

THE UPPER ROOM,
AND OTHER SERMONS DELIVERED
ON IMPORTANT PUBLIC OCCASIONS

BEING IMPORTANT TRUTHS FOR THE TIMES.

BY THE RIGHT REV.

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“EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS,” “KNOTS UNTIED,” ETC., ETC.

“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself
to the battle?”—1 Cor. xiv. 8.

LONDON:

C H A S . J . T H Y N N E ,
WYCLIFFE HOUSE, 6, GREAT QUEEN STREET,
LINCOLN'S INN, W.C.

1887AD

XV.

THE LORD'S GARDEN.

CANTICLES IV. 12.

THE Lord Jesus Christ has a garden. It is the company of all who are true believers in Him. They are His garden.

Viewed in one light, believers are Jesus Christ's *spouse*. They are all joined to Him by an everlasting covenant that cannot be broken; wedded to Him by the marriage of faith; taken by Him to be His for ever, with all their debts and liabilities, with all their faults and imperfections. Their old name is gone, they have no name but that of their Bridegroom. God the Father regards them as one with His dear Son. Satan can lay no charge against them. They are the Lamb's wife: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Cant. ii. 16).

Viewed in another light, believers are Christ's *sister*. They are like to Him in many things. They have His Spirit; they love what He loves, and hate what He hates; they count all His members brethren; through Him they have the spirit of adoption, and can say of God, "He is my Father." Faint indeed is their resemblance to their elder Brother! And still they are like.

Viewed in a third light, believers are Christ's *garden*. Let us see how and in what way.

I. Jesus calls His people *a garden, because they are altogether different from the men of the world*. The world is a wilderness: it brings forth little but thorns and thistles; it is fruitful in nought but sin. The children of this world are an untilled wilderness in God's sight. With all their arts and sciences, intellect and skill, eloquence and statesmanship, poetry and refinement,—with all this they are a wilderness, barren of repentance, faith, holiness, and obedience to God. The Lord looks down from heaven, and where He sees no grace, there the Lord can see nothing but a "wilderness" state of things. The Lord Jesus Christ's believing people are the green spot of the earth; the oasis amidst barren deserts; they are His garden.

He calls His people *a garden, because they are sweet and beautiful to His mind*. He looks on the world, and it grieves Him to the heart: He looks on the little flock of His believing people, and is well pleased. He sees in them the fruit of His travail, and is satisfied. He rejoices in spirit when He sees the kingdom revealed to babes, though the wise and prudent receive it not. As in the day of Noah's sacrifice, He smells a sweet odour and is refreshed. It is very wonderful, very mysterious! Believers are vile in their own eyes, and feel themselves miserable sinners; yet Jesus says, "Thou art all fair,—sweet is thy voice,—thy countenance is comely,—beautiful as

Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem,—fair as the moon, and clear as the sun” (Cant. i. 15, iv. 7, ii. 14, vi. 10, etc.). Oh, the depths! It sounds incomprehensible and almost incredible; but it is true.

He calls His people *a garden, because He delights to walk among them*. He sees the children of this world, but He mingles not with them. His eyes are on all their ways, but He does not come down to talk with them, as He did to Abraham, like a man with his friend. On the other hand, He loves to walk among His candlesticks, and see whether the light burns brightly. He loves to be present in the assemblies of His saints, and to come in and sup with them, and they with Him. He loves to come with His Father, and make His abode with His disciples; and wheresoever two or three are gathered in His name, there is He. He loves to come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits; to go down to the beds of spices, and gather lilies; to see whether the vine flourishes, and the tender grape appears, and the pomegranates bud forth (Cant. vii. 12). In short, He holds peculiar communion with His people, and deals familiarly with them, as He does not with the world.

