to see Him, for this will be a part of your finding Him.

But that will not be enough. You must then get to know that He is present with you. We cannot see Him, but yet He that walks amidst the golden candlesticks is, in spirit, in this House of Prayer at this moment. My Master, You are here. There is no empty seat at the table left to be filled by You, nor do we expect to see You walking among us in Your calm majesty, clothed with Your seamless garment down to Your feet. And we do not need to see You. Our faith realizes You quite as well as sight could do and we bless You that You hear us as we speak to You. You are invisible, yet assuredly present—You are looking into our faces, You are delighting in us as objects of Your redeeming love. You do especially remember that You died for us and, as a mother gazes upon the babe for whom she has endured so much, or as a shepherd looks upon the sheep that he has brought back from its long wanderings, so are You now looking upon each one of Your loved ones. If, dear Friends, you can get that thought fully into your minds—that Christ is really here in our midst—you can then, each one, begin to say, "I have found Him."

But you need more than that, namely, to feel that He loves you, loves you as if there were nobody else for Him to love! Loves you even as the Father loves Him. That is a daring thing to say and I would never have said it if He had not first uttered it. But He says, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." Can you comprehend how each one of the blessed Trinity loves each of the others and especially how the Father loves the Son? Even so does Jesus Christ love you, my believing Brother, my believing Sister! Note that He loves you—it is not only that He did love you and died for you, but He still loves you! He says to you, individually, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." Look at the nail-print—that is His memorial, His forget-me-not and, by it He says to you—

"Forget you I will not, I cannot, your name Engraved on My heart does forever remain! The palms of My hands while I look on I see The wounds I received when suffering for thee."

Now, have you found Him? If you have pictured Him in your mind's eye. If you are certain of His Presence with you and then, above all, if you are fully assured of His love, you can say, "I have found Him."

If you can, in truth, say that, I hope there will come with it this one other thing, namely, an exceedingly great joy. I cannot speak to you as I would wish—my words cannot express the joy of heart which I feel in knowing that I have found Him—that He is with me and that He has loved me with an everlasting love! I shall never understand, even in Heaven, why the Lord Jesus should ever have loved me. I can say to Jesus what David said in his lamentation over Jonathan, "Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." There is no love like it and why was it fixed upon me? Have you never felt that you could go in, like David, and sit before the Lord and say, "Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me to this point?" Yet wonderful as it is, it is true—Jesus loves you, loves you, now, at this very moment! Do you not rejoice in it? I assure you that in the least drop of the love of Christ, when it is consciously realized, there is more sweetness than there would be in all Heaven without it! Talk of bursting barns, overflowing wine-vats and riches treasured up—these give but a poor solace to the heart! But the love of Jesus, this is another word for Heaven! And it is a marvel that even while we are here below we should be permitted to enjoy a bliss beyond what the angels know, for—

"Never did angels taste above Redeeming Grace and dying love," but that joy is ours if we can truly say, "I have found Him."

If you have come as far as that—and if you have not, may God help you to this point right speedily—come to the Table of your Lord! You are, indeed, His children, so you have a right to come. Hear the King's invitation, "Eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved." These joys are not merely for some of the Lord's people but for all His saints! Then, stand not back, but come and feast on the rich provision of Divine Love!

Now we come to the second step. The spouse says, "I held Him." This is a deeper experience than the former one. "I held Him," means more than, "I found Him." Sometimes Jesus comes to His children and manifests Himself very sweetly to them, but they behave in an unseemly manner and soon He is gone. I have known Him reveal Himself to His people most delightfully, but they have grown cold, wayward, foolish—and He has been obliged to go away from them. When you get to the top of the mountain, it needs great Grace to stay there! I do not find it difficult to get into communion with Christ, but I confess that I do not find it so easy to maintain that communion. So that, if you have found Him, do as the spouse says that she did, "I held Him."

How are we to hold Christ? Well, first, let us hold Him by our heart's resolve. If now we have Him near us, let us lovingly look Him in the face and say, "My Lord, my sweet,

blessed Lord, how can I let You go? My All in All, my heart's Lord and King, how can I let You go? Abide with me, go not from me." Hold Him by your love's resolve and it shall be as chains of gold to fasten Him to you! Say to Him, "My Lord, will You go away from me? See how happy You have made me. A glimpse of Your love has made me so blest that I do not envy the angels before Your Throne! Will You take that joy away from me by taking Yourself away? Why did You give me a taste of Your love if You do not mean to give me more? This little has but made me dislike all things else—You have spoiled me, now, for all my former joy! O tarry with me, my Master, else am I unhappy, indeed!"

