



A Garden Inclosed

A Sermon by George Müller of Bristol

An Address delivered by George Müller at a Conference of Christians of various denominations held at Clifton, on Tuesday, September 30th, 1873,

Song of Solomon iv. 12-16.

The few words, beloved Christian friends, I have to speak this evening, are in connection with the first portion of Holy Scripture to which our attention has been directed, contained in the Song of Solomon, - the portion on which our beloved brother has already spoken.

It is not necessary to repeat what is God's object in giving to us the Song of Solomon; you all know it, and our esteemed brother has again referred to it. But it should be in our hearts to seek to enter into the spiritual meaning of this most precious Book. I do not know one single part of Divine testimony which more effectually acts like a spiritual thermometer, to show how it is with regard to our affection for the Person of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ, than this little portion of the Word of God called the Song of Solomon. And this portion to which our attention is directed for consideration in these meetings, if entered into with regard to ourselves, would bring an abundant blessing to our souls.

Now let us once more read this verse; and, as God may help me, I desire to make a few remarks, in addition to what has been stated already. "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse;" we are called a "spouse," the most intimate of all unions. How comes this, that we are in this most intimate of all unions? By reason of that deep sleep of death which fell upon Jesus. That Blessed One died in our stead, in order that we might have life, in order that we might be brought into this most intimate of all relationships to Him, in order that we should be His spouse. Now this sister is called a "garden inclosed," "a spring shut up," "a fountain sealed;" these three different figures are employed. A "garden inclosed:" let me here observe that I judge the meaning is not what is commonly stated. A "garden inclosed": the very word "garden" implies that it is inclosed; a portion of land taken away from other parts, inclosed by a hedge or wall, or somehow or other inclosed and cultivated afterwards. It is this very thing which constitutes it to be a garden. But it is not simply said a "garden," there is something added regarding the garden, and that is, that it is "barred," "bolted," "shut up," just like this spring, and this "fountain sealed"; that is the particular point: not that this portion of land is inclosed, but that this inclosed field is shut up, - that it is not accessible to everyone. The owner goes in and out as he pleases; he has a right to this piece of land - this Garden; but it is bolted, it is barred, it is shut up, and not accessible to everyone. Just as he who sealed the fountain may alone break the seal; and he who shut up the Spring may break away that by which it is shut up, and may partake of the refreshing draughts of this fountain: that is the particular point. Now what is meant by this figure of "a bolted Garden," "a spring shut up," "a fountain sealed"? We are our Lord's property, - He has bought us with His precious blood; thus we are His and not our own. The right to the Garden is His, the bolts and keys are His, the fountain is His, the spring is His; *all* belongs to that Blessed One, who bought us with His precious blood. Do we feel in our inmost souls that all we have and are belongs to the Lord? - that He has bought our persons, our talents, and our time? Do we feel that He has bought our eyes, our hands, our feet? Do we feel that our houses and lands, our horses and carriages, belong to Him? - that all the money we have is His, - that our profession or business is His, - that everything we have and are is His? Oh! if our inmost souls entered into it, what Christian men and women should we be from this time and henceforth.

Now beloved in Christ, as we are come here not to pass an hour or two for amusement, but in order that our inmost souls may be affected, that we may be more holy and devout, "out and out" consecrated to the Lord; oh! let us seek to enter into this glorious fact, that the Lord Jesus Christ has bought us with His precious blood, that "out and out" we are His, and not our own; and that not for this evening, or tomorrow, merely, but that all the days of our life, we and all we have and are, belong to the Lord. Oh! let us ask God to seal this upon our hearts, and to seal it so, that from this evening and henceforth we shall never be able to lose sight of this truth. This, I judge, is the great practical point that the Holy Ghost would bring before us in this portion.

Now we read the next verse: "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices." What is this? The Lord Jesus coming into His Garden, and the grace He sees in His Church; - the grace He sees in His spouse, His sister: the Bridegroom able to take a delight and joy and pleasure in what He sees in His people. Beloved in Christ, the great practical point is; - Is it thus with me? When I was meditating upon this portion last Sunday evening, I said to myself, "Lord, let it be thus with me; help me, that it may be thus with me." Oh that it may be thus with ourselves, individually; and that it may be thus not only "now and then," when we are under special spiritual influences, or under special spiritual excitement, such as the present may be; but that day by day, from Monday morning until Saturday evening, and all the day through, all the week long, all the year round, - we may be in the "fear of the Lord." It is just this which, with the blessing of God, will make an effect upon the consciences of the unconverted. When they see that we are in earnest, - that there is a reality about our profession as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; when they are able to say, "Look at that man, he is just what he was twenty, or thirty, or forty years ago." And so goes on that man or woman, - day by day, week by week, month after month, and year after year, - always in the fear of God, always setting Christ before him. Oh, if it were thus with us, beloved in Christ, what a testimony would our lives be to an ungodly world! More than this, how we should strengthen each other's hands in God! We are all members of the Body, and each one has a duty to perform, in order that his fellow-believers may be helped on. We should not be simply satisfied with reading that Jonathan went into the wood to strengthen the hands of David; but we should ask ourselves, "Do I strengthen my brethren and sisters? do I lend them a helping hand when they are tried and afflicted and weak? When they are falling, do I seek to strengthen their hands in God? " Again, in the Epistle to the Thessalonians we read, "Edify one another even as also ye do." Do we build up one another, and seek to encourage and lead on one another in the knowledge of Christ? How is it with us regarding these points? Is it true of us that we are not merely plants and trees, but fruit-bearing trees in the Lord's Garden? Oh! beloved in Christ, is our life and walk day by day a sweet perfume to Christ? Just let us ask ourselves, and deal honestly with our souls this evening; and before we go away let us ask ourselves, as before God, the question, Is my life and my deportment a sweet savour unto Christ? Do I refresh the heart of my blessed Lord? Thus it might be thus it ought to be, beloved in Christ. Oh let us aim after it, that it may be thus; and if we honestly ask the Lord that He would help us, we should most assuredly experience the fulfilment of the promise of the blessed Lord Jesus, contained in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, the twelfth verse: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." And we should verily experience the truth of the precious statement of the apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me."

