

HENRIC SCHARTAU
AND
THE ORDER OF GRACE

Biography by Henrik Hägglund and
Fifteen Sermons by Henric Schartau

Translated by
S. G. HÄGGLUND



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Communion Sermon

In the Name of Jesus Christ.

I am all full of festering sores, Come lay Thy hand upon me; I am adrift, far from the shores, Let Thy grace never fail me. I am so weak, have pity, Lord, An erring sheep Thy care afford, Thy grace alone I'm pleading.

Thus may every erring, anxious soul pray to the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is true God and the great Chief Shepherd, who has given His life for the sheep. In the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth,
Where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou
makest it to rest at noon:
For why should I be as one that is veiled
Beside the flocks of Thy companions?*

The book from which these words are taken is sealed to the world. It contains a conversation between Christ, the Redeemer, represented as a bridegroom, and His faithful congregation, represented as a bride. It is the bride who here speaks to the friend of her soul. She declares her own love for Him and asks where He is dwelling. She expresses her anxiety and fear in view

of the condition that would confront her, if she should longer lack His gracious presence. "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou makest it to rest at noon: For why should I be as one that is veiled, beside the flocks of Thy companions?" Song of Songs 1. 7.

We find in this book various figures of speech at which carnal minds have taken offense and fallen, but here are depicted the experiences of a faithful soul who stands in grace, the infirmities that appear, the temptations to which it is exposed, the by-ways on which it may chance to enter, together with the gracious chastisement of God, the unfailing love of Jesus, and the wonderful guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Here the bride is expressing her first longing for communion with the Saviour. She has already received great insight into the ways of the Lord. She is aware of the dangers of turning away by which a soul seeking after Jesus may be tempted. To this she gives expression by saying that the reason for her longing to know where her friend is dwelling is that she may not be as one that is veiled beside the flocks of His companions.

It is evident that the bride here speaks of flocks other than that of Jesus, which is one only. She speaks of several flocks under the care of the Saviour's companions, who are shepherds as He and have His pastoral office. They gather flocks for themselves not for Him. By the misuse of natural and official gifts they turn the attention of their listeners away from "God that giveth the increase to him that planteth and watereth." By seeking and gaining the idolatrous love and the blind confidence of their infatuated followers, they lead hearts

from the way where God's love should find room in them, and in this way souls are drawn from their rightful owner, who has bought them with His holy and precious blood. The bride fears to come under the guidance of such shepherds and into fellowship with the parties and congregations of men. The reason for her fears is that she realizes how dangerous and blissless the condition is into which she would be placed through such afflictions: "Lest I be as one veiled, lest I go hither and thither."

The word used depicts the condition of a man fatigued with much walking and afflicted with excessive heat. This is something that usually goes with the state of awakening. It finds expression in an old psalm.

"Though I may roam far from my home,
On land and sea I languish,
I seek in vain the slightest lane,
Where dwells no grief nor anguish."

It may readily happen that an awakened soul begins to think that maybe this or that pastor might help him to obtain peace of conscience, or that he might come nearer to the Redeemer, if he should join this or that group which claims to be in so intimate a relationship with the Saviour. But quite the reverse happens. You seek for Jesus among men, you heartily long for peace, but your anxiety increases more and more, and you drift farther and farther away from your Saviour. It is by Him that you are to enter into communion with His members, not the reverse. Relationships with men do not bring you into a right and blessed communion with your Saviour. Choose the only right way. Do as the

bride in our text: turn to your Saviour in hearty prayers and supplication that you may know Him and that He may Himself bring you into His blessed fellowship. Speak to Him and say, "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou makest it to rest at noon. For why should I be as one that is veiled beside the flocks of Thy companions?"

It may seem strange that a person who is not yet conscious of having come to the Saviour may nevertheless love Him, yes, may say in the more exact language of the Spirit, "Thou whom my soul ardently loveth." It is certain that in a heart where the Holy Spirit has wrought faith, there "the love of God is shed abroad." Even in the very first moment of faith, when it is perceived merely as a seeking after the Lord, a pressing onward to His righteousness, this constant seeking after Jesus, this hungering and thirsting after His righteousness, as nourishment for the soul and rest for the conscience, are evidences that love for Jesus has been quickened in the soul. We seek for something which we value, something by which we hope to become happy, something in which we find pleasure, something that we love.

Ask your heart, if you can truthfully address the Lord Jesus with these words, if you can conscientiously say that you dearly love Him. Does your soul affectionately seek after Him? This is the first spark of the love which is kindled in the soul. But what need is there of asking your heart, if your outer life and your deeds bear witness that you are one of those who walk as "the enemies of the cross of Christ?" If you love the world and "mind earthly things," then the love of the Father is not in you. Judge then for yourself if it is reason-

able and consistent with God's order of grace to suppose that you are nevertheless partaking of God's grace and love. It is clearly evident that since you do not love the Son of God neither do you believe on Him. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Jesus has commanded His servants to declare this very thing to all impenitent sinners, that they are under the wrath of God as long as they remain in their sins. He said to His disciples, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." According to this commandment of my Saviour, I tell you, on His behalf and in the name of the Triune God, that you, who wish to retain your sins and to love any of them, must also retain the guilt and wretchedness of your sins, and you cannot take comfort in the love and grace of God.

