

He Is Altogether Lovely

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all.

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond perfectness.

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual

songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” Colossians 3:10-17.

I want you to fall in love with Christ as you never have before. In this booklet, I want you to see something very simple. That is, that Jesus Christ is altogether lovely in everything that He does. His mercy, grace, and love have made us victorious. He has also made the Christian part of a great royal family to be honored and enjoyed throughout eternity.

Chapter One

OUR BELOVED, OUR FRIEND

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

“For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:20-21).

“His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem” (Song of Solomon 5:16).

The Apostle Paul came in fear and trembling to Corinth, saying “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). In Luke 4:20, Jesus entered the synagogue and all eyes were fastened upon him. In Matthew 17:8, after Moses and Elijah had visited Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration, the Bible says, “they saw no

man, save Jesus only." In Acts 8:35, Philip ministered to the Ethiopian eunuch by opening the Scriptures and teaching him about Jesus.

Jesus never wrote a song, never wrote a book, was rejected of men, and yet He is the central figure in world history today. It is the most amazing story. God became Man through meekness. He was God though He was Man, Man though He was God. And, here's the great thing about Him who is "all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11)—He is altogether lovely.

The Paradoxes of His Person

He was lonely, yet He comforted people. He was a man of sorrows and yet He brought joy that remained (Isaiah 53:3, John 15:11). He was despised, yet He accepted every sinner who would come to Him. Jesus Christ would take those who were divided and unite them if possible. Jesus was hated yet He loved the whole world. He was rejected and yet He received whosoever chose to come to Him.

If you are in darkness, Jesus is Light. If you are a sinner, He is your Savior. If you are guilty, He is your Forgiver. If you are bereaved, He is your resurrection hope. If you are wandering, He is your way. If you are truly ignorant, Jesus is

your knowledge and your wisdom. If you feel like an outcast, accept Him and He becomes your righteousness forever. If you have no hope, come to Him and let Him be your blessed Hope. If you are sick, He is your Great Physician.

He is altogether lovely, a great Friend. Not only was Jesus accused of being a winebibber and gluttonous, but He was also known as “a friend of publicans and sinners” (Luke 7:34). He received them and ate with them (Luke 15:2) because He saw their need and loved them.

Thank God, He is altogether lovely.

Revealing the Father's Heart

Jesus was separate from sinners in that He did not sin (Hebrews 7:26). Consider the story of the prodigal son. Jesus doesn't mention Himself in the story, but He reveals the Father's heart (see Luke 15).

When the prodigal said, “I have come to the end of myself. My father has many hired servants. There is plenty back there, and I'm hungry. I will go home and say that I have sinned against heaven and I have sinned against him.” So, he got up and went home. Jesus wanted us to know the Father's heart by showing that when the prodigal's father saw his son afar off,

he ran to the son and kept kissing him on the neck.

The son tried to confess—"I have sinned against heaven; I have sinned against you. I am no more worthy to be called your son. I will just be your servant." The father never heard it, because he was kissing his son's neck. In those days, kissing the neck was a sign of great oneness. When Paul left Ephesus, men and women kept kissing his neck. The meaning of this act was much deeper, because it represented kissing the soul of the person. The neck represented the life of the soul in ancient times. God the Father used the term because He wanted us to know how much He loves us.

"Give my son the robe, the ring, the shoes. Kill the fatted calf," the father said after the prodigal came home. "My son was dead. Lost, but now he is found."

What Jesus was saying in this story is "Don't you ever forget that this is what your Father is like."

Chapter Two

MADE WHOLE BY RESURRECTION LIFE

In Luke 7, the prostitute came into Simon's house and washed Jesus' feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and anointed His feet with precious ointment. Simon was accusing Jesus in his heart. Jesus said, "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head."

He continued, "Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

"My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Then Jesus turned to the prostitute and said, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

What is my message? He is altogether lovely, that's all it is. He is all in all. He's altogether lovely.

An attempt was made to trick Jesus. The woman taken in adultery was brought to Him. He stooped down to write on the ground, got up and said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). He went back to writing on the ground. When He got up the second time, everyone had left but the woman. They had gone out, the eldest to the youngest.

To the woman, Jesus said, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?"

"No man, Lord," she answered.

Then He said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more" (John 8:11).

He is altogether lovely.

He is Resurrection Life Right Now

In John 11, Lazarus died. Jesus was a dear friend of Martha and Mary and He spent much time at their home. When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha were disappointed because Jesus

didn't come when he was sick. Martha said, "I know if You had been here, Lazarus would have been all right." She was really being sarcastic, and she was pouting too. She believed in the God of yesterday, the God of the Old Testament. She believed that at the Last Day He would raise up people—including her brother.

But Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life [right now]: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25-26). Jesus does not see us in spiritual death once we have been saved at the Cross.

