

CHRIST
ALTOGETHER
LOVELY

"Yes, He is altogether lovely."
-Song of Songs 5:16

JOHN FLAVEL



SERMON ONE

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CHRIST IS TO BE LOVED

At the ninth verse of this chapter, you have a question put forth by the daughters of Jerusalem, “What is your beloved more than another beloved?” The spouse answers, “He is the chief among ten thousand.” She then recounts many of the things she finds so excellent in her beloved and then concludes with these words that I have read: “Yes, he is altogether lovely.”

The words set forth the transcendent loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and naturally resolve themselves into three parts:

- 1. Who He is.**
- 2. What He is.**
- 3. What He is like.**

First, Who he is: the Lord Jesus Christ, after whom

she had been seeking, for whom she was overcome by love; concerning whom these daughters of Jerusalem had enquired: whom she had struggled to describe in his particular excellencies. This is the great and excellent subject of whom she here speaks.

Secondly, What he is, or what she claims of him: That he is a lovely one. The Hebrew word, which is often translated “desires,” means “to earnestly desire, covet, or long after that which is most pleasant, graceful, delectable and admirable.” The original word is both in the abstract, and plural in number, which says that Christ is the very essence of all delights and pleasures, the very soul and substance of them. As all the rivers are gathered into the ocean, which is the meeting-place of all the waters in the world, so Christ is that ocean in which all true delights and pleasures meet.

Thirdly, What he is like: He is altogether lovely, the every part to be desired. He is lovely when taken together, and in every part; as if she had said, “Look on him in what respect or particular you wish; cast your eye upon this lovely object, and view him any way, turn him in your serious thoughts which way you wish; consider his person, his offices, his works, or any other thing belonging to him; you will find him altogether lovely, There is nothing disagreeable in him, there is nothing lovely without him.” Hence note,

DOCTRINE: That Jesus Christ is the loveliest person souls can set their eyes upon: “Thou art fairer than the children of men.” Psalm 14:2.

He is “Altogether Lovely”

Here it is said of Jesus Christ, which cannot be said of any mere creature, that he is “altogether lovely.” In opening this lovely point I shall,

1. Examine the importance of this phrase “altogether lovely.”
2. Show you in what respect Christ is so.

What is meant by “Altogether Lovely”

Let us consider this excellent expression, and particularly reflect on what is contained in it, and you shall find this expression “altogether lovely.”

First, It excludes all unloveliness and disagreeableness from Jesus Christ. As a theologian long ago said, “There is nothing in him which is not loveable.” The excellencies of Jesus Christ are perfectly exclusive of all their opposites; there is nothing of a contrary property or quality found in him to contaminate or devaluate his excellency. And in this respect Christ infinitely transcends the most excellent and loveliest of created things. Whatsoever loveliness is found in them, it is not without a bad aftertaste. The fairest pictures must have their shadows: The rarest and most brilliant gems must have dark backgrounds to set off their beauty; the best creature is but a bitter

sweet at best: If there is something pleasing, there is also something sour. If a person has every ability, both innate and acquired, to delight us, yet there is also some natural corruption intermixed with it to put us off. But it is not so in our altogether lovely Christ, his excellencies are pure and unmixed. He is a sea of sweetness without one drop of gall.

Secondly, "Altogether lovely," i.e. There is nothing unlovely found in him, so all that is in him is wholly lovely. As every ray of God is precious, so every thing that is in Christ is precious: Who can weigh Christ in a pair of balances, and tell you what his worth is? "His price is above rubies, and all that thou canst desire is not to be compared with him," Prov. 8:11.

Thirdly "Altogether lovely," i.e. He embraces all things that are lovely: he seals up the sum of all loveliness. Things that shine as single stars with a particular glory, all meet in Christ as a glorious constellation. Col. 1:19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." Cast your eyes among all created beings, survey the universe: you will observe strength in one, beauty in a second, faithfulness in a third, wisdom in a fourth; but you shall find none excelling in them all as Christ does. Bread has one quality, water another, raiment another, medicine another; but none has them all in itself as Christ does. He is bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, a

garment to the naked, healing to the wounded; and whatever a soul can desire is found in him, 1 Cor. 1:30.

Fourthly, "Altogether lovely," i.e. Nothing is lovely in opposition to him, or in separation from him. If he truly is altogether lovely, then whatsoever is opposite to him, or separate from him can have no loveliness in it. Take away Christ, and where is the loveliness of any enjoyment? The best creature-comfort apart from Christ is but a broken cistern. It cannot hold one drop of true comfort, Psalm 73:26. It is with the creature--the sweetest and loveliest creature--as with a beautiful image in the mirror: turn away the face and where is the image? Riches, honours, and comfortable relations are sweet when the face of Christ smiles upon us through them; but without him, what empty trifles are they all?

Fifthly, "Altogether lovely," i.e. transcending all created excellencies in beauty and loveliness. If you compare Christ and other things, no matter how lovely, no matter how excellent and desirable, Christ carries away all loveliness from them. "He is (as the apostle says) before all things," Col. 1:17. Not only before all things in time, nature, and order; but before all things in dignity, glory, and true excellence. In all things he must have the pre-eminence. Let us but compare Christ's excellence with the creature's in a few particulars, and how manifest will the transcendent loveliness of Jesus Christ appear! For,

1. All other loveliness is derived and secondary; but the loveliness of Christ is original and primary. Angels and men, the world and all the desirable things in it, receive what excellence they crave from him. They are streams from the fountain. The farther any thing departs from its fountain and original, the less excellency there is in it.