The next verse, the fifteenth, "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." This is what the Lord Jesus Christ further says about the Church, - she is a fountain of gardens. That means a fountain in gardens, or a fountain such as is found in a garden. "A well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon," The particular point here, I think, that is intended to be conveyed as to the spiritual meaning is this, - the refreshing that is intended to be diffused through the instrumentality of the Church. You remember well that statement in the Gospel of John with regard to the Spirit not yet given, "That out of the believer should flow rivers of living water." The Church should be a fountain, - a spring

of living waters, - a spring running from Lebanon. How is it with us regarding this? If we ask ourselves as before God (and we should always deal honestly with our hearts), we should say, Is the living water flowing out of me? Am I God's instrument in conveying spiritual blessings? Do I by my life and deportment and words minister the Spirit to others? How often has it been thus; or has it been so at all? And if in some degree, is it so habitually? What the Lord Jesus Christ looks for is this, That since He has graciously been pleased to give unto us the Holy Ghost, it should be true of us individually, "that out of us flow rivers of living water." And I would say, that, if we more expected it, we should have more; and if our life and walk and deportment were more as it becomes a disciple of the Lord Jesus, we should, by the grace of the Spirit, refresh others, and out of us would verily flow "rivers of living water"; as was the case in the days of the apostles. The office of the apostles we cannot have; and if any were to come and tell us that they were apostles, we should at once say that they were liars. But while we cannot have the office of the apostles, - the grace of the apostles we should seek after. It may be true of the saints of the Most High now in this latter part of the nineteenth century, as it was true of them in the days of Paul, - that out of them "flow rivers of living water." And if, beloved in Christ here present, we were expecting this, and were praying for this, - that we might be men and women out of whom should "flow rivers of living water," we should find that verily the Lord is as good as His Word, and that He would give us help and strength that thus it might be.

The last verse, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." Possibly the way in which I understand this verse may differ from the way in which one or other of my beloved brethren understand it. The meaning, as I understand it, is this, - The Church responding, and the Church delighting to give joy to the heart of her beloved Bridegroom. The Church wishing to refresh Him by her sweet savours and pleasant fruits, says, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." I understand the whole of this verse, and not simply the last words thereof, to be a statement of the Church: the beloved is speaking to the bridegroom in order to refresh his heart; and so the saints of the Most High should ever look above and say to themselves, How can I give joy to the heart of my blessed Lord? He has laid down His life for me, what can I do for Him, how can I serve and glorify Him? And lest any say, I am poor, or I am young, or I have not much learning, I have been but recently brought to the knowledge of the Lord, - I say, everyone who is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a partaker of the Holy Ghost, regenerated and renewed, has it in his heart to refresh and gladden the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh let us never say, "I can do nothing to give joy to the heart of my blessed Lord." We *can* do it, and the Lord Jesus Christ looks for it that we should do it. He has given the last drop of His blood for us, and went through everything that was necessary for our salvation; and now is He looking that we, on our part, seek His glory, and refresh His heart, in return for all He has done for us. And thus it comes that the Church desires to gladden the heart of the Lord Jesus, and she says, "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits."

Now notice the response of the Blessed One in the first verse of the next chapter, "I am come into my Garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." The first thing I notice here particularly is this, it is all "My," "My," "My," because we belong to the Lord, and have nothing in ourselves. It is *My* spice, *My* Garden, *My* honeycomb, *My* honey, everything belonging to the Lord Jesus. And this we must never lose sight of, that however much we may be advanced in knowledge and grace, yet we owe every particle of grace and knowledge to the Lord. We must never stand before a spiritual looking-glass and think what we have done, what we have attained to; but give all the honour and glory - not in word only, for that is a little thing, - but in our inmost souls, to Him to whom it is alone due: the Lord Jesus Christ claims it all for Himself. It is *My* Garden, *My* sister, *My* spouse, *My* myrrh, *My* spice, *My* honeycomb, *My* honey, - *everything* belongs to Him.

And then at the close of the verse, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." "Be drunken in love," as it should be, or at least might be rendered. And here let me say particularly, if there is one thing more than another after which we should aim, it is an increase of love. Oh! when we think of it, - that there is a possibility of being drunken in love, what a blessed, blessed, blessed thing to set before us, to be aiming after this, - to be drunken in love, to be filled with love. Oh, beloved in Christ, let it be our holy, godly aim, to know something of this for ourselves! And these blessed meetings may be a great stimulus to us to aim after an increase of love. That is one of the special objects why we come together; not so much that we may instruct one another, but that we may excite one another to an increase of love. Oh let us aim after this! "God is love." And just in measure as we are helped on to increase in love, so, and only in so far, do we become more like God.

The word "Müllers" is written in a large, black, cursive script font. The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent 'M' and a long, sweeping tail on the 's'.

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