You, who are now penitent, fleeing from sin and seeking Jesus, have been in a similar condition. You saw your sins delineated by the commandments of God, and under His threats you felt that they were abominable and condemnable. You learned that such dregs cannot satisfy an hungry soul. They may give you a sense of tumbling recklessness, but no peace; they may feed your imagination, but they give no refreshing and quickening hope. Oh, that you might turn to the Chief Shepherd and pray that you might find Him and thus obtain the right nourishment for your soul! "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou makest it to rest at noon." You would then certainly find that your prayerful question is al-

ready answered in the Word. It is the answer which the bride received in the following verse,

“If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,
Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock,
And feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents.”

This answer contains, first, a rebuke for ignorance, as the original Hebrew text has it, “Do you not know it?” It is a reprimand similar to that in Hebrews 5. 12, “When by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God.” A person who by the Word of God has been brought to seek after Jesus should have learned in the Word where to find Him. It is deplorable that such ignorance can be found in awakened souls. It is usually hidden from them, and they need a rebuke such as was given to the bride in order that their ignorance may be revealed to them. The Messiah, however, mingles kindness with severity and, in the second place, follows up the rebuke with the glad gospel message, “O thou fairest among women!”

The communion of saints is the most beautiful and glorious of all human associations, whether secular or religious, before the all-seeing Son of God, who searches the reins and hearts of men. It is the inner man which the Holy Spirit has sanctified “to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” He has built up in our inmost souls faith “in the beloved Son in whom God is well pleased,” while “without faith it is impossible to please God.” It is by faith that saints are dressed in the garments of righteousness and salvation, as the psalmist signifies when he

says concerning the bride of Christ, "The king's daughter within the palace is all glorious:* Her clothing is inwrought with gold." The bride herself refers to this in the verses preceding our text, where she compares her appearance to that of the "tents of Kedar and the curtains of Solomon," which are outwardly "scorched and swarthy," like wretched dwellings, while within they were beautifully decorated and filled with riches or, though orderly and dignified outside as Solomon's porches and curtains, they were surpassingly so inwardly full of riches and splendor.

In the third place, the answer of the bridegroom contains instruction, for both rebuke and comfort become fruitless, unless the ignorant be also instructed. Therefore Christ tells His bride how she shall come to enjoy His presence. He gives her twofold advice.

"Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock." The footsteps of the sheep mark the way by which the approved saints of the Lord have gone through repentance and faith to eternal life, and these marks are recorded in the Scriptures. We find their footsteps traced in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and in the beginning of the twelfth chapter a faithful witness of Jesus exclaims, "Let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand

* "The king's daughter is all glorious within," acc. to A. V. which agrees with the Sw. version used by Schartau.

of the throne of God." Enter in upon these footsteps. Look and see in the Holy Scriptures how many have been converted and saved, and you shall find that it is not impossible for any one, and that you also can and should be saved. There cannot be so great obstacles in the way of any one seeking for salvation but that other believers mentioned in the Scriptures have passed through the like and have been saved. Lot did not perish in the godless Sodom. Joseph and Daniel did not deviate from the ways of the Lord, though they dwelt in royal palaces. Lazarus was saved in his poverty, and Abraham in his riches. Let then the Spirit of God lead you on the way which these have gone. Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock. Let the Spirit of God constrain you to give heed to these things, as Lydia did, and the Lord shall open your heart as He opened hers. Go like Peter out from your evil companions and consider your fall penitently as he did, and you shall be helped and restored as he was. Let yourself be persuaded to make an honest confession as David did, saying heartily, "I have sinned against the Lord," and you shall receive the same reply as he, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."

The second item of advice which Christ gives His bride is this, "Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." The shepherds formerly had their houses out in the fields where there was the best of pasturage. Here the sheep were gathered to rest, for there was less danger of going astray here than out on the vast frontiers. The homes of right minded pastors are such tents, where sorrowful sinners may find direction how they shall find food and rest for their souls. But more especially the churches

are such tents, where the flock of the Good Shepherd may congregate. Here the Word is found in its greatest purity and blessing. The "kids" are the spiritual children, who do not have great ability of discernment to distinguish evil from good, while evil and good are commingled even at many places where there is much talking in the name of the Word of God. Therefore the spiritual children are safest when gathering their spiritual food in the house of the Lord. It is such a place where I am now speaking the Word of the Lord. I will therefore as a faithful shepherd make diligence to give my sheep wholesome food, and I shall by the grace of God beware lest I be like those who corrupt the Word of God.