2. The loveliness and excellency of all other things, is only relative, consisting in its reference to Christ, and subservience to his glory. But Christ is lovely, considered absolutely in himself. He is desirable for himself; other things are desirable because of him.

3. The beauty and loveliness of all other things are fading and perishing; but the loveliness of Christ is fresh for all eternity. The sweetness of the best created thing is a fading flower; if not before, yet certainly at death it must fade away. Job 4:21. "Doth not their excellency, which is in them, go away?" Yes, yes, whether they are the natural excellencies of the body, acquired endowments of the mind, lovely features, graceful qualities, or anything else we find attractive; all these like pleasant flowers are withered, faded, and destroyed by death. "But Christ is still the same, yesterday, today, and for ever," Heb. 13:8.

4. The beauty and holiness of creatures are ensnaring and dangerous. A man may make an idol out of them, and indulge himself beyond the bounds of

moderation with them, but there is no danger of excess in the love of Christ. The soul is then in the healthiest frame and temper when it is most overwhelmed by love to Christ, Song of Songs 5:8.

5. The loveliness of every creature is of a confining and obstructing nature. Our esteem of it diminishes the closer we approach to it, or the longer we enjoy it. Creatures, like pictures, are fairest at a certain distance, but it is not so with Christ; the nearer the soul approaches him, and the longer it lives in the enjoyment of him, still the sweeter and more desirable he becomes.

6. All other loveliness cannot satisfy the soul of man. There is not scope enough in any one created thing, or in all the natural universe of created things for the soul of man to reach out and expand; but the soul still feels itself confined and narrowed within those limits. This comes to pass from the inadequacy and unsuitableness of the creature to the nobler and more excellent soul of man. The soul is like a ship in a narrow river, which does not have room to turn. It is always running aground and foundering in the shallows. But Jesus Christ is in every way sufficient to the vast desires of the soul; in him it has sea-room enough. In him the soul may spread all its sails with no fear of touching bottom. And thus you see what is the importance of this phrase, "Altogether lovely."

How Christ is “Altogether Lovely”

Secondly, Next I promised to show you in what respects Jesus Christ is altogether lovely:

HE IS LOVELY IN HIS
PERSON

First, He is altogether lovely in his person: he is Deity dwelling in flesh, John 1:14. The wonderful, perfect union of the divine and human nature in Christ renders him an object of admiration and adoration to both angels and men, 1 Tim. 3:16. God never presented to the world such a vision of glory before. Consider how the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ is overflowing with all the graces of the Spirit, in such a way as never any of the saints was filled. O what a lovely picture does this paint of him! John 3:34, “God gives the Spirit [to him] without limit.” This makes him “the most excellent of men and [his] lips have been anointed with grace,” Psalm 45:2. If a small measure of grace in the saints makes them sweet and desirable companions, what must the riches of the Spirit of grace filling Jesus Christ without measure make him in the eyes of believers? O what a glory must it fix upon him!

HE IS LOVELY IN HIS
OFFICES

Secondly, He is altogether lovely in his offices: let us consider for a moment the suitability, fullness, and comforting nature of them.

First, The suitability of the offices of Christ to the miseries of men. We cannot but adore the infinite wisdom of his receiving them. We are, by nature, blind and ignorant, at best but groping in the dim light of nature after God, Acts 17:27. Jesus Christ is a light to lighten the Gentiles, Isa. 49:6. When this great prophet came into the world, then did the day-spring from on high visit us, Luke 1:78. By nature we are alienated from, and at enmity against God; Christ comes into the world to be an atoning sacrifice, making peace by the blood of his cross, Col. 1:20. All the world, by nature, is in bondage and captivity to Satan, a miserable slavery. Christ comes with kingly power, to rescue sinners, as a prey from the mouth of the terrible one.

Secondly, Let the fullness of his offices be also considered, which make him able “to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him,” Heb. 7:25. The three offices, comprising in them all that our souls do need, become an universal relief to all our distresses; and therefore,

Thirdly, Unspeakably comforting must the offices of Christ be to the souls of sinners. If light were pleasant to our eyes, how pleasant is that light of life springing from the Sun of righteousness! Mal. 4:2. If a pardon be

sweet to a condemned criminal, how sweet must the sprinkling the blood of Jesus be to the trembling conscience of a law-condemned sinner? If a rescue from a cruel tyrant is sweet to a poor captive, how sweet must it be to the ears of enslaved sinners, to hear the voice of liberty and deliverance proclaimed by Jesus Christ? Out of the several offices of Christ, as out of so many fountains, all the promises of the new covenant flow, as so many soul-refreshing streams of peace and joy. All the promises of illumination, counsel and direction flow out of Christ's prophetic office. All the promises of reconciliation, peace, pardon, and acceptation flow out of his priestly office, with the sweet streams of joy and spiritual comforts which accompany it. All the promises of converting, increasing, defending, directing, and supplying grace, flow out of the kingly office of Christ; indeed, all promises may be reduced to these three offices, so that Jesus Christ must be altogether lovely in his offices.

J E S U S C H R I S T I S
A L T O G E T H E R L O V E L Y I N H I S
R E L A T I O N S .