Further say to Him, "Lord, if You go, Your chosen one will be unsafe! There is a wolf prowling about—what will Your poor lamb do without You, O mighty Shepherd? There are cruel adversaries all around seeking my harm—how can I live without You? Will You deliver your turtledove over to the cruel fowler who seeks to slay her? Be that far from You, O Lord! Therefore, abide with me." Tell Him how you will sorrow if He goes away—

"'Tis paradise if You are here, If you depart, 'tis Hell."

"Nothing can revive my spirit if You are gone from me. Oh, stay with me, stay with me, I beseech You, most blessed Lord!" As long as you can find arguments for His staying, Christ does not want to go from you. His delights are with the sons of men and He is happy in the society of those whom He has purchased with His precious blood! Keep on giving your reasons why He should remain with you and so hold Him. Be bold enough to even say to Him, "I will not let You go." Get Jacob's boldness when he said to the Angel of the Covenant, "I will not let You go unless You bless me." But go even beyond that—do not put in any, "unless," at all, but say, "I will not let You go, for I cannot be blest if You are gone from me."

Further, Brothers and Sisters, hold Him by making Him your All in All. He will never go away if you treat Him as He should be treated. Yield up everything to Him! Be obedient to Him. Be willing to suffer for Him. Grieve not His Holy Spirit. Crown Him, extol Him, magnify Him, keep on singing His praises for so will you hold Him! Renounce all else for Him, for He sees that you truly love Him when you count all things but dross for His dear sake. He says, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." Those were the days when some of you could accept a father's frown for the sake of Christ's love! When you could have given up your job and all your prospects in life to follow Jesus! It was then that He delighted in you and, in proportion as you break your idols, put away your sins and keep your heart chaste and pure for Him, alone, you shall abide in His love! Yes, and you shall get deeper and deeper into it till what was a stream up to your ankles shall soon be chest deep and, by-and-by, shall be waters to swim in!

Christ and you cannot fully agree unless you walk as He would have you walk, in careful holiness and earnest service for Him. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" And is there anything in this vile world that is fit to stand in rivalry with Him? Is there any gain,

is there any joy, is there any beauty that can be compared with His gain, His joy, His beauty? Let each of us cry, "Christ for me! Go, harlot-world! Come not near even the outside of my door. Go, for my heart is with my Lord and He is my soul's chief treasure!" If you will talk like that, you will hold Him fast till you have your heart's desire and bring Him to your mother's house!

Hold Him, too, by a simple faith. That is a wonderful hold-fast. Say to Him, "My Lord, I have now found You and I rejoice in You, but still, if You hide Your face from me, I will still believe in You. If I never see a smile from You, again, till I see You on Your Throne, yet will I not doubt You, for my heart is fixed, not so much upon the realization of Your Presence, as upon Yourself and Your finished work. Though You slay me, yet will I trust in You." Ah, then He will not go away from you—you can hold Him in that way! But if you begin to put your trust in enjoyments of His Presence instead of in Him, alone, it may be that He will take Himself away from you in order to bring you back to your old moorings, so that, as a sinner, you may trust the sinner's Savior and trust in Him, alone!

One word more before we leave this point. The only way to hold Christ is to hold Him by His own power. I smiled to myself as I read my text and tried to make it all my own—"I held Him and would not let Him go." I thought to myself, the spouse said of her Bridegroom that she would not let Him go—and shall I ever say to my Lord that I will not let Him go? He is the King of Kings, the Omnipotent Jehovah—can I hold Him? He is the mighty God and yet a poor puny worm like myself says, "I would not let Him go"? Can it be really so? Well, the Holy Spirit says that it is, for He guided the pen of the writer of this Song when he wrote, "I held Him and would not let Him go." Think of poor Jacob, who, when the Angel did but touch him, felt his sinews shrink, directly, yet he said, "I will not let You go." And I, a poor trembling creature, may hold the Omnipotent, Himself, and say to Him, "I will not let You go."