After the bride has asked the Chief Shepherd where He feeds His flock, she next inquires where He prepares rest for His sheep, "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou makest it to rest at noon." Mark this, dear soul, this order: first food, then rest for the soul. First you are to be brought to the green pastures of God's Word, and thereupon you are to receive refreshment and peace unto your soul as these are found in the Holy Communion with Jesus. The peace which a faithful Christian finds in the Lord's Supper is the "rest at noon" whereof our text speaks. In the eastern countries where Solomon wrote this book the heat at noon is very great, so that the sheep cannot then eat, but must seek rest in a shady place. We may imagine how the shepherd gathered the sheep nearer about himself and how they lay down beside him. It has already been shown that in this book heat symbolizes anxiety, sorrow, and unrest, weakness,

and suffering. When the heat of affliction and temptation has reached the height of noon, then it is time to seek shelter and rest. These the believer finds with God, Immanuel, the Chief Shepherd, for he "has been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." "He is our peace," and the peace He gives is found in His Supper. Our text represents that the Chief Shepherd Himself also rests, for His bride asks Him where He dwells, "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest and findest rest at noon." It is also with reference to Holy Communion as administered in Zion, that is in the true congregation of Jesus, that He says,

"This is my resting-place for ever :
Here will I dwell ; for I have desired it."

At the communion table the Chief Shepherd gathers His sheep round about Himself; here He is the very nearest to them, He gives them His body and blood and thus brings them into the most intimate communion with Himself. If you have hitherto wandered from one flock to another, come now to the table of grace. Jesus calls you, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Here your unrest shall be quieted, here your heart shall find rest. You have His own word that you shall find Him here, for He has Himself said that in this bread you have His body, and in this cup His blood. You may rely on His promise that here you shall find the forgiveness of sins when you partake of His blood, which was shed for the

remission of your sins. With this you must be satisfied and not ask more than He has promised, namely refreshment and peace. Yes, even when you enjoy this, you must not expect that it shall always be thus. The bride says expressly in our text that it is only at noon that she expects to find the Chief Shepherd at rest with His flock. A soul fatigued with anxiety needs rest and peace, but a person who always desires to rest is lazy. A person who boasts of enjoying undisturbed quiet in his heart is not with Jesus, does not belong to His flock; for after His sheep have enjoyed communion with Him in the Lord's Supper, they are again brought out in the pastures of the Word to grow in peace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Here they must not rest in quiet, but ever advance along the way that leads to eternal life, whither the Chief Shepherd has Himself gone before them. They may not enjoy undisturbed peace, for their enemies the wolves — Satan, the world, and the flesh — daily tempt them to sin. They must also according to their Lord's commandment use the nourishment which they have received in the Word, the strength imparted by the Holy Supper, not to rest idly in the consciousness of the grace they have received, but to exercise themselves in godliness and to be diligent in doing good and fervent in love to God. Go then, according to the words of the Chief Shepherd, from this peaceful Supper to have peace in your work, there to show fidelity and to receive your reward. When you come out into the pastures of the Word, lo, you shall find a vast field, covered with the most beautiful flowers, the most glorious and comforting truths, teachings, examples, promises, and commandments. These grow

together. Do not undertake to make selections according to your own mind, but take them according as the Chief Shepherd enables you to understand and believe them. After such an interchange of work and rest, war and peace, Jesus shall, in a blessed death, take you from the pasture into the paradise of God and "give you to eat of the tree of life." He shall translate you to "the rest which remaineth for the people of God," where no heat of anxiety shall befall you, and where God shall wipe all tears from your eyes.

If any one of you here has wandered hither and thither to the flocks of the companions, it is time that you seek rest for your soul. This you will find with Him who is our peace. Come to Him who has bought you, and tell Him of your utter weariness. Confess your many sins, committed against Him, not only when like one spiritually asleep you were walking in manifest wickedness, but also when though awakened you walked in errors, relying on the testimonies of men with reference to your spiritual condition, in ignorant disputations about spiritual matters, in useless Sunday visits, in discord with worldly minded parents, in loveless wrangling with benighted people, yielding to carnal desires, neglecting your earthly vocation, passing unkind remarks about people you do not know, and in numberless wrong deeds which a useless doctrine brings forth. Ask the Lord Jesus to forgive you all this and to give you a hearty confidence in His infinite love. He gave His life for the sheep. He is ever present in His Word, though you do not see Him; yes, He is in your very midst while you are here congregated in His name. Come to agreement with Him. Confess your sins be-

fore Him. Ask Him to receive you in His arms as one of His sheep, saying, "I poor, sinful being" etc.* Amen.

* "I poor, sinful being" are the opening words of The Confession of Sins in the liturgy of the Church of Sweden.