

Christ Delights in Me

2009 FCC Conference

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We began this series of addresses by looking at how Christ draws the believer to himself and we aimed at that address by noticing how he draws the believer into his own dwelling place. Then yesterday we looked at that whole idea of Christ dwelling with the believer and we ended with the mutual delight in that dwelling together. I would like to take up that theme this morning of Christ's delight in his people. So Christ draws us, Christ dwells with us, Christ delights in us.

This theme of the Lord's delight in his people is not confined to the Song of Solomon. We can look, for example, at Isaiah 62:4-5 where the Lord speaks through the prophet and says at the end of verse 4, "the LORD delighteth in thee." Then in verse 5, "For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Think of that. Think of that day when you married and the mutual delight you had in one another. So the Lord says he delights in his people as the bridegroom over the bride.

Then later on in the prophecy of Zephaniah we find in chapter 3, verse 17, "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Picture that. Here this bride and the bridegroom comes along and he is delighting in her so much that he has made up songs to her, love songs, and he is singing them to her to communicate his excitement with her and his delight in her. So even there in the prophets, the prophets who are so full of denunciations of sin, yet again and again we find this theme of the Lord's delight in his people. In fact, what is the Incarnation of Christ but the ultimate expression of the Lord's delight in his people? When we look at the life of Christ on earth, we see the delight he took, the joy he took in sinners. Isn't that staggering?

So let's look at that theme as we find it especially here in the Song of Solomon. I want you to notice, first of all, some of the names that the beloved, the Lord, gives to his bride, his beloved people. Notice, for example, in verse 10, "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one." Then again in verse 14, "O my dove." It would be a wonderful study actually to go through the Song of Solomon and make a list of all the names that Christ uses to address his beloved people; that would be a great encouragement to you if you would do that. And this is genuine. This is sincere. This isn't

flattery. This isn't trying to impress. This is exactly how he feels about you, believer. He looks at you and he says, "My love. My fair one. My dove."

Children, there is a little nature study for you for when you go home. You can make this a little study. The dove. Why? And it happens repeatedly throughout the Song of Solomon and why does the Lord call his people a dove? He doesn't call them an eagle. He doesn't call them a raven. He doesn't call them a robin. He calls them a dove. It's a beautiful picture if you really begin to look at what scientists and zoologists have discovered about the dove. I'll just give you a couple of hints. One is that the dove is the most loyal of all the birds. Most birds have lots of partners and friends in life but the dove has one. The dove has one. It has one partner in life. It is utterly loyal, utterly faithful. And when maybe that partner dove dies, it mourns and groans for the rest of its days. It is utterly loyal and faithful and it's such a beautiful bird too, isn't it? So pure. So white. So innocent. I wouldn't be surprised if the Lord called me a raven or do you have starlings here? I'm not sure if you do. You know, scavenger type birds. Dirty birds. But he comes and he says, "My dove."

So these are beautiful names to begin to encourage us about his delight in us. Then notice some of the words he says to her after this. Again, if you go to verse 10, he says, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." Then again at the end of verse 13, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Rise up and come away. Remember, we spoke of the king and his tent and the bride coming over the mountain, sunburned, dirty and yet he draws her in and into his presence and they have this wonderful wedding. I think what's pictured here now is the desire to get away from the crowd; to get away from the party; to get away from anything else that might distract. He's saying, "Let's go away together. Let's get some time alone just you and me. Rise up and come away."

Then it's interesting in verse 14 how he addresses her again, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice." Especially notice these words where she is. So he said, "Come on, my love, rise up. Come away." But where is she? Well, she seems to be hiding. She's in the cleft, the crevices of the rock he pictures her and secret places of the stairs as if there is some large house with a cupboard under the stair and she's sort of hiding away in it. There seems to be some kind of embarrassment, bashfulness, shame, reticence, as if she's just thinking, "Just don't let anybody look at me. Don't let anyone hear me. Let me be unseen. Let me be unnoticed." But it would appear that she feels, in a way, her unworthiness and she hides herself away and she feels, "If I'm here all my days and I'm never seen and never noticed again, so be it. That's what I deserve." And he seeks her out and he's looking in the crevices and in the cracks of the rock and he spots her while he's searching the home for her. He has looked in all the rooms and finally he finds a secret cupboard under the stairs and she is there in the dark and he spots her and he says, "Let me see thy face. Let me hear thy voice. I know you feel ashamed and embarrassed and unworthy but believe me, I really do want you. I want to be with you. I want to see you. I want to hear you."