He calls His people *a garden, because they are useful, and bear fruit and flowers*. Where is the real use of the children of this world? Of what value are they, while they continue unconverted? They are unprofitable tenants and worthless cumberers of the ground. They bring no glory to the Lord that bought them; they fulfil not their part in creation; they stand alone in the world of created beings, not doing the work for which their Maker meant them. The heavens declare the glory of God,—the trees, the corn, the grass, the flowers, the streams, the birds speak forth His praise,—but the man of the world does nothing to show that he cares for God, or serves God, or loves God, or feels grateful for Christ’s redeeming death.

The Lord’s people are not so. They bring Him some revenue of glory. They bear some little fruit, and are not altogether barren and unprofitable servants. Compared to the world, they are a garden.

II. The Lord’s garden has a distinctive peculiarity about it. It is a *garden enclosed*.

There is an enclosure round believers; or else they never would be saved. This is the secret of their safety. It is not their faithfulness, their strength, or their love,—it is the wall around them which prevents their being lost. They are a “garden enclosed.”

They are enclosed by *God the Father’s everlasting election*. Long before they were born,—long before the foundations of the world,—God knew them, chose them, and appointed them to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ. The children of this world do not like to hear this doctrine proclaimed. It humbles man, and leaves him no room to boast. But whether it is abused or not, the doctrine of election is true. It is the corner-stone of the believer’s

foundation, that he was chosen in Christ before the world began. Who can rightly estimate the strength of this enclosure?

They are enclosed by *the special love of God the Son*. The Lord Jesus is the Saviour of all men, but He is specially the Saviour of them that believe. He has power over all flesh, but He gives eternal life to them that are specially given to Him, in a way that He does to none others. He shed His blood on the cross for all, but He only washes those who have part in Him. He invites all, but He quickens whom He will, and brings them to glory. He prays for them: He prays not for the world. He intercedes for them, that they may be kept from evil, that they may be sanctified by the truth, that their faith fail not. Who can fully describe the blessedness of this enclosure?

They are enclosed by *the effectual working of God the Holy Ghost*. The Spirit of Christ calls them out from the world, and separates them as effectually as if a wall were built between them and it. He puts in them new hearts, new minds, new tastes, new desires, new sorrows, new joys, new wishes, new pleasures, new longings. He gives them new eyes, new ears, new affections, new opinions. He makes them new creatures; they are born again, and with a new birth they begin a new existence. Mighty indeed is the transforming power of the Holy Spirit! The believer and the world are completely put asunder, and everlastingly separated. You may place a believer and an unbeliever together, *marry* them, join them under one roof, But you cannot unite them any more into one piece. The one is part of the “garden enclosed,” and the other is not. Effectual calling is a barrier that cannot be broken.

Who can tell the comfort of this threefold wall of enclosure! Believers are enclosed by election, enclosed by washing and intercession, enclosed by calling and regeneration. Great is the consolation of these threefold bands of love around us,—the love of God the Father, the love of God the Son, the love of God the Holy Ghost! A threefold cord is not easily broken.

Does any reader suppose for a moment that all this was not needed? I believe that nothing short of this threefold enclosure could save the Lord’s garden from utter ruin. Without election, intercession, and regeneration, there is not one soul who would get to heaven. The wild boar out of the wood would break in and devour; the roaring lion would come in and trample all under his feet. The devil would soon lay the Lord’s garden level with the ground.

Blessed be God for this, that we are “a garden enclosed!” Blessed be God, our final safety hangs not on anything of our own,—not on our graces and feelings,—not on our degree of sanctification,—not on our perseverance in well-doing,—not on our love,—not on our growth in grace,—not on our prayers and Bible-readings,—not even on our faith. It hangs on nothing else but the work of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If this threefold work enclose

us, who shall overthrow our hope? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Adam had a heart free from sin. Adam was strong in innocency, and undefiled by contact with bad examples and corrupt neighbours. Adam was on vantage ground, a thousand times higher than we now occupy; and yet Adam fell before temptation. There was no enclosure round him, no wall to keep Satan out, no barrier round the first flower of the Lord's garden;—and see how Adam fell!