In John 11:33, Jesus groaned. In John 11:34 He asked, "Where have you laid him?" In John 11:35, He wept. People who were watching Him said, "Behold, how he loved him!" (John 11:36). In John 11:38, He groaned again.

Why did Jesus groan out loud? He identified with people who did not believe. He knew He was going to resurrect Lazarus, but He was thinking of all of us, as well as the Jews who were living at that time. Identification with our heartache over loss of loved ones made Him groan.

I am telling you He is altogether lovely. No

one ever spoke as He did.

Loving His Own Until The End

The thing that makes Jesus so unique is that He loved His own until the end. After Peter denied Him, Jesus could have looked this way or that way, but His eyes were fixed upon Peter. They must have been precious, tender eyes, because Peter went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:61-62). He wasn't scolding Peter. At this time, Jesus hadn't reminded him of anything, but Peter couldn't handle the tenderness of Jesus' eyes and he knew he had hurt his dear friend.

In John 21:15-19, Peter had gone fishing. Before he ever repented, Jesus gave him the Great Commission, asking him three times, "Lovest thou Me." Jesus wanted to be loved by this backslider. Jesus wants you to love Him. He wants me to love Him. He wanted to be loved by Peter.

"Lovest thou Me? Lovest thou Me? I want you to Love Me, Peter. I am human though I am God. Love Me."

Then Jesus explained Peter's future. "You're not going to make it for a while. Feed My sheep, feed My lambs. When you get older, you will die for Me. But in the meantime, serve Me anyway,

just as you are.”

That is altogether lovely.

Unlimited Forgiveness

Think of what Jesus said in Matthew 18:21.

“How many times am I to forgive?” Peter asked. “I think seven times.” The priests said four times was enough. But Jesus, with an idiom of speech, said “Seventy times seven—endlessly forgive. Forgiveness is unlimited.”

The One who forgives with unlimited forgiveness recommissions Peter to preach, even though Peter has not yet begun to understand forgiveness. He is altogether lovely.

Jesus told Peter, “You’re not going to get it right until you are old.” He used the word “old.” Then, Peter would die for Christ. History tells us that he was crucified upside down. He wanted his feet up and his head down because he did not want to die like Jesus.

Christ’s Love for Israel

When I read Matthew 23:37, I see in my heart how much Jesus loves the Jewish people. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered thy child together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye

would not!" Then He went on to prophesy how Jerusalem would be taken and destroyed by Rome and Titus in A.D. 70 (Matthew 23:38-24:2).

I see Jesus' heart in Luke 19:41 as He weeps over this city, and thinks of the sins of not only Jerusalem, but also of those who would bring such pain and persecution to the Jewish people throughout history. He thinks of all that His dear people would have to go through. Israel won't accept Him until His advent according to Zechariah 12:10. This speaks not of the Rapture of the Church, but of Jesus' return to earth at the end of the Great Tribulation. At that moment, the children of Israel will finally see and recognize His wounds and they will mourn and accept Him as Messiah in one day.

But, in Luke 19, Jesus weeps and thinks, "Oh, the pain that this nation is going to go through, and here I am. I am coming to My own, and they receive Me not. I am offering them the free gift of love and they won't accept it."

Chapter Three

MERCY AND GRACE IN OUR TIMES OF NEED

I see Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane with the blood coming out of his pores, asking the Father to remove the cup of separation from Him. He prayed, falling on His face, asking His Father again as the disciples were sleeping. The Son did not want to be separated from the Father for three hours (Matthew 27:46). He had never been separated from the Father before. There is no one like Him. He is altogether lovely.

The Bible says, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

What has your temptation been? Each of us could mention many temptations and failures.

But Jesus knows exactly what it is like to be tempted, so He identifies with us in the most wonderful way. He wants to be our provision to overcome temptation.

He is altogether lovely.

I see Him now with the two thieves running out their tongues at Him. Suddenly, something happens to one of them. "This Man has done nothing," he says. He changes his heart and his mind—that's repentance.

This thief said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

"And Jesus said unto him, Verily, verily, I say to unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43).

At first, this man was mocking Jesus, then he got saved. He never had an opportunity to be baptized and never went to church, yet he was going to be with Jesus in heaven.

Jesus is altogether lovely.

At Rest in the Midst of the Storms

I preached a sermon years ago about the boat in Matthew 8:23-27. Many were with us on our trip to Israel and the Sea of Galilee years ago. This is where the fishermen lived most of the time. That is where their business was.

On the boat in the middle of that same sea, Jesus slept through a storm that was caused by demons. His disciples panicked and awakened Him. Addressing His disciples He asked, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." Jesus was resting in the midst of the storm, aware that the demons could do nothing to them while He was on the boat.

He is altogether lovely.