Let's look at these 2 requests here and remember, this is you, believer. You feel like this, don't you? You maybe have come here this morning and you do feel like the last place in the world you want to be is here maybe. You'd rather be just left alone, you think. "What am I doing amongst all these Christians and godly people? Why would the Lord have anything to do with me? I should just be left alone, nobody seeing me, nobody hearing me." And through his word he is coming to you and he's saying, "Let me see you. Let me hear you."

Let's look at these 2 requests. I'd like to take them in reverse order, actually. First of all, he says, "Let me hear thy sweet voice. Let we hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice." What do you feel like, Christian, when you go to pray? Do you hear that voice again and you think, "Here we go again, just the usual routine. Is the Lord not weary of me?" The same words, the same routine, the same hypocrisy, the same insincerity, the same unbelief. You pray and yet you want to block your ears maybe as you pray. You don't want to hear your voice and you think, "How can he ever want to hear my voice?" Your voice to yourself sounds so horrible and yet here the beloved speaks and says, "Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice." That voice that grates in your ears, that pains you, your own voice, is sweet to him. He delights in it. He says, "Let me hear your sweet prayers." Yes, these prayers that are bitter to you are sweet to him. These prayers that you feel are so empty are full to him. These prayers that to you seem so repetitive, he says, "Let me hear them again and again."

This isn't just tolerance, is it? It's not just acceptance. He actually enjoys to hear your sweet prayers. Let that encourage you the next time you go to bend your knees before the Lord and you cringe almost as you begin. Take this verse and encourage yourself with it. The Lord is saying to me, "Let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice." Don't believe what your heart says. Don't believe what the devil says. Believe what the word of God says and the word of God says your prayers to him are sweet. They are welcome. They are enjoyable. They are as precious to him as your loved one that phones you after a gap of maybe a few weeks or a few months and you lift up the phone and you hear that voice and you say, "Fantastic! This is wonderful to hear your voice again!" Is the Lord any less enthusiastic to hear your voice?

Sometimes, even maybe our nearest and dearest in this world, maybe sometimes rarely but sometimes we think, "I could do with some quiet." Sometimes even the voice we love most in this world, we might say, "Okay, I've had enough. Just an hour," but the Lord never says that. Never. He has never heard enough. He never says, "Just give me a break. I need some peace." He ever lives not just to make intercession but to receive intercession. He loves to hear your sweet prayers. He loves to hear your sweet praise. We come to a gathering like this and we listen with wonder, I do at least, at the beauty of the singing. The talents. The gifts that God has given. The melodies and the harmonies. It's so heart-thrilling and we think, "I don't want to spoil this with my voice. These people are all singing so sincerely, so happily, so spiritually, so beautifully. Why add my croak, my grown, my grate to that and spoil it all? Does the Lord want to hear me sing?" He does. Joyful noises as well as joyful tunes and harmonies. Joyful croaks and groans and grates as well as the beautiful harmonies and balances.

Yes, add your voice. The worst singer here, he loves to hear his praise because he's not listening as we do for what pleases the ear; for pitch perfect notes and hitting all the right points at all the right places. He's looking at the heart and he sees tunefulness there and he hears it expressed even in our croakings and our groanings and he says, "Let me hear it. Let me hear it." So, again, when you come in public worship or private worship and you pick up the book of Psalms, take this verse up first and encourage yourself with it. Let it expand your lungs and fill your mouth because he is saying, "Let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice." He hears things in your singing that no one here can sing here. He does. When we hear, can we hear penitence? Can we hear humility? Can we hear hope? Can we hear faith? These are the notes that he hears. He doesn't hear A, B, C, D, do, re, mi, fa. These are the notes he is listening for and these are the notes that are sweet to his ears.

We're being told here basically that there is not only joy in heaven over a sinner repenting but over a sinner singing, that that melody actually does reach up not just to the outer courts of heaven but the very ears of the Lord Jesus, the real physical ears, human ears, and they enter into this human mind and he thinks about them and he enjoys them and he appreciates them wherever and whenever they are heard. And as God, he is able to hear not just one voice at a time or one congregation at a time but every single voice in every part of the world. You think of the vast numbers of Christians on a Sunday morning singing all over the world in all different tongues. "He can never hear all these voices individually, can he?" Of course he can. Think of the joy that fills his heart as he hears one here, one there, one here, one there, thousands, millions. How it must thrill him. How he must hear this verse fulfilled with such joy and how he responds with, "Sweet is thy voice."