Let believers open their sleepy eyes, and try to understand the value of their privileges! This is the most blessed part of the Lord's garden. It is a "garden enclosed." I believe if there was no election, there would be no salvation. I never saw a man who would be saved if it depended in any wise on himself. Let us all thank the Lord Jesus, every day, and thank Him from our hearts, that His people are a chosen and guarded people, and that His garden is nothing less than "a garden enclosed."

III. The Lord's garden is not empty: it is always *full of flowers*. It has had many in time past, it has many at the time present. Believers are the flowers that fill the Lord's garden.

I will mention two things about the flowers in the garden of the Lord Jesus. In some things they are all exactly like one another. In some things they are as various and diverse as the flowers in the gardens of this world.

(a) *In some things they are all alike.*

(1) They have all been *transplanted*. Not one of the Lord's flowers grew naturally in His garden. They were all born children of wrath, even as others. No man is born with grace in his heart. Every believer among the Lord's people was at one time at enmity with Him, and in a state of condemnation. It was the grace of God that first called him out of the world. It was the Spirit of Christ who made him what he is, and planted him in the garden of the Lord. In this the Lord's people are all alike: they are all transplanted flowers.

(2) The Lord's flowers are all *alike in their root*. In outward things they may differ, but underneath they are all the same. They are all rooted and grounded on Jesus Christ. Believers may worship in different places, and belong to different churches, but their foundation is the same,—the cross and the blood.

(3) The Lord's flowers are all *at their beginning weak*. They do not come to full maturity at once. They are at first like new-born babes, tender and delicate, and needing to be fed with milk, and not with strong meat. They are soon checked and thrown back. All begin in this way.

(4) The Lord's flowers *all need the light of the sun*. Flowers cannot live without light. Believers cannot live comfortably unless they see much of the face of Jesus Christ. To be ever looking on Him, feeding on Him, communing with Him,—this is the hidden spring of the life of God in man's soul.

(5) The Lord's flowers *all need the dews of the Spirit*. Flowers wither without moisture. Believers need daily, hourly, to be renewed by the Holy Ghost in the spirit of their minds. We cannot live on old grace, if we would be fresh, living, real Christians. We must be daily more filled with the Spirit. Every chamber in the inward temple must be filled.

(6) The Lord's flowers are *all in danger of weeds*. Flower-beds need constant weeding. Believers need daily to search and see that they do not let besetting sins grow on undisturbed. These are the things that choke the actings of grace, and chill the influences of the Spirit. All are in peril of this; all should beware.

(7) The Lord's flowers *all require pruning and digging*. Flowers left alone soon dwindle and grow small. No careful gardener leaves his roses alone all the year round. Just so believers need stirring, shaking, mortifying, or else they become sleepy, and incline like Lot to settle down by Sodom. And if they are slow about the work of pruning, God will often take it in hand for them.

(8) The Lord's flowers *all grow*. None but hypocrites and wolves in sheep's clothing, and painted Christians, stand still. True believers are never long the same. It is their desire to go on from grace to grace, strength to strength, knowledge to knowledge, faith to faith, holiness to holiness. Visit a border of the Lord's garden after two or three years' absence, and you will see this. If you see it not, you may well suppose there is a worm at the root. Life grows; but death stands still and decays.

(5) But while the Lord's flowers are all alike in some things, they are *various and diverse in others*, even as the flowers in our own gardens. Let us consider this point a little.

Believers have many things in common,—one Lord, one faith, one baptism of the Spirit, one hope, one foundation, one reverence for the Word, one delight in prayer, one newness of heart. And yet there are some things in which they are not one. Their *general* experience is the same, and their title to heaven the same: and yet there are varieties in their *specific* experience. There are shades of diversity in their views and feelings. They are not so altogether and completely one that they can quite understand each other in all things, at all times, and in all points. Very important is it to bear this in mind! Believers are one in genus, but not one in species,—one in great principles, not one in all particulars,—one in reception of the whole truth, not one in the proportion they give to the parts of truth,—one in the root, but not one in the flower,—one in the part that only the Lord Jesus sees, not one in the part that is seen of the world.