First, **He is a lovely Redeemer**, Isa. 61:1. He came to open the prison-doors to them that are bound. Needs must this Redeemer be a lovely one, if we consider the depth of misery from which he redeemed us, even

“from the wrath to come,” 1 Thess. 1:10. Consider the numbers redeemed, and the means of their redemption. Rev. 5:9, “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation.’” He redeemed us not with silver and gold, but with his own precious blood, by way of price, 1 Pet. 1:18,19. with his out-stretched and glorious arm, by way of power, Col. 1:13. he redeemed us freely, Eph. 1:7, fully Rom. 8:1, at the right time, Gal. 4:4, and out of special and particular love, John 17:9. In a word, he has redeemed us for ever, never more to come into bondage, 1 Pet. 1:5. John 10:28. O how lovely is Jesus Christ in the relation of a Redeemer to God’s elect!

Secondly, **He is a lovely bridegroom to all that he betroths to himself.** How does the church glory in him, in the words following my text; “this is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!” Heaven and earth cannot show anyone like him, which needs no fuller proof than the following particulars:

1. That he betroths to himself, in mercy and in loving kindness, such deformed, defiled, and altogether unworthy souls as we are. We have no beauty, no goodness to make us desirable in his eyes; all the origins of his love to us are in his own breast, Deut. 7:7.

He chooses us, not because we were, but in order that he might make us lovely Eph. 5:27. He came to us when we lay in our blood, and said unto us, "Live"; and that was the time of love, Ezek. 16:5.

2. He expects no restitution from us, and yet gives himself, and all that he has, to us. Our poverty cannot enrich him, but he made himself poor to enrich us, 2 Cor. 8:9. 1 Cor. 3:22.

3. No husband loves the wife of his bosom, as much as Christ loved his people, Eph. 5:25. He loved the church and gave him self for it.

4. No one bears with weaknesses and provocations as Christ does; the church is called "the Lamb's wife," Rev. 19:9.

5. No husband is so undying and everlasting a husband as Christ is; death separates all other relations, but the soul's union with Christ is not dissolved in the grave. Indeed, the day of a believer's death is his marriage day, the day of his fullest enjoyment of Christ. No husband can say to his wife, what Christ says to the believer, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," Heb. 8:5.

6. No bridegroom enriches his bride with such honours by marriage, as Christ does; he makes them related to God as their father, and from that day the mighty and glorious angels think it no dishonour to be their servants, Heb. 1:14. The angels will admire the

beauty and glory of the spouse of Christ, Rev. 21:9.

7. No marriage was ever consummated with such triumphal proceedings as the marriage of Christ and believers shall be in heaven, Psalm 14:14,15. "She shall be brought to the king in raiment of needle-work, the virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto thee; with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace." Among the Jews, the marriage-house was called the house of praise; there was joy upon all hands, but nothing like the joy that will be in heaven when believers, the spouse of Christ, shall be brought there. God the Father will rejoice to behold the blessed accomplishment and confirmation of those glorious plans of his love. Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom will rejoice to see the travail of his soul, the blessed birth and product of all his bitter pains and agonies, Isa. 53:11. The Holy Spirit will rejoice to see the completion and perfection of that sanctifying design which was committed to his hand, 2 Cor. 5:5, to see those souls whom he once found as rough stones, now to shine as the bright, polished stones of the spiritual temple. Angels will rejoice: great was the joy when the foundation of this design was laid, in the incarnation of Christ, Luke 2:13. Great therefore must their joy be, when the top-stone is set up with shouting, crying, "Grace, grace." The saints themselves shall rejoice

unspeakably, when they shall enter into the King's palace, and be forever with the Lord, 1 Thes. 4:17. Indeed there will be joy on all hands, except among the devils and damned, who shall gnash their teeth with envy at the everlasting advancement and glory of believers. Thus Christ is altogether lovely, in the relation of a Bridegroom.

Thirdly, **Christ is altogether lovely, in the relation of an Advocate.** 1 John 2:1, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the Propitiation." It is he that pleads the cause of believers in heaven. He appears for them in the presence of God, to prevent any new alienation, and to continue the state of friendship and peace between God and us. In this relation Christ is altogether lovely. For,

1. He makes our cause his own, and acts for us in heaven, as if for himself, Heb. 4:15. He is touched with a most tender understanding of our troubles and dangers, and is not only one with us by way of representation, but also one with us in respect of sympathy and affection.

2. Christ our Advocate tracks our cause and business in heaven, as his great and primary design and business. For this reason in Hebrews 7:25. he is said to "live for ever to make intercession for us." It is as if our concerns were

so attended to by him there, that all the glory and honour which is paid him in heaven would not divert him one moment from our business.

3. He pleads the cause of believers by his blood. Unlike other advocates, it is not enough for him to lay out only words, which is a cheaper way of pleading; but he pleads for us by the voice of his own blood, as in Heb. 12:24, where we are said to be come “to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Every wound he received for us on earth is a mouth opened to plead with God on our behalf in heaven. And hence it is, that in Rev. 5:6 he is represented standing before God, as a lamb that had been slain; as it were exhibiting and revealing in heaven those deadly wounds received on earth from the justice of God, on our account. Other advocates spend their breath, Christ spends his blood.

4. He pleads the cause of believers freely. Other advocates plead for reward, and empty the purses, while they plead the causes of their clients.

5. In a word, he obtains for us all the mercies for which he pleads. No cause miscarries in his hand, which he undertakes, Rom. 8:33, 34. O what a lovely Advocate is Christ for believers!