Let's look secondly at the first request here because he says, "Let me see thy countenance." Let me see your face. Let me see your face. Why? He says, "Because thy countenance is commonly." Your face is beautiful. Your face is beautiful. It's not how we feel, is it? Sometimes we feel such failures and such sinners: we lose our temper; we fall into an old sin. We go and we look ourselves in the mirror and you just, again, you're like this believer here, you just want to shrink back and hide. You can hardly abide the sight of yourself. But here we are told the Lord comes to us and says, "Let me see your face." What is it about our faces that he wants to see? What does he find beautiful? Again, he's not looking at human measurements of beauty. He sees things in a face that we rarely do. Sometimes we can, rarely we do. He sees beautiful expressions. You see that, don't you, in a young child? You can look at a young child's face, maybe 2, 3, 4, 5, and that face is just continually changing. Continually. So expressive. So varied and it's just so fascinating, isn't it? But as we grow older, we kind of develop an ability to present a more uniform face. We have some expressions but we kind of get quite skilled at presenting a same face. We don't deliberately think about it but that's what happens and you can look at somebody and do you really know what's behind that mask?

Well, the Lord does. He sees our faces as a little child's face. He sees expressions, movements, that we cannot see. He sees when we have a hopeful expression, when our

face is filled with hopeful, forward-looking, heavenly mindedness. When we can look beyond this world and see the world to come, the new heavens and the new earth. He can see when that enlightens our face and gladdens us. He can see when our faces, yes, are blushing with penitence and sorrow over our sin, when we do feel that spiritual embarrassment. He sees that too. He sees the face that is persevering with determination despite many afflictions and many difficulties and many knock-backs and drawbacks. He sees that person who sets their face like a flint and perseveres on and puts that face into the wind and swims against that tide and battles against that trial and temptation. He sees that. He notices it. He sees that face that looks to him, that is looking heavenwards, because there is nothing else on earth that will help them at this time. He sees when every false hope and confidence is left behind, that the whole soul is through the face looking upwards. "To whom else can I go? You have the words of eternal life." He sees that courage when we are facing opposition, persecution, mocking, prejudice. He sees that courage that says, "No, I'm not going to say it back. I'm not going to flinch. I'm not going to compromise." He sees that face full of joy as it hears the Gospel. As it draws near to him. As it senses his presence. He sees every single spiritual expression on your face though outwardly to anyone else it might look exactly the same.

One of the things I really miss about not now being a pastor in a congregation is the familiar faces in my congregation. The Scottish Highlanders are not a very expressive people. They are not as expressive as Americans but with time, you do begin to detect a little change here and there on that face and when you are preaching, there are sometimes you really need that and you know there is a certain person there in the second back row, if I could just see their face, I'll see that, "Come on, Pastor. Keep going. I'm praying for you." Or you'll see that hungry soul in the second front row, that young Christian that is hanging on every word that just keeps you going. And you know where to look whenever you're in a particular need. Again, it's not something you're thinking about but you just develop a relationship with the people in front of you and you know where not to look and here the Lord is saying, "I see every face. I see every expression. I know where to look and I know when to look. I see it all. I see every twitch, every flicker, every movement, and it's so beautiful to me."

Think of that: the Lord is looking down on you this morning and he is saying, "Let me see thy face for your face is beautiful." And there is a theme that runs through the Song of Solomon and it's the theme of eyes and there's nothing really more expressive in the faces than the eyes. That's where we look at people if we really want to know how they feel, the eyes. They can cover up a lot with the cheeks and the mouth, forehead, but the eyes have it. The eyes tell it. And there are some amazing verses later on in this book. You look at Song of Solomon 4:9, here again the beloved is speaking. In verse 7 he said, "Come again. Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee. Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon." Lebanon was renowned for its beautiful cedar trees. Amana for its clear running river. Shenir and Hermon, that's the same place for the fertilizing dew that fell on that mountain. Here is being described some of the most beautiful places on earth and yet the Lord is saying to his beloved, "Come away from there." Even the best places, the best human experiences. Why? Well, he says, "Come away from the lions'

den," verse 8, and "from the mountains of the leopards." He's saying, "Even the best, the highest, the greatest human experiences have dangers in them. They have their leopards. They have their lions." They can turn on us. The best times in our life can become dangerous times. We can get carried away. We can get taken away. The Lord prospers us and our hearts grow cold. He says, "Come away from these."