You cannot understand your brother or sister in some things. You could not do as they do, speak as they speak, act as they act, laugh as they laugh, admire what they admire. Oh, be not hasty to condemn them! Make them not

offenders for a word. Set them not down in a low place because they and you have little sympathy, few harmonizing and responding strings in your hearts,—because you soon come to a standstill in communing with them, and discover that they and you have only a limited extent of ground in common! Write it down on the tablets of your heart, that there are many schools, orders, classes, diversities of Christians. You may all be in the Lord's garden, and be united on grand doctrines; and yet for all that, the Lord's garden is made up of various sorts of flowers. All His flowers are useful: none must be despised. And yet His garden contains widely different sorts.

(1) Some that grow in the Lord's garden are like the flowers which are *brilliant and showy in colour, but not sweet*. You see them afar off, and they attract the world's eye, and their tints are beautiful, but you can say no more.

These are frequently the public Christians,—the popular preachers,—the speakers on platforms,—the lions of listening companies,—the people talked of, and pointed at, and run after. Such persons are the tulips, and sunflowers, and peonies, and dahlias of the Lord's garden,— wonderful, gaudy, bright and glorious in their way, but not sweet.

(2) Some are like those flowers which *make no show at all, and yet are the sweetest*.

These are the Christians whom the world never hears of; they rather shrink from public observation. They hold on the even tenor of their way, and pass silently on towards home; but they sweeten all around them.

These are they that are rare and hard to find: but the better they are known, the more they are loved. Ask their true character in their own homes, and in their families,—ask husbands, wives, children, servants, their character, and you will soon discover that not a tenth part of their beauty and excellence is known by the world. The nearer you go, the more perfume will these dwellers in the Lord's garden give out. These are the Lord's violets,— valued by only few, but to those who know them, oh, how sweet!

(3) Some in the Lord's garden are like those flowers which *cannot live in cold weather*.

These are the Christians who have but a little strength, who faint in the day of adversity, who only flourish when everything around them is smooth and warm. A cold wind of trial, and unexpected frost of affliction, nips them and cuts them down. But the Lord Jesus is very merciful; He will not suffer them to be tempted above what they can endure. He plants them in sheltered and sunny places of His garden. He protects them and hedges them round by strong plants, to break the cold. Let no man despise them. They are the Lord's flowers, beautiful in their place and in their way.

(4) Some in the Lord's garden are like those hardy flowers *which flower even in winter*.

These are those rough Christians who never seem to feel any trials; whom

nothing, either of opposition or affliction, appears to move. Doubtless there is not that softness and sweetness about them that we admire in others. We miss that lovable delicacy which in some people is such an unexplainable charm. They chill us sometimes by their rudeness and want of sympathy when compared to many we know. And yet let no man despise them. They are the crocuses in the garden of the Lord, beautiful in their place and way, and valuable in their own season.

(5) Some in the Lord's garden are *never so sweet as after rain*.

These are the Christians who show most grace under trial and affliction. In the day of sunshine and prosperity they become careless: they need the shower of some sorrow to come down on them to make their full excellency appear. There is more beauty of holiness about their tears than about their smiles: they are more like Jesus when they weep than when they laugh. These are the roses of the Lord's garden: lovely and sweet and beautiful at all times, but never so much so as after rain.

(6) Some in the Lord's garden are *never so sweet as at night*.

These are the believers who need constant trial to keep them close to the throne of grace. They cannot bear the sunshine of prosperity: they become careless in prayer, sleepy about the Word, listless about heaven, too fond of nestling with some Benjamin in the corner of this world. Such persons the Lord Jesus often keeps under a cloud, to preserve them in a right frame. He sends wave after wave, trouble after trouble, to make them sit like Mary at His feet, and be near the cross. It is the very darkness they are obliged to walk in which makes them so sweet.

(7) Some in the Lord's garden are *never so sweet as when crushed*.