Fourthly, **Christ is altogether lovely in the relation of a friend**, for in this relation he is pleased to acknowledge his people, Luke 12:4, 5. There are certain things in which one friend manifests his affection and friendship to another, but there is not one like Christ. For,

1. No friend is so open-hearted to his friend as Christ is to his people: he reveals the very counsels and secrets of his heart to them. John 15:15. "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord does; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.

2. No friend in the world is so generous and bountiful to his friend, as Jesus Christ is to believers; he parts with his very blood for them; "Greater love (he says) has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," John 15:13. He has exhausted the precious treasures of his invaluable blood to pay our debts. O what a lovely friend is Jesus Christ to believers!

3. No friend sympathizes so tenderly with his friend in affliction, as Jesus Christ does with his friends: "In all our afflictions he is afflicted," Heb. 4:15. He feels all our sorrows, needs and burdens as his own. This is why it is said that the sufferings of believers are called the sufferings of

Christ, Col. 1:24.

4. No friend in the world takes that contentment in his friends, as Jesus Christ does in believers. Song of Songs 4:9. "You have ravished my heart, (he says to the spouse) you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." The Hebrew, here rendered "ravished," signifies to puff up, or to make one proud: how the Lord Jesus is pleased to glory in his people! How he is taken and delighted with those gracious ornaments which himself bestows upon them! There is no friend so lovely as Christ.

5. No friend in the world loves his friend with as impassioned and strong affection as Jesus Christ loves believers. Jacob loved Rachel, and endured for her sake the parching heat of summer and cold of winter; but Christ endured the storms of the wrath of God, the heat of his indignation, for our sakes. David manifested his love to Absalom, in wishing, "O that I had died for you!" Christ manifested his love to us, not in wishes that he had died, but in death itself, in our stead, and for our sakes.

6. No friend in the world is so constant and unchangeable in friendship as Christ is. John 13:1, "Having loved his own which were in the

world, he loved them unto the end.” He bears with millions of provocations and wrongs, and yet will not break friendship with his people. Peter denied him, yet he will not disown him; but after his resurrection he says, “Go, tell the disciples, and tell Peter.” Let him not think he has forfeited by that sin of his, his interest in me. Though he denied me, I will not disown him, Mark 16:7. O how lovely is Christ in the relation of a friend!

I might further show you the loveliness of Christ in his ordinances and in his providences, in his communion with us and communications to us, but there is no end of the account of Christ’s loveliness: I will rather choose to press believers to their duties towards this altogether lovely Christ, which I shall briefly conclude in a few words.

APPLICATION

1. Is Jesus Christ altogether lovely? Then I beseech you set your souls upon this lovely Jesus. I am sure such an object as has been here represented, would compel love from the coldest breast and hardest heart. Away with those empty nothings, away with this vain deceitful world, which deserves not the thousandth part of the love you give it. Let all stand aside and give way to Christ. O if only you knew his worth and excellency, what he is in himself, what he has done for you, and

deserved from you, you would need no arguments of mine to persuade you to love him!

2. Esteem nothing lovely except as it is enjoyed in Christ, or used for the sake of Christ. Love nothing for itself, love nothing separate from Jesus Christ. In two things we all sin in love of created things. We sin in the excess of our affections, loving them above the proper value of mere created things. We also sin in the inordinacy of our affections, that is to say we give our love for created things a priority it should never have.

3. Let us all be humbled for the corruption of our hearts that are so eager in their affections for vanities and trifles and so hard to be persuaded to the love of Christ, who is altogether lovely. O how many pour out streams of love and delight upon the vain and empty created thing; while no arguments can draw forth one drop of love from their stubborn and unbelieving hearts to Jesus Christ! I have read of one Joannes Mollius, who was observed to go often alone, and weep bitterly; and being pressed by a friend to know the cause of his troubles, said "O! it grieves me that I cannot bring this heart of mine to love Jesus Christ more fervently."

4. Represent Christ to the world as he is, by your behaviour towards him. Is he altogether lovely? Let all the world see and know that he is so, by your delights in him and communion with him; zeal for him, and readiness to part with any other lovely thing upon his

account. Proclaim his excellencies to the world, as the spouse did in these verses. Persuade them how much your beloved is better than any other beloved. Show his glorious excellencies as you speak of him; hold him forth to others, as he is in himself: altogether lovely. See that you “walk worthy of him unto all well pleasing,” Col. 1:10. “Show forth the praises of Christ,” 1 Pet. 2:19. Let not that “worthy name be blasphemed through you,” James 2:7. He is glorious in himself, and he is sure to put glory upon you; take heed that you do not put shame and dishonours upon him; he has committed his honour to you, do not betray that trust.

Never be ashamed to be counted as a Christian: he is altogether lovely; he can never be a shame to you; it will be your great sin to be ashamed of him. Some men glory in their shame; do not let yourself be ashamed of your glory. If you will be ashamed of Christ now, he will be ashamed of you when he shall appear in his own glory, and the glory of all his holy angels. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; and among other sins, be ashamed especially for this sin, that you have no more love for him who is altogether lovely.

6. Be willing to leave every thing that is lovely upon earth, in order that you may be with the altogether lovely Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. Lift up your voices with the bride, Rev. 20:20 “Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.” It is true, you must pass through the pangs of

death into his intimacy and enjoyment; but surely it is worth suffering much more than that to be with this lovely Jesus. “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Jesus Christ,” 2 Thes. 3:5.