Incomprehensible Mercy and Grace

Jesus' plan was to give us mercy to rejoice against judgment. It simply means that He was not going to give what we rightly deserve as sinners. When I think of what I really deserve, I can occasionally get a projection of fear.

We don't receive what we truly deserve. Instead, at the point of salvation, God gives us sixty-eight things we don't merit. Grace doesn't judge us, it does sixty-eight things for us while we are yet ungodly (Romans 4:5).

Not only were we saved by grace through faith and not of works, but He was also rich in mercy toward us when we were living in trespasses and sin. Jesus quickened us together by grace when we were saved, and seated us to-

gether with Him in heavenly places. In addition to all of these benefits, He also made it possible for us to receive the fullness of grace—which means grace upon grace upon grace upon grace upon grace.

If you want to study mercy, which means that we do not get the penalty we deserve, you will find it mentioned 26 times in Psalm 136. "...mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," David wrote in Psalm 23:6. Mercy is established forever.

I cannot fully comprehend mercy and grace. I just cannot. I have preached it for nearly fifty years. Still, I cannot fully comprehend it, although I believe in it 100 percent. It is just too wonderful.

Mercy endures forever. It rejoices against judgment. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Sin reigns unto death, but grace reigns by Jesus Christ through righteousness unto eternal life (Romans 5:20-21).

When God placed us under grace (Romans 6:14) and fulfilled the Law (Romans 10:4), He told us not to continue in sin. God forbid that we do. Can't you see that in everything I am telling you, He is altogether lovely?

Honor in the Royal Family

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the midst of the assembly (Numbers 14:5). Do you see why it is important for us to come in with a tremendous reverence, when we assemble in the congregation with the elders (Psalm 89:7)? Do you see why assembly meetings are so sacred? Jesus walks in the midst of His churches (Revelation 2:1-2), writing down how we listen, taking note of what we received from each service, recording what was preached, and hearing what we say in the car afterwards. He puts it all in a book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16). Do you see how precise He is? Do you understand that He desires a personal relationship with you?

I have always been deeply touched by the story of Jesus touching Blind Bartimaeus when He went from Jerusalem to Jericho (Mark 10:46-52). I don't read of a single thing happening on that trip but the healing of this blind man. Multitudes were following Jesus. He never went beyond two hundred miles at a time in His entire ministry. However, He went that far for Bartimaeus, and He died for everyone all over the world. He is so lovely.

On the Cross in Luke 23:34, Jesus says, "Fa-

ther, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Jesus says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"(Matthew 24:35). His Word is forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89).

He loves the assembly meeting because we sing about Him, we pray to Him, and we talk about Him. We reveal a special love for each other when we forgive as He forgives. It is His love that we are revealing.

Song of Solomon says, "His mouth is sweet." It sure is. "He is altogether lovely." He sure is. "He is our beloved." He sure is. "He is our friend." He sure is.

Thomas did not believe that Jesus was alive. So, on the second Sunday after the Resurrection, Jesus came through that closed door. He didn't go to Peter, John, or James. So many people were gathered there, but He went directly to Thomas, saying, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas responded, "My Lord and My God" (see John 20:26-28). Jesus went to the one who didn't believe and just loved him up.

He is altogether lovely. He is all and in all. And we are determined to know nothing except

Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We should honor each other because the royal family of Christ has the highest honor code in all the universe. Some people don't know this and they become so arrogant and independent. The honor code means that I highly esteem others without reservation (1 Timothy 5:21) .

Honor isn't adulation when you are filled with the Spirit. In the Bible, God says, "If you will honor Me, I will honor you" (see 1 Samuel 2:30). "Honor" means you have this value system—the greatest value system—for your fellow believers. You value them highly, because they are going to be a part of the Bride of Christ with you for all eternity.

Honoring someone this way isn't exalting the flesh. Honor is saying, "Boy, I pray for you in the morning; sometimes when I am riding in the car. You don't know this. You never dreamed that I do this. But I dearly honor you and value you highly.

A person who doesn't understand the value system of the royal family's honor code is a person who is a novice—arrogant, judgmental, and critical.

CONCLUSION

I hope that when we see Jesus Christ alone, face to face, in the Supreme Court of Heaven—and we will, by God's grace—that He will say to each of us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." This is my greatest desire.

He is altogether lovely.

At salvation He gives me the Holy Spirit so that I can love just as He loves. He fills me with the Word of God richly so that I can have His wisdom in my mind. He fills me with faith so that I can execute His power in authority. When I fall, He says, "Son, get up. Isolate it, forget it, and move on" (see Philippians 3:13-14).

Unto those of us who believe, Jesus is amazingly precious. When we get up in the morning, He is with us. There is not a thing we can do, not a place we can go, where He is not with us.

"...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20).

"I will never, [no never] leave thee, nor for-

sake thee," Jesus promises in Hebrews 13:5. He is altogether lovely.