Then he says, verse 9, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse." Did he really say that? He did because he says it again, "thou hast ravished my heart." That word "ravished" means "claimed completely; seized; stolen; mastered." He's saying to her, "You have taken my heart. You've got it. You've claimed it. It's yours." And how did she do it? She must have done something amazing surely to have accomplished this. To have so impacted her beloved that he says, "You have ravished me. You have conquered me. You have claimed me. You have got me." What did she do? "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes." You know, it actually means with one glance. One glance. What has been said here is that the Lord sees every single glance towards him. Every single one. Every single time you look to him in prayer, in praise or trust or repentance. Every one, he notices. He sees. More than that, he acknowledges. More than that, he enjoys. More than that, it conquers him. It ravishes him.

"You mean to say that even right now if the eye of my soul looks toward him, the Lord Jesus knows I'm doing this right here and amongst this crowd he can see that?" That's exactly what the word teaches. "You mean to say that when I go into private and I mumble that pathetic prayer once again, that he actually sees me looking heavenwards?" More than that, he is ravished by it. Ravished by it. He is utterly captivated. He is magnetized. He cannot look away. It brings a smile to his face and joy to his heart. You can do that right now to Jesus. Right now. Let's have many eyes look at him. Let's hear friends thrill the heart of the Lord Jesus. Let every eye be looking, "Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus." Let his heart be ravished by us. Let us thrill him. Every eye.

And he goes on and he says, "how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!" Remember, he has been in this huge wedding party with the greatest of wines and fragrances and smells and he says, "Let's leave all these things behind. I just want you. Just you. Your eyes. Your voice to me now." He says, "That's better to me than the greatest parties, the greatest things that this world can offer."

Let me show you one last verse. Song of Solomon 6:5. It just gets more and more remarkable. Look at verse 4, he says to her again, "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me." Can you believe that? That it doesn't just...he doesn't just notice it. He's not just ravished by it. It has such an impact on him that here he's, as it were, saying, "I can take no more. It's too much. I'm overcome." Of course, this is poetic. Never will the Lord really say, "Stop looking at me." But he's using every poetic device in the book to emphasize the impact of your eyes on him as you look towards him. The Lord delights in you, believer. He enjoys you. He notices every single movement of the soul. He regards and rejoices in it.

Now, who are you going to believe? Your heart or God's word? The devil's whispers or the Lord's whispers in your ear? He comes to you, believer, every day of worship, every day and he says, "Let me hear thy voice; for thy voice is sweet. Let me see thy face; for thy face is beautiful." And that never ends. However far away you have gone, however distant, however hidden you try to make yourself, he is saying, "Come out. Come away. Rise up." And he does this in conversion, doesn't he? And when a soul is converted, this is effectively what he says. He comes to the sinner and says, "Rise up and come away. Let me hear thy voice. Let me see thy face. Let's have a relationship. Let's have intimacy. Let's have love between us. No more enmity. No more anger. No more darkness." Unconverted friend here today, unbelieving friend, stranger to this kind of experience, it can be yours. He comes to you through the Gospel and he says, "Rise up away from your sins, away from your past and come away with me. Let me see your face. Let me hear, yes, even your voice that has spent so much time sinning, blaspheming, criticizing, even persecuting his people. Let me hear that voice in prayer, in praise, in penitence."

When we are backslidden he says this, "Let me see your face again. Let me hear your voice again." But ultimately are these not the words that we hear at death when the believer dies? Yes, here people say, "I miss his face and I miss her voice." But it's because the Lord has said, "Rise up. Come away. Let me see thy face. Let me hear thy voice more directly, more closely, no more on earth but now in heaven." Think of a believer's death like that. The Lord has come to them and the Lord has said to them these words, "Let me see thy countenance. Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely." I think we can let them go if that's what they are going to. John Bunyan said that the summons came to Mr. Steadfast to pass over the Jordan and the contents of the summons were that he must prepare for a change of life. Listen to this, "For his master was not willing that he should be so far from him any longer."

Let's pray.

Can this be? We believe. Help thou our unbelief. We see these words in thy word, we believe they are true, but it's really hard at times to believe they are true for us. Help our unbelief. Come with thy Holy Spirit and make these words really precious to thy precious people here. May they truly believe thy desire is toward them and thy delight is in them, that thou cravest nearness to thy people in this world and that at death, thou art expressing that desire in an ultimate way. Help us to live in thy pavilion, in thy tabernacle, in thy secret place. Help us each day to rise up and come away. Speak these precious words to us, "My love. My dove." In Jesus' name. Amen.