7. Let the loveliness of Christ draw all men to him. Is loveliness in the creature so attractive? And can the transcendent loveliness of Christ draw none? O the blindness of man! If you see no beauty in Christ that causes you to desire him, it is because the god of this world has blinded your minds.

8. Strive to be Christ-like, if ever you would be lovely in the eyes of God and man. Certainly, my brethren, it is only the Spirit of Christ within you, and the beauty of Christ upon you, which can make you lovely persons. The more you resemble him in holiness, the more will you show of true excellence and loveliness; and the more frequent and spiritual your communication and communion with Christ is, the more of the beauty and loveliness of Christ will be stamped upon your spirits, changing you into the same image, from glory to glory. Amen.

SERMON TWO

CHRIST

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

“And the desire of all nations shall come.” - Haggai 2:7

The first chapter of Haggai is mainly spent in reproving the negligence of the Jews, who, being discouraged from time to time, had delayed the rebuilding of the temple. In the meantime they employed their care and cost in building and adorning their own houses: but, at last, being persuaded to set about the work, they met with this discouragement, that such was the poverty of the present time, that the second structure would not match the magnificence and splendor of the first. In Solomon's days the nation was wealthy, but now it was drained; so that there would be no comparison between the second and the

first. To this great discouragement the prophet applies this relief: that whatsoever should be lacking in external pomp and glory, should be more than recompensed by the presence of Jesus Christ in this second temple. For Christ, “the desire of all nations,” he says, shall come into it. Which, by the way, may give us this useful note: The presence of Jesus Christ gives a more real and excellent glory to the places of his worship, than any external beauty or outward ornaments whatsoever can bestow upon them. Our eyes, like the disciples, are apt to be dazzled with the sparkling stones of the temple, and, in the meantime, to neglect and overlook that which gives it the greatest honour and beauty.

But to return. In these words we have both the description of Christ, and an arrow pointing at the time of his incarnation: he is called “the desire of all nations,” and the time of his coming in the flesh is clearly implied to be during the time of the second temple. Where, by the way, we find a valid reason to stand amazed at and bemoan the blindness of the Jews. They admit the truth of this prophecy and are not able to deny the destruction of the second temple, many hundred years past, yet will not be brought to acknowledge the incarnation of the true Messiah.

But to the point. Christ, called the desire of all nations, was to come into the world in the time of the second temple, Mal. 3:12, after grievous shocks and shakings of the world. They were to make way for his coming; for so our prophet here speaks, “I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come,” to

which the apostle alludes, in Heb. 12:26, applying this prophecy to Jesus Christ. Here Christ is called the “desire of all nations,” putting the act of desiring in the place of the thing desired: as in Ezek. 24:16. “The desire of your eyes,” that is to say, the desirable wife of your bosom; so here, the “desire of all nations,” is Christ, the object of the desires of God’s elect in all nations of the world. He is a Saviour infinitely desirable in himself, and actually desired by all the people of God, dispersed among all races, tongues, and nations of the world. Therefore note,

Doctrine: *That the desires of God’s elect in all kingdoms, and among all people of the earth, are, and shall be drawn out after and fixed upon, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The merciful God beholding the universal ruins of the world by sin, has provided a universal remedy for his own elect, in every part of the earth. Christ is not restricted to any one kingdom or nation in the world; but intended to be God’s salvation to the ends of the earth; and accordingly speaks the apostle, Col 3:11 “There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.” In the explanation of this point two things must be enquired into:

1. Why Christ is called the desire of all nations.

2. Upon what account the people of God, in all nations, desire him.

Let us begin with an examination of why he is called the desire of all nations, and what that phrase may mean. There are several things that are supposed, or included in it.

First, **God the Father has appointed him as a common remedy for the sins and miseries of his people, in all parts and quarters of the world.** So in the covenant of redemption, between the Father and the Son, the Lord expresses himself, Isa 49:6 “It is too small a thing that you should be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the gentiles, that you should be my salvation to the ends of the earth.” This is similar to the prophecy of Isa 52:15 “So shall He sprinkle many nations.” If God had not appointed him for this, he could not be desired by all nations.

And, indeed, the grace of God admirably shines forth in the freeness of it, that even the most barbarous nations are not excluded from the benefits of redemption by Christ. This is what the apostle delights, that Christ should be preached to the Gentiles, 1 Tim. 3:16. They were a people that seemed to be lost in the darkness of idolatry; yet even for them Christ was given by the Father, “Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, And the ends of the earth

for your possession.” (Psalm 2:8)

Secondly, **Christ is called the desire of all nations, plainly because of the sufficiency that is in him to supply the needs of the whole world.** As the sun in the heavens suffices all nations for light and influence, so does the Sun of righteousness suffice for the redemption, justification, sanctification and salvation of the people of God all over the world; Isa 45:22, “Look to me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth.”

Thirdly, **it implies the reality that is in godliness.** It shows you that religion is no imagination, as the atheistic world would try to persuade us; and this evidently appears in the uniform effects of it upon the hearts of all men, in all nations of the world, that are truly religious. All their desires, like so many needles touched by one and the same loadstone, move towards Jesus Christ, and all meet together in one and the same blessed object, Christ. Were it possible for the people of God to come out of all nations, races and languages in the world, into one place, and there confer and compare the desires and workings of their hearts, though they never saw each other’s faces, nor heard of each other’s names, yet, as face corresponds to face in a glass, so would their desires after Christ correspond to each other. All hearts work after him in the same manner; what one says, all say: These are my troubles and burdens, these my wants and miseries; the same

things are my desires and fears: one and the same Spirit works in all believers throughout the world. This could never be if religion were but an imagination, as some call it; or a fraud or conspiracy, as others call it: hallucinations are as various as faces; and conspiracies presuppose mutual acquaintance and conference.

