

Affection for Christ

Song of Solomon 5: 9; Song of Solomon 1: 13; John 11: 18.

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I want to call attention to the privilege of being true in our affections to an absent Christ, and to show the way the Spirit takes in order that a place may be provided for the Lord Jesus in the developed affections of His own.

I refer particularly to this verse in John's Gospel, which tells us that Bethany was about two miles from Jerusalem.. Bethany is a wonderful spot in the Scriptures. It is a place of blessing to the lovers of Christ; it is the place where He lifted the shadow of death from spirits that were heavy at the loss of Lazarus; where they made Him a supper in the responsive affections of their hearts. Beloved, it was only two miles from Jerusalem *where He was hated!*

I want to bring that point home, I trust with some power. At this privileged spot, where He could spend the night encompassed in the developed affections of His people; there under the shadow of the "city of . . . calamities;" nigh unto Jerusalem where He was about to suffer. He was to be cast out there, despised, reviled, spat upon, disowned — the Christ of God! And within two miles was the place where affections welcomed Him, and made room for Him. May I apply the moral of it? We find ourselves today under the shadow of a world which hates our Saviour; we find ourselves in proximity to a system which is saying the most abominable things of the impeccable Christ! We find ourselves near to that which hesitates not to malign the character of the glorious Son of God, our precious Saviour! What a wonderful privilege for saints of God to make room for Him in their hearts under the very shadow of that which would obliterate His Name if it could!

This precious Bethany, this place that He would lead us to even now in our spirits — as we await His coming again, He would lead us "as far as to Bethany," the language suggesting that there is that which is beyond Bethany, and indeed there is! But He would lead us as far as to Bethany, and He would give us, as leading us there, to know the triumph of His death and resurrection, and His glorious ascension! He would thrill our hearts with that precious love which carried Him through all — that glorious Man who suffered and rose again and ascended to God's right hand.

May I challenge my heart and yours, beloved brethren; is there a Bethany in your affections for Christ? What is your "Beloved more than another beloved?" What intimacy is disclosed in this typical chapter! Only one in the nearness of intimate love could have described His Holy Person as she did! Ah! dear brethren, the closer we are to Jesus, the more intelligent and affectionate will be our appreciation when challenged as to who He is — "more than another beloved!" Men in their thoughts and words are degrading Him to the level of human leaders, and the challenge is — what is our Beloved more than another beloved? Let us search our hearts, and as we think of the answer of the spouse we see that she starts with His head — pure gold. And she goes right down to His blessed feet — and notice them! There is no change in the blessedness and glory of His Person! His head is of the purest gold! If we think of Nebuchadnezzar's image, the head was of gold, but all the way down there was deterioration, until we come to the feet of iron and clay. Everything deteriorates in this world, however brilliant its start may be. In that blessed glorious Person, *our Beloved*, there is nothing but absolute, scintillating glory from head to foot. Every feature marked by absolute durability, and all resplendent in glory! "What is your Beloved more than another beloved?" "A bundle of myrrh is my

beloved unto me" (Song of Songs 1: 12).

Dear brethren, how do we value the suffering love of Christ? "A bundle of myrrh." Myrrh speaks of suffering. "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia" (Psalm 45: 8). Matthew's Gospel records that when Herod's soldiery had derided Him, they took away the scarlet robe in which they had mocked Him, and put upon Him His *own garments* "and led Him away to crucify Him." Had we walked behind that blessed Saviour as He went to the Cross, we should have caught the fragrance of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia! Oh! the fragrance of Christ as He walked to the cross! The suffering love of Jesus, the bitterness of death, and over all the fragrance of the frankincense ascending to God! As He goes forward — "Not My will, but Thine be done." In obedience to His Father's will, and love to Him, was all fulfilled. In love He gave Himself, collectively for the Church, individually for every one of us; for we can say, can we not, "The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." I remember a dear old brother who used to say that at the beginning of his Christian life he would quote that verse like this — "The Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." Later on, he learned to quote it; — "The *Son of God*, who *loved* me, and gave *Himself* for me." It is the preciousness of the Person that thrills the heart.

What is your Beloved to you more than another beloved?

"We have a little sister" says the Scripture (and one would desire to treat this with holy delicacy!) "and she hath no breasts" There is no developed affection for the Beloved! Alas! Alas! How often that might be recorded of the children of God! Affections have not developed responsively to Christ! "What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?" "If she be a wall we will build upon her a palace of silver; and if she be a door, we will inclose here with boards of cedar."

Beloved brethren, whatever may be the interpretation of this verse, let us apply it to ourselves thus — if our affections are not developed after Christ, and our door is open to the world, that which will hold us in responsive affection to Him is the contemplation of His redeeming love, His holy sufferings, and the unique greatness of His Person. "Silver" and "Cedar wood."

The woman in Luke 7 — a delightful though sinful person — came, attracted by the knowledge that Jesus was there! No one else held her affections, it was *Jesus* she wanted. She came and stood at His feet. You will notice that in these short verses His blessed feet are mentioned seven times! Oh! the perfection of the walk of Jesus! The preciousness of the movements of Jesus in this scene! He has no peer, there is no one like Him! In His holy walk He ever manifested the deep, deep love of His heart; beautiful upon the mountains those precious feet of Christ, bringing glad tidings of peace! Have we sufficiently appreciated the feet of Jesus?

If you go through Luke's Gospel you will find that the feet of Jesus teach us progressively the greatness of His Person. There is a woman here *standing* at His feet; in Luke 10 there is a woman *sitting* at His feet, and listening to His words. Wherever you read of Mary of Bethany she is always at the feet of Jesus. And in Luke 19 there is a man *on his face* at His feet, and he worships! The more we go down before the glory of His Person, the greater He is in our view. Standing at His feet; sitting at His feet; on our face at His feet — worship! the heart going out as the greatness and glory of the preciousness of Christ fills the vision! Truly we can each say from our hearts — "My Beloved is . . the chiefest amongst ten thousand . . yea He is *altogether lovely*. This is my Beloved and this is my Friend."

May it be so increasingly till He comes.