

Song of Solomon 5:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Analysis

The bride concludes her description of her beloved: 'His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.' The phrase 'his mouth is most sweet' (Hebrew 'chikko mamtaqim,' חִכּוֹ מַמְתַּקִּים) suggests both his speech (words are sweet, gracious, true) and his kisses (physical intimacy is delightful). The climactic declaration 'he is altogether lovely' (Hebrew 'khullo machamadim,' כָּלּוֹ מַחְמַדִּים) literally means 'all of him is desirable/precious'—from the Hebrew root chamad (חָמַד), meaning to desire, delight in, or treasure. Every aspect of the beloved is precious and desirable; there is nothing unlovely about him. The bride then identifies him with two terms: 'my beloved' (dodi, דּוּדִי) emphasizes romantic love and passion, while 'my friend' (re'i, רֵעִי) highlights companionship, trust, and partnership. This combination presents complete covenant relationship—both passionate love and intimate friendship. The verse teaches that ideal covenant love encompasses total admiration ('altogether lovely'), passionate romance ('beloved'), and deep friendship ('friend').

Historical Context

The wasf (detailed description) in 5:10-16 follows ancient Near Eastern literary conventions but reaches a climax here with comprehensive affirmation: 'altogether lovely.' Every part of the beloved, from head (verse 11) to legs (verse 15), merits praise. The phrase 'altogether lovely' (khullo machamadim) is particularly striking because 'machamad' (desirable thing) appears elsewhere for treasures and precious possessions (2 Chronicles 36:19; Daniel 11:37-38). The beloved is

supremely treasured. Combining 'beloved' and 'friend' in marriage echoes Proverbs' wisdom: 'rejoice with the wife of thy youth... let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love' (Proverbs 5:18-19). Early church tradition immediately applied 'altogether lovely' to Christ—the incomparably beautiful Savior who possesses every excellence. Charles Spurgeon preached, 'If all the virtues of the most excellent were bound in one bundle, they would not equal Christ.' The Puritans meditated on Christ as the supreme Friend (John 15:15) and Beloved. Modern readers affirm both marital love's ideal (passion plus friendship) and Christ's supreme loveliness.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. In what ways is Jesus 'altogether lovely' to you—is there any aspect of His character, work, or person that you find difficult to treasure and delight in?
2. How does the combination of 'beloved' and 'friend' inform your understanding of complete relationship with both your spouse and with Christ?

Interlinear Text

חִכּוֹ	מְמֵתֶקֶן יָם	וְכָל־וְ	מִסְמֵד יָם	זֶה
His mouth	is most sweet	H3605	yea he is altogether lovely	H2088
H2441	H4477		H4261	
דוֹדִי	וְזֶה	רֵעִי	בָּנוֹת	יְרוּשָׁלַם:
This is my beloved	H2088	and this is my friend	O daughters	of Jerusalem
H1730		H7453	H1323	H3389

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 45:2: Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

Song of Solomon 7:9: And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.

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