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# Commentary of the Song of Songs, Chapter One

by James Durham

### *Verse 1. The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.*

**B**efore we enter upon the purpose of this chapter, or give the division of it, we would first speak to the title, which appears in verse 1.

We consider this title Scripture, it being in the original, even as other titles, prefixed to various Psalms, as to Psalm 51, 102, &c. In it three things are set down, 1. The nature of this Scripture. 2. Its excellency. 3. Its instrumental author, who was made use of by the Spirit in penning it.

First, for the nature of this Scripture, it's *a song*. Songs in Scripture, are such portions, or books thereof, as were especially intended to be made use of, for the praising of God, the edifying and comforting of His People, in singing of them. Three sorts of them were in use amongst the Hebrews (as the titles of our Psalms do show, and as they are mentioned by the Apostle, Eph. 5:19.) 1. Psalms, such were used, both with voice and instruments. 2. There were hymns (so the 145th Psalm is entitled) such in the contents of them, were wholly made up of praise, and what immediately led to that. 3. There were spiritual songs, which were more extensive in their contents, taking in histories, cases, and exercises of all sorts; and might be sung with the of voice, without instruments, either publicly, or privately. This Song is of this last sort, intended to be made use of in the praises of God; and so composed, both for contents and manner, as it might best attain that end, and prove edifying and comfortable also to Believers in their singing of it.

2. The excellency of this Song is expressed in this, that it's a Song of Songs, a most excellent song, this being the manner how the Hebrews expressed their superlatives. While it is called, a Song of Songs, it's compared with, and preferred to all other Songs: And we conceive the comparison is not only betwixt this and secular Songs; but, 1. It's compared with, and preferred to all these which Solomon wrote, and is preferable to all these thousand and five mentioned, I Kings 4:32. 2. It's compared with all other scriptural songs, such as is recorded,

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Exod. 15. and Judges 5, &c. Of all of these songs, this one is the most excellent, as being: 1. Purposely intended to treat of the most choice and excellent subjects, to wit, Christ and His Church; which is not done upon particular occasions, as in other songs, but is the great purpose that is particularly intended, and pursued. 2. It treats of Christ and his Church, in their most glorious, lively, and lovely actions, to wit, his care of, and his love unto his Church, and that in its most eminent degree; and also, of her love to him, in its various measures and workings. 3. It's in the most excellent manner composed, by way of dialogue and sweet colloquies betwixt these two parties, having in it many excellent and various expressions. These are well interwoven with sundry cases of several sorts, to make the whole composition the more taking and excellent. 4. It's set forth in a most lovely, excellent, majestic style and strain, which exceedingly ravishes and captivates the affections, making the love contained in it, sweetly savour and relish through the beautiful garment of borrowed expressions, which is put upon it. 5. It's a most excellent song, in respect of its comprehensiveness; here is an armory and store-house of Songs in this one Song. Here there is something treasured up for every case, that may be edifying and comfortable, which will not be so found in other Song. Here there is something suitable for all sorts of believers, under all the variety of cases and dispensations wherewith they are exercised; and also, all relations under which the church stands: all which should commend this Song to us.

It is recorded of the Hebrews, that whatever Scripture was delivered in the form of poetry, they counted themselves specially bound to take notice of that, and to get it by heart. Indeed it is not for nought, that some Scriptures, and not others, are cast in that mold; and that this could be the intent of the Holy Ghost, may be gathered from Moses his putting his last words in a song, Deut. 32. that they might be the better remembered.

The third thing in the Title is the Penman made use of by the Spirit, in writing and recording this Song. Solomon was a Great Man, rich, wise, yea, an elect saint; yet one who had also fallen into manifold faults, whom the Lord allowed to die, without recording expressly any thing of his recovery, though we make no doubt of it. (look up reference here) We shall endeavor to make this clear from these considerations:

First, from the Lord's promises to him, 2 Sam. 7:14,15. where these three things are observable which the Lord undertakes concerning him, 1. That he will be to him a Father. 2. That he will correct him with the rods of men, if he shall sin: which says he would not eternally punish him. 3. That he would not do with him as he did with Saul, whom he rejected; he would not take away His mercy from Solomon, as he had done from him: and if no more were in these promises

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but what is temporal, there would be no great consolation in them to David (whose consolation is one chief part of the intention of that place.) Beside, these promises, Psalm 89:31,32,33. (which are the same as these, 2 Sam. 7.) are looked upon as special evidences of God's Love, and particular promises of His saving-covenant.

2. When he is born, the Lord gives him his name, yea, sends Nathan, 2 Sam. 12. with this warrant, to name him Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him; which cannot be a love arising from any thing in him, as if he had been well pleased with his behavior, (Solomon had not yet done anything good or evil) but it must be a love prior to his works, and so not arising from his good deeds, and therefore not cut off by his sins. This is similar to the love God had to Jacob, before he had done good or evil, Rom. 9:11. and must speak out electing-love, as it doth in that place.

3. He is made use of by the Spirit to be a Penman of Holy Writ, and a prophet of the Lord; all which are by our Lord, Luke 13:28. said, to 'sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the kingdom of heaven.' There is no reason to exclude him, seeing that universal assertion (all the prophets, &c.) would not be a truth, unless he were there. Although some wicked men have prophesied, as Balaam did, yet are they never accounted prophets of the Lord, as Solomon was, but false prophets and enchanters; neither were they Penman of Holy Writ; who were, as Peter calleth them, 2 Peter 1:21, 'Holy men of God, speaking as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost.'