Fourthly, **Christ, the desire of all nations, implies the vast extent his kingdom has, and shall have in the world; out of every nation under heaven some shall be brought to Christ, and to heaven by him.**

Though the number of God's elect, compared with the multitudes of the ungodly in all nations, is but a remnant, a little flock; and, in that comparative sense, there are few that shall be saved; yet considered absolutely, and in themselves, they are a vast number, which no man can number, Matt 8:11 "Many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." It is in order to accomplish this that the gospel, like the sun in the heavens, travels around the world. It arose in the east, and takes its course towards the western world; rising, by degrees, upon the remote, idolatrous nations of the earth: out of all which a number is to be saved. Even "Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God," Psalm 68:31. This consideration should move us to pray earnestly for the poor Heathens, who yet sit in darkness and the shadow of death. There is yet hope

for them.

Fifthly, **it holds forth this, that when God opens the eyes of men to see their sin and danger by it, nothing but Christ can give them satisfaction:** it is not the amenity, fertility, riches and pleasures, the inhabitants of any kingdom of the world do enjoy, that can satisfy the desires of their souls: when once God touches their hearts with the sense of sin and misery, then Christ, and no one but Christ, is desirable and necessary in the eyes of such persons. Many kingdoms of the world abound with riches and pleasures; the providence of God has carved liberal portions of the good things of this life to many of them, and scarcely left any thing lacking to their desires that the world can afford. Yet all this can give no satisfaction without Jesus Christ, the desire of all nations, the one thing necessary, when once they come to see the necessity and excellency of him. When this happens, give them whatever you wish of the world, nevertheless they must have Christ, the desire of their souls.

Thus we see upon what grounds and reasons Christ is called the desire of all nations.

Objection. But there remains one great objection against this truth, which must be resolved, namely: if Christ is the desire of all nations, how is it possible that Jesus Christ finds no reception in so many nations of the world? For among many peoples Christianity is hissed at, and Christians are not tolerated to live

among them? They see no “beauty in him that they should desire him.” (Isa 53:2)

Answer. First, **we must remember the nations of the world have their times and seasons of conversion**; those that once embraced Christ, have now lost him, and idols are now set up in the places where he once was sweetly worshipped. The sun of the gospel is gone down upon them, and now shines in another Hemisphere; and so the nations of the world are to have their distinct days and seasons of illumination. The gospel, like the sea, gains in one place what it loses in another; and in the times and seasons appointed by the Father, they come successively to be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; and then shall the promise be fulfilled, Isa 49:7 “Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to the Servant of rulers: ‘Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall worship, because of the Lord who is faithful.’”

Secondly, **let it also be remembered, that although Christ may be rejected by the rulers and body of many nations**; yet he is the desire of all the elect of God dispersed and scattered among those nations.

In the next place, **we are to enquire upon what account Christ becomes the desire of all nations**, i.e. of all those in all the nations of the world, that

belong, to the election of grace. And the true ground and reason thereof is, because only Christ has in himself that which relieves their emptiness, and answers to all their need. As,

First, **they are all, by nature, under condemnation**, Rom. 5:16,18. under the curse of the law; against which nothing is found in heaven or earth able to relieve their consciences but the blood of sprinkling, the pure and perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus. And hence it is that Christ becomes so desirable in the eyes of poor sinners, all the world over. If any thing in ordinary nature could be found to pacify and purge the consciences of men from guilt and fear, Christ would never be desirable in their eyes; but finding no other remedy but the blood of Jesus, to him, therefore, shall all the ends of the earth look for righteousness, and for peace.

Secondly, **all nations of the world are polluted with the filth of sin, both in nature and practice, which they shall see, and bitterly bewail, when the light of the gospel shall shine among them**; and the same light, by which this shall be discovered, will also reveal that the only remedy of this evil lies in the spirit of Christ, the only fountain opened to all nations for sanctification and cleansing. This will make the Lord Jesus incomparably desirable in their eyes. O how welcome will he be who comes to them, not by blood only, but by water also, I John 5:6.

Thirdly, **when the light of the gospel shall shine upon the nations, they shall then see that because of the guilt and filth of sin, they are all barred out of heaven.** Those doors are chained up against them, and that no one but Christ can open an entrance for them into that kingdom of God. For, “no one comes to the Father except through me,” John 14:6. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved,” Acts 4:12. Hence the hearts of sinners shall pant after him, as a hart pants for the water brooks. And thus you see upon what grounds Christ becomes the desire of all nations. Five applications flow from this point:

- 1. For information.**
- 2. For examination.**
- 3. For consolation.**
- 4. For exhortation.**
- 5. For direction.**

First Application: **for information.**

1. Is Christ the desire of all nations? *How vile a sin is it then for any nation, upon whom the light of the gospel has shined, to reject Jesus Christ?* They would say as those in Job 21:14, “Depart from us, For we do not desire the knowledge of your ways.” They would thrust away his worship, government, and servants; and in effect say, as it is Luke 19:14, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” Thus did the Jews, Acts 13:46. They put away Christ from among themselves, and thereby judged themselves unworthy of eternal life.