How is that wonder to be accomplished? I will tell you. If Omnipotence helps you to hold Omnipotence, why, then, the deed is done! If Christ and not you, alone, holds Christ, then Christ is held, indeed, for shall He vanquish His own self? No, Master, You could slay death and break the old serpent's head, but You cannot conquer Yourself! And if You are in me, I can hold You, for it is not I, but You in me, that holds Yourself and will not let You go! This is the power which enables us, with the Apostle, to say, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The next step is described in the words, "I brought Him." With this we finish. "I brought Him into my mother's house and into the chamber of her that conceived me." And where, I pray you, Beloved, is our mother's house? I do not believe in any reverence for mere material buildings, but I have great reverence for the true Church of the Living God. The Church

is the House of God and the mother of our souls. It was under the ministry of the Word that most of us were born to God. It was in the assembly of the saints that we heard the message which first of all quickened us into newness of life and we may well be content to call the Church of Christ our mother, since our elder Brother—you know His name— when one said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brethren stand outside, desiring to speak with You," pointing to His disciples, answered, "Behold, My mother, and My brethren. For whoever shall do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." Surely, where Jesus chooses to call the assembly of the faithful by the sacred name of mother, we may rightly do the same!

And we love the Church, which is our mother. I do hope that all the members of this Church love the whole Church of God and also have a special affection for that particular part of it in which they were born for God. It would be unnatural—and Grace is never unnatural, though it is supernatural—it would be unnatural not to love the place where we were born into the heavenly family! I do not know and never shall know on earth the man who was the means of my conversion. I may know him when I get to Heaven, but if he is still living anywhere in this world, God bless him! And I know that many of you would say the same of the outward instrument which was used as the means of blessing to you—and you will say the same, will you not, of all the brotherhood of which some of us are but the spokesmen and representatives? We love the Church of God! Well, then, whenever we find our Beloved, we have to hold Him and not let Him go. And then to bring Him down to the house of our mother and to the chamber of her that conceived us.

How can you bring Christ to His Church? Partly, you can bring Him by your spirit. There is a wonderful power about a man's spirit, even though he does not speak a word. Silent worshippers can contribute very greatly to the communion of saints. I know some brethren—I will not say that any of them are now here—but I have known some brethren whose very faces dispirit and discourage one whose every movement seems to make one feel anything but spiritual. But I know others of whom I can truly say that it is always pleasant to me to shake their hands and to have a look from their eyes. I know that they have been with Jesus, for there is the very air of saintliness about them. I do not mean sanctimoniousness—that is a very different thing! In the old pictures, the painters used to put a halo round the head of a saint—a most absurd idea, but I believe that there is a real spiritual halo continually surrounding the man who walks with God.

If you, dear Friend, have really found Christ and bring Him with you into the assembly, you will not be the man who will criticize and find fault, and quarrel with your neighbor because he does not give you enough room in the pew. You will not be the person to pick holes in other people's coats, but you will be very considerate of others. As for yourself, anything will do for you, and anywhere will do for you, for you have seen the Beloved! You want other people to get as much good as they can. You are no longer selfish—how can you

be, when you have found Him whom your soul loves? And now your poor Brother need not be very choice in the selection of his words—if he will only talk about Jesus, you will be quite satisfied! If his accents should be a little broken, you will not mind that. So long as you feel that he wishes to extol your Lord, that will be enough for you!

So, in this manner you will, in spirit, bring the Beloved to your mother's house, to the chamber of her that conceived you.

But, dear Friend, it will also be a happy thing if you are able to talk about your Lord, for then you can bring Him to the Church with your words. Those of us who are called to preach the Word have often to cry to the Lord to help us to bring Christ into the assembly by our words—though, indeed, the words of any human language are but a poor conveyance for the Christ of God! Oh, let the King, my blessed Master, ride in the chariot of angelic song and not in the lumbering wagon of my poor sermons! I long to see Him flying on the wings of the wind and not in the car of my feeble language! Yet has He come to you many a time that way and you have been glad. Let Him come as He will, if He will but come, it is our delight to bring Him into our mother's house, into the chamber of her that conceived us!

Therefore, dear Friends, each one of you, in turn, as you are able, talk to your brother and to your sister and say, "I have found Him whom my soul loves." You know that when Samson killed the lion, he said nothing about it. It would have been a great feat for anyone else to boast of, but Samson could kill a lion any day, so he did not think much of doing that. But when he later found a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion, he took some of it and began to eat— and carried a portion of it to his father and mother. So, if ever you find sweetness and preciousness in Christ, the true Strong One, be sure that you carry a handful of the honey to your friends and give portions to those for whom otherwise nothing might be prepared!