These are the Christians whose reality comes out most under some tremendous and uncommon judgment. The winds and storms of heavy affliction roll over them, and then, to the astonishment of the world, the spices flow out. I once saw a young woman who had lain on a bed six years in a garret, with a spinal complaint, helpless, motionless, cut off from everything that could make this world enjoyable. But she belonged to the garden of Jesus: she was not alone, for He was with her. You would have thought she would have been gloomy; she was all brightness. You would have expected her to be sorrowful; she was ever rejoicing. You would suppose she was weak and needed comfort; she was strong and able to comfort others. You would fancy she must have felt dark; she seemed to me all light. You would imagine her countenance was grave; it was full of *calm* smiles, and the gushings forth of inward peace. You would have pardoned her almost if she had murmured; she breathed of nothing but perfect happiness and content. The crushed flowers in the Lord's garden are sometimes exceeding sweet!

(8) Some of the flowers in the Lord's garden are *never fully valued till*

they are dead.

These are those humble believers who, like Dorcas, are full of good works and active love towards others. These are those unostentatious ones who dislike profession and publicity, and love to go about, like their Lord and Master, doing good to souls,—visiting the fatherless and the widows, pouring in balm on wounds which this heartless world neither knows nor cares for, ministering to the friendless, helping the destitute, preaching the gospel not to silk and velvet, but to the poor.

These are not noticed by this generation: but the Lord Jesus knows them, and His Father also. When they are dead and gone, their work and labour of love all comes out. It is written with a diamond on the hearts of those they have assisted: it cannot be hid. They speak being dead, though they were silent when living. We know their worth when gone, if we did not while we had them with us. The tears of those who have been fed in soul or body by their hand tell forth to the wondering world that some have gone home whose place cannot easily be supplied, and that a gap is made which it will be hard to fill up. These shall never have that wretched epitaph, “Departed without being desired.” These are the lavender in the Lord’s garden, never so much appreciated and admired as when cut off and dead.

And now let me wind up with a few words of practical application.

There is one thing about the Lord’s garden, which I see nothing like in this world.

The flowers of this world all die, and wither and lose their sweetness, and decay, and come to nothing at last. The fairest flowers are not really everlasting. The oldest and strongest of nature’s children comes to an end.

It is not so with the Lord’s flowers. The children of grace can never die. They may sleep for a season; they may be taken away when they have served their generation, and done their work. The Lord is continually coming down to His garden and “gathering lilies,” laying flowers in His bosom one after the other; but the Lord’s flowers shall all rise again.

When the Lord comes again the second time, He shall bring His people with Him. His flowers shall live once more, more bright, more sweet, more lovely, more beautiful, more glorious, more pure, more shining, more fair. They shall have a glorious body like their Lord’s, and shall flourish for ever in the courts of our God.

(1) Reader, are you in the Lord’s garden, or are you in the wilderness of this world?

You must be in one or the other. You must take your choice. Which have you chosen, and which do you choose now? The Lord Jesus would fain transplant you. He strives with you by His Spirit. He would fain add you to the number of His beloved ones. He knocks at the door of your heart by word

and by providence. He whispers to your conscience, “Awake, arise, repent, be converted, and come away!”

Oh, turn not away from Him that speaketh! Resist not the Holy Ghost. Choose not your place in the wilderness, but in the garden. Awake, arise, and turn away from the world.

(2) Reader! the wilderness or the garden! Which will you have?

If the wilderness,—you will have your own way, run wild, grow to waste, bring forth fruit and flowers to yourself, become a barren, unprofitable, useless plant, live unloved and unlovable to yourself, and at last be gathered in the bundle with the tares, and burned!

If the garden,—you will not have your own way. But you will have what is far better,—you will have God and Christ for your own. You will be cultivated, watered, tended, moved, pruned, trained by the Lord Jesus Himself; and at last your name shall be found in the bundle of life.

THEN CHOOSE THE
GARDEN ENCLOSED, AND LIVE!