This is at once a fearful sin, and a dreadful warning. How soon did vengeance overtake them like the overthrow of Sodom? O, let it be for a warning to all nations to the end of the world. He would have gathered the children of Israel under his wings as a hen does her brood, even when the Roman Eagle was hovering over them, but they would not, therefore their houses were left to them desolate, their city and temple made a heap.

2. If Jesus Christ be the desire of all nations, *how incomparably happy then must that nation be, that enjoys Christ in the power and purity of his gospel-ordinances!* If Christ under a veil made Canaan a glorious land, [as it is called in] Dan. 11:41, what a glorious place must that nation be that beholds him with open face in the bright sunshine of the gospel! O England, know your happiness and the day of your visitation! What others desire, you enjoy: provoke not the Lord Jesus to depart from you by corrupting his worship, longing after idolatry, abusing his messengers, and oppressing his people, lest his spirit depart from you.

Second Application: **for examination.**

If Christ is the desire of all nations, examine whether he is the desire of your souls in particular; otherwise you shall have no benefit by him. Are your desires after Christ true spiritual desires? Reflect, I beseech you, upon the attitudes and tempers of your heart. Can you say of your desires after Christ, as Peter did of his love to Christ? "Lord, you know all things, you know that I

desire you.” Examine your desires as to their sincerity by the following tests:

1. Are they passionate and earnest? Does Christ have the supreme place in your desires? Do you esteem all things to be but dross and dung in comparison to the excellencies of Jesus Christ your Lord? (Phil. 3:8) Is he to you as the refuge city to the man slayer? (Heb. 6:18,19) As a spring of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land? (Isa. 31:2) Such passionate desires are true desires.

2. Are your desires after Christ universal; that is to say, is every thing in Christ desirable in your eyes? The hypocrite, like the harlot, is for a divided Christ; they would be called by his name, but depend upon themselves, Isa. 4:1. If his holiness and government, his cross and sufferings are desirable for his own sake: such universal desires are right desires.

3. Are your desires after Christ industrious desires, using all the means of accomplishing what you desire? You say you desire Christ, but what will you do to obtain your desires? If you serve him carefully and incessantly in all the ways of duty; if you will strive in prayer, labour to believe, cut off right hands, and pluck out right eyes, in other words— be content to part with the most profitable and pleasant ways of sin that you may enjoy Christ, the desire of your souls; then your

desires are right desires.

4. Are your desires after Christ permanent desires, or only a sudden motion or impulse, which later fades away? If your desires after Christ abide upon your hearts, if your longings be after him at all times, though not in the same height and degree, then your desires are right desires. Christ always dwells in the desires of his people; they can feel him in their desires, when they cannot discern him in their love or delight.

5. Will your desires after Christ admit no satisfaction, nor find rest anywhere but in the enjoyment of Christ? Then your desires are right desires. The soul that desires Christ can never be at rest till it comes home to Christ, 2 Cor. 5:2, Phil. 1:23. The devil can satisfy others with the riches and pleasure of this world, as children are quieted with rattles; but if nothing but Christ can rest and accomplish your desires, surely such restless desires are right desires.

6. Do your desires after Christ spring from a deep sense of your need and want of Christ? Has conviction opened your eyes to see your misery, to feel your burdens, and to make you aware that your remedy lies only in the Lord Jesus? Then your desires are right desires. Bread and water are made necessary and desirable by hunger and thirst; by these things examine the truth of your desires after Christ.

Third Application: **for consolation.**

Do you indeed, upon serious examination, find such desires after Christ as were described above? O, bless the Lord for that day when Christ, the desire of all nations, became the desire of your souls; and for your comfort, know that you are happy and blessed souls at present.

1. You are blessed in this, that your eyes have been opened to see both the need and worth of Christ. Had not Christ applied his precious eye-salve to the eyes of your mind, you could never have desired him; you would have said with them in Isa. 53:2, "He has no form or comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Or, as they asked the spouse, Song 5:9 "What is your beloved more than another beloved?" O, blessed souls, enlightened of the Lord, to see those things that are hid from them that perish!

2. You are blessed in this, that your desires after Christ are a sure evidence that the desire of Christ is towards you: had he not first desired you, you could never have desired him. We may say of desires, as it is said of love, we desire him because he first desired us: your desires after Christ are inflamed from the desires of Christ after you.

3. You are blessed in this, that your desires shall surely be satisfied, Matt. 5:6, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Prov. 10:24, "The desires of the righteous shall

be granted.” God never raised such desires as these in the souls of his people, to be a torment to them for ever.

4. You are blessed in this, that God has guided your desires to make the best choice that ever was made in the world, while the desires of others are hunting after riches, pleasure, and honour in the world; toiling themselves like children in pursuit of a painted butterfly, which when they have caught, only discolours their fingers. God, meanwhile, directed your desires to Christ, the most excellent object in heaven or earth. Any good will satisfy some men; O, happy soul, if none but Christ can satisfy you! (Psa 4:6)

5. You are blessed in this, that there is a work of grace certainly wrought upon your soul; and these very desires after Christ are a part thereof.

6. You are blessed in this, that these desires after Christ keep your soul active and working after him continually in the ways of duty, Psa 27:4 “One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.” Desire will be a continual spring to diligence and industry in the ways of duty; the desire of the end awakens the use of means, Prov. 16:26. Others may fall asleep and cast off duty, but it will be hard for you to do so, whose souls burn with desire after Christ.