Thus hold Christ fast and bring Him to your mother's house by your spirit and by your words.

But if, alas, you feel that you cannot speak for Christ, then, Beloved, bring Him by your prayers. Do pray, especially at these communion seasons, that the King, Himself, will come near and feast His saints. Ask Him not only to bless you, but to bless all His saints, for you are persuaded that they all love Him better than you do and that they all want Him as much as you do—and that they will all praise Him even more than you do if He will but come and manifest Himself to them! In this way, each one of you, as you come to the House of Prayer and to the place of fellowship, will be a real benefit to our spiritual force and we shall seem to get nearer and nearer to our Master as the house fills with loving worshippers who have found Him, and held Him, and brought Him here.

Now may we find all this to be especially true as we gather around the Table! The Lord be with you all, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: SOLOMON'S SONG 2; 3:1-5.

Here we have a dialogue of love between the Lord Jesus and His people.

Song of Solomon 2:1. I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys. Among all flowers, there is none that can be compared with Him—

"White is His soul, from blemish free,
Red with the blood He shed for me."

2. As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters. The child of God cannot long be mistaken for a worldling. The lily rises up above its thorny companions, but everybody knows that it is not a thorn—and quickly do the eyes of the Lord Jesus discern His people wherever they may be found. You, dear Friend, may, perhaps, come of a graceless family, or you may live in a house where God is all but unknown—yet Christ always knows His pure lilies, even if they grow among the cruel piercing thorns.

3. As the apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. You who love the Lord Jesus know what this verse means. He is a great variety of delights to you—food for your soul, a shadow for your head in the day of the sun's burning heat. When you are near Him, the sun does not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. There is no shadow like Christ's shadow, and no fruit like His fruit!

4. He brought me to the banqueting house. That, I trust, He will do again as He has often done before, both while we are hearing His Word and when we approach His Table—"He brought me to the banqueting house."—

4. And His banner over me was love. Not the fiery ensign of war, but the peaceful banner of love! You have had enough of the world, Beloved, during the past six days—you will again have enough of it in the six days yet to come— but just now let Love's royal banner wave over you and give your thoughts entirely to Him who has loved you with an everlasting love, and sealed His love to you by the blood that streamed from His pierced heart.

5. Sustain me with cakes of raisins, comfort me with apples: for I am lovesick. The love of Christ shed abroad in our heart sometimes quite overpowers it. It is very possible to be so delighted, so full of joy with a sense of the love of Jesus, that one feels unable to bear any more of it! Oh, for more of this blessed sickness! "It is a strange thing," says one, "this love of Christ"—

"For, oh, when whole, it makes me sick, When sick, it makes me whole!"

6. 7. His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field. Those lovely, but timid creatures that are so easily scared away—

7. That you stir not up, nor awake my Love, till He please. O you carking cares, keep away from us! You distractions that are so apt to arise in our crowded assembly, you aches and pains that come in and make the body drag down the spirit, keep away from us for a while!

8. The voice of my Beloved! The spouse knows it at once! Her ears are so trained that she recognizes it as soon as she hears it. Jesus said that His sheep follow Him, for they know His voice. And He added, "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

8. Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. "I thought my sins would keep Him back, for they seemed like great mountains—how could He come to me? But, 'behold,' He makes nothing of those barriers! 'He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.'"

9. My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, He stands behind our wall, He looks forth at the windows, showing Himself through the lattice. When we observe the ordinances, aright, they are like latticed windows—we cannot see our Lord through them as clearly as we would like, but still, we do see Him and we are thankful for these windows until we get up yonder, where we shall see Him face to face!

10-13. My Beloved spoke and said to me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away. No matter what the weather is outside, it may be spring within. If your hearts have been frost-bound and barren, may they now begin to thaw at the approach of Jesus! Many of us have asked for His company and believe that He will be here—and when He comes, He will make our souls rejoice! They shall be as watered gardens when the spring returns.

14. O My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely. Christ calls you out, you hidden ones! You who are half ashamed to be seen, He bids you come to Him! Come away from your doubts and your fears, your halting and your hesitating—it is Jesus who calls you—therefore come to Him at once!

15. Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes. Drive away every sin that would keep Christ away. Ask for His Grace to subdue every wandering thought that He may be with you in undisturbed communion.

16. 17. My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

Song of Solomon 3:1-5. By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise, now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broadways I will seek Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him, but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw you Him whom my soul loves? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves: I

held Him and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my Love, till He please.