

# ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX



And just as of old Moses spoke to the Lord  
“as a man is wont to speak to his friend,”  
and the Lord replied to him, so here the Word Divine and the holy soul,  
like two intimates, converse familiarly together.

Sweeter than honey, therefore, are the words that pass between them ;  
the very glances they interchange are full of tenderest feeling  
and speak the language of holy love.

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## References:

<https://archive.org/stream/stbernardssermon02bern#page/n9/mode/2up>

[http://archive.org/stream/stbernardssermon02bern/stbernardssermon02bern\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/stbernardssermon02bern/stbernardssermon02bern_djvu.txt)

Grace moves us to begin and prosecute good works.

Let no worldly cares, no allurements of the flesh be allowed to distract our attention from this sacred colloquy.

Blessed is he that keepeth his garments clean,” that is, the robes of innocence and simplicity, if yet he be careful to set them off with the ornament of humility.

Humility is beyond question one principle of spiritual beauty.

Whomsoever, therefore, the Holy Spirit by His unction deigns out of compassion to reinvest in his original and natural kindliness, he shall be restored forthwith to the integrity of his manhood, yea, shall receive from grace a perfection more sublime than ever belonged to his nature.

O admirable humility! She who never contracted the stain of sin assumes the disposition of a penitent! She who has done nothing needing to be atoned for, yet does not dispense herself from making atonement!

He always takes special pleasure in the soul which has learned to contemplate Him in the spirit.

It is necessary that thou shouldst be led on gradually from glory to glory.’

...it is given to see God openly and not in signs and symbols.

Now, it is impossible for the soul not to hear, when the Word, wishing to speak to her, sets this spiritual tongue of His in motion; “for the Word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit.”

Much less, on the other hand, can the Word fail to catch what is spoken by the soul, both because He is everywhere present, and also for the reason that the tongue of her devotion can never move at all, except under the impulse of His inspiring grace.

She loves Him the more, the more she sees herself outdone in loving.

For when Thou, Who art the Light Unfailing, didst strip Thyself of Thy natural rays, when Thou didst empty Thyself, “taking the form of a servant,” then Thy loving-kindness became more clearly manifest, then Thy charity shone forth more brightly, then Thy grace was more lavishly poured out.

Therefore do you likewise take care to bestrew with the flowers of good works the nuptial couch of your own consciences, making the practise of virtue to precede the holy quiet of contemplation, as the blossom precedes the fruit.

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Do not imagine, then, that the satisfaction of your private devotion should be allowed to withdraw you in the very slightest from the practice of holy obedience or from following the traditions of the fathers.

In the first place, you must cleanse your consciences from every stain of anger, dissension, discontent, and jealousy; and you must hasten to exclude from the home of your hearts in whatever you may find there to be opposed either to domestic peace or to the obedience which you owe your superiors. Next, it is requisite to adorn the spiritual couch with the flowers of all kinds of good works and holy desires, and to perfume it besides with the odours of the various virtues.

That is, your consciences shall be redolent of (flowers of the bed chambre) of *piety, peace, gentleness, justice; obedience, joy, and humility.*

My brethren, every man who walks not according to the flesh but according to the spirit should recognise himself to be the spiritual temple of God.

Be careful, then, of this spiritual edifice which is yourselves,...Take care, I say, to furnish it with... "fear of the Lord" ...patience... perseverance...but above all divine charity.

The trees (to furnish rafters to the bridal-chamber of one's conscience) I am speaking of are "*peace, goodness, benignity, joy in the Holy Spirit,*" to "*shew mercy with cheerfulness,*" to "*give with simplicity,*" to "*rejoice with them that rejoice,*" and to "*weep with them that weep.*"

He (the Bridegroom, the Lord) thus reminds her (the one who strives for union) that it is not the bridal-chamber but the field that produces the flowers, and that they owe their beautiful colours and their sweet smell to His bounty and communication.

...this is a salutary reminder that "it is not expedient indeed " to glory in anything, but that " he that glorieth " should " glory in the Lord."

The flower of a good work soon droops and withers and loses all its beauty and life, if it be not frequently renewed, so to speak, by an unceasing succession of similar acts of piety. All this with reference to the flowers in the bed-chamber.

The Lord, (the Bridegroom) proclaims, " I am the Flower of the field. "

Thus, whilst the Bride invites her Beloved to repose, she is summoned by Him to the field and exhorted to devote herself to labour.

Thou art both to me, O Lord Jesus, Thou art my Model in suffering and the Reward of my suffering.

Rightly have I assigned to the garden the flower of virginity, whose characteristics are modesty, avoidance of publicity, love of retirement, and patience under discipline.

For the repose of contemplation is enjoyed with greater security after the performance of external good works.

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We find rest in those we love, and we provide a resting place in ourselves for those who love us.

I know by myself how incomprehensible God is, seeing I cannot comprehend the parts of my own being.

Prayer is a virtue that prevaieth against all temptations.

The peacemakers shall be called the sons of God, who came to make peace between God and man.

The tears of penitents are the wine of angels.

We find rest in those we love, and we provide a resting place for those who love us.

He who prays and labours lifts his heart to God with his hands.

The cause of loving God is God. I spoke the truth, for He is both the efficient and final Cause. It is He who gives the occasions, it is He who creates the affection, He consummates the desire.

He gave Himself to merit for us, He retains Himself to be our reward, He offers Himself as the food of saintly souls, He gives himself as the price of the redemption of those in captivity.

Give Him glory once for offenses pardoned; give it again for virtues conferred.

While I am in this life this more sublime philosophy will be mine-to know Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

His fatherly love is greater than any injustice whatsoever.

It suffices me for attaining to all righteousness, to have Him alone propitious toward me against whom alone I have sinned... Not to sin is the righteousness of God: Man's righteousness is God's forgiveness.

In order to merit, it is enough to know that our merits do not suffice for us.

Great faith merits great rewards. And wherever you set down the foot of hope among the goods of the Lord, they will be yours.

Ah! from how great bitterness of soul have you often delivered me, O Good Jesus, coming to me!... How often has prayer taken me on the brink of despair, and restored me to the state of soul of one exulting in joy and confident forgiveness. Those who are afflicted in this way, behold they know that the Lord Jesus is truly a Physician Who healeth the broken of heart and bindeth up their bruises.