7 You are blessed in this, that your desires after Christ will make death much the sweeter and easier to you, Phil 1:23 “For I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” When a Christian was once asked, whether he was willing to die, he answered in return, “Let him be unwilling to die, who is unwilling to go to Christ.” And much like it, was the reply of another, *Vivere renuo, ut Christo vivam*: I refuse this life, to live with Christ.

Fourth Application: **for exhortation.**

In the fourth place, let me exhort and persuade all to make Jesus Christ the desire and choice of their souls. Here I present the extent and design of the gospel: O that I could effectively press home this exhortation upon your hearts; let me offer some moving considerations to you, and may the Lord apply them to your hearts.

1. Every creature naturally desires its own preservation; do not you desire the preservation of your precious and immortal soul? If you do, then make Christ your desire and choice, without whom they can never be preserved, Jude 1.

2. Do not your souls earnestly desire the bodies they live in? How tender are they over them, how careful to provide for them? (Though they pay an expensive rent for those tenements they live in.) Is not union with Christ infinitely more desirable than the union of soul and body? O covet union with him! Then shall your souls be happy, when your bodies drop off from them at

death, 2 Cor. 5:1,2. Indeed, soul and body shall be happy in him, and with him forevermore.

3. How do the men of this world devote themselves to the enjoyments of it? They pant after the dust of the earth; they rise early, sit up late, eat the bread of carefulness; and all this for vanity indeed— Shall a worldling do more for earth, than you for heaven? Shall the creature be so earnestly desired, and Christ neglected?

4. What do all your desires in this world benefit you, if you go christless? Suppose you had the desire of your hearts in these things, how long should you have comfort in them, if you miss Christ?

5. Does Christ desire you, who have nothing lovely or desirable in you? And have you no desires after Christ, the most lovely and desirable one in both worlds? “His desires are towards you,” Prov. 8:31. O make him the desire and choice of your souls.

6. How absolutely necessary is Jesus Christ to your souls? Bread and water, breath and life, are not so necessary as Christ is; “One thing is necessary,” Luke 10:42, and that one thing is Christ. If you miss your desires in other things, you may yet be happy; but if you miss Christ you are undone for ever.

7. How suitable a good is Christ to your souls! He has within himself whatsoever they want, 1 Cor. 1:30. Set your hearts where you will, nothing will be found to

match and suit them, as Christ does.

8. How great are the benefits that will come to you by Jesus Christ! In him you will have a rich inheritance settled upon you: all things shall be yours, when you are Christ's, 1 Cor. 3:22. And is not such a Christ worth desiring?

9. All your well grounded hopes of glory are built upon your union with Christ, 1 Cor. 1:21. If you miss Christ, you must die without hope. Will not this draw your desires to him?

10. Suppose you were at the judgment seat of God, where you must shortly stand, and saw the terrors of the Lord in that day; the sheep divided from the goats; the sentences of absolution and condemnation passed by the great and awful Judge upon the righteous and wicked: would not Christ then be desirable in your eyes? As ever you expect to stand with comfort at that bar, let Christ be the desire and choice of your souls now.

Fifth Application: **for direction.**

Do these, or any other considerations, put you upon this enquiry— *how shall I get my desires kindled and enflamed towards Christ?* Alas! my heart is cold and dead, not a serious desire is stirring in it after Christ. To you I shall offer the following directions:

Direction 1. Redeem some time every day for meditation; get out of the noise and clamour of the world, Psa 4:4, and seriously consider how the present

state of your soul stands, and how it is likely to go with you in eternity: here all sound conversion begins, Psa 69:29.

Direction 2. Consider seriously that lamentable state in which you came into the world. You are a child of wrath by nature, under the curse and condemnation of the law: so that either your state must be changed, or you will inevitably be damned, John 3:3.

Direction 3. Consider the way and course you have taken since you came into the world, proceeding from iniquity to iniquity. What command of God have you not violated a thousand times over? What sin is committed in the world, that you are not one way or other guilty of before God? How many secret sins are upon your score, unknown to the most intimate friend you have in the world? Either this guilt must be separated from your souls, or your souls from God for all eternity.

Direction 4. Think upon the severe wrath of God reserved for every sin; "The wages of sin is death," Rom. 6:23. And how intolerable the fulness of that wrath must be when a few drops sprinkled upon the conscience in this world are so insupportable, that has made some to choose suicide rather than life. Yet this wrath must abide for ever upon you, if you do not get an interest in Jesus Christ, John 3:36.

Direction 5. Ponder well the happy state and condition they are in who have obtained pardon and

peace by Jesus Christ, Psa 32:1,2. And seeing the grace of God is free, and you are set under the means of it; why may not you be as likely to find it as others?

Direction 6. Seriously consider the great uncertainty of your time and the preciousness of the opportunities of salvation, never to be recovered when they are once past, John 9:4. Let this arouse you to lay hold upon those golden seasons while they are yet with you; that you may not bewail your folly and madness, when they are out of your reach.

Direction 7. Associate yourselves with serious Christians; get into their acquaintance, and beg their assistance; beseech them to pray for you; and see that you rest not here, but be frequently upon your knees, begging of the Lord a new heart and a new state.

In conclusion of the whole, let me beseech and beg all the people of God, as upon my knees, to take heed, and beware, lest by the carelessness and scandal of their lives they quench the weak desires beginning to kindle in the hearts of others. You know what the law of God demands for striking a woman with child, so that her fruit go from her, Exod. 21:22,23. O shed not soul-blood, by stifling the hopeful desires of any after Christ.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the desire of all nations.

JOHN FLAVEL