4. Neither are the particular privileges and he was admitted unto to be forgotten; by him the Lord built the Temple, by him the covenant was explicitly renewed with God, I Kings 8:9. And his prayers are often particularly mentioned, to be heard; yea after his death, some testimonies are recorded of him, which cannot agree with his rejection: see 2 Chr. 11:17. There the ways of Solomon are put in, as commendable with David's, though there were defects in both; and this being immediately after Solomon's death, it would seem he left the worship of God pure, and so had returned from his idolatry, though all the monuments of it were not abolished. And especially in this, he was singularly privileged, that, in a most lively way, he was the Type of our blessed Lord Jesus, in his intercession, reign, and peaceable government: beside, that by a particular covenant, the kingdom of Christ, and his descent from him, was established to him.

5. It's of weight also, that it seems more than probable, that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes after his recovery; it being neither amongst the Proverbs, nor Songs which are mentioned, I Kings 4:32. And in it, he speaks out of experiences he had both of folly and madness, and the vanity he had found in all created

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things, even when he had finished his experiment of all the possible ways of attaining, either the knowledge of their perfections, or satisfaction in the enjoyment of them.

The Scriptures therefore, hath not left his recovery altogether dark; yet, as to any historical evidence thereof, the Lord hath so ordered that he passeth away under a cloud, for these good ends:

First, thereby, Solomon is chastened with the rods of men (even after death) upon his name; for his failures are set down expressly, but his recovery (as to any direct testimony thereof) is passed over.

2. By this, the Lord makes his displeasure with Solomon's failures always known; though he had favour to his person, and gave him his soul for a prey.

3. And thus the Lord would warn others from declining, and hereby teach his people, to be afraid to rest upon gifts; yea, or upon graces, seeing he hath left this matter so far in the dark, as might yield an occasion (as it were) to question the eternal condition of Solomon.

4. It may be also, that Solomon after his recovery, did never recover his former lustre, nor attain to such a profitable way of appearing in God's public matters, for which formally he had been so observable: for so it is taken notice of David, after his fall, that his following life is stained, as different from what went before; therefore it is the accommodation of Jehosaphat, 1 Chr. 17:3. that he walked in the first ways of his father David, which certainly, it is not done to condemn David's state after that time, but to leave that mark (as a chastisement) on his failings: and seeing Solomon's were greater, therefore may this silence of his recovery, be more universal as to him.

Before we draw any thing from this, by way of application, I shall answer a doubt, and it is this, how can all these thousand and five Songs mentioned, I Kings 4:32. be lost, without wronging the perfection of canonical Scripture? Or, what is, of them? Or, what is to be accounted of the loss of them?

*Answer.* we say, 1. The Scriptures may be full in the articles of faith, even though some portions thereof, which once were extant, were now missing; except it could be made out, that some points of faith were in these books, which are not to be found in other Scriptures. 2. Yet, seeing it is not safe, and it has many inconveniences, to assert that any book once intended of God to his Church, as a canon, or rule of faith and manners, should be lost.

And seeing, it is not consistent with that wise providence of his, whereby he hath still carefully preserved the treasure of his oracles in his Church. We rather incline to say, that though these songs were possibly useful, and might be

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written by the Spirit's direction; yet, that they were not intended for the universal edification of the Church, nor enrolled as a part of his word, appointed for that end. Neither can it be thought strange, that it should so be; for, that a thing be Scripture, it's not only needful, that it be inspired, but also that it be appointed of God for public use. It's not improbable, but Isaiah, Moses, David, Paul, and others, might have written many more writings, upon particular occasions, or to particular persons, which were useful in themselves for edification; and yet were never appointed of God to be looked upon, or received as Scriptures for public use in His Church: so do we account of these Songs mentioned in the objection, and other writings of Solomon, not now extant: and it may be the Spirit hath pitched on this Song, to be recorded, as the sum and chief of all the rest; and he did pitch upon some particular prayers of David and Moses, &c. passing by others.

And lastly, we are rather to be thankful, for the great in advantage we have by this, then anxiously to inquire, what hath become of the rest.

There are four things, we would propose for application, from the title of this Song.

First, that singing of believers cases, even their several cases, is allowable: or, that singing of divers and different cases, yea, even their saddest cases, is not inconsistent with, but very agreeable unto the work of praise: ye see, this is a song for the nature of it, which Song is to be sung, yet for matter, exceeding comprehensive of all sorts of cases, and these various.

There are (amongst others) five cases, in which to sing, doth sometimes stumble, at least, cause hesitation with those who are weak and tender; all which, we will find cleared in the Bride's practice of singing this Song.

First, it's doubted if sad cases should be sung, seeing, James 5:13. it's said, 'is any man merry, let him sing psalms?' *Answer.* It's true, those who are merry should sing, but not only they, no more than only they who are afflicted, should pray. It's not our case, nor our cheerful disposition, but the duty that should be respected in this work of praise; yea, we should sing, for cheering our disposition, and mitigating and sweetening our crosses. So doth the Bride here sing her sufferings, chap. 1:6, chap. 5:7 when she was smitten; yea, her desertions, she putteth these also in a Song.

2. It's stumbled at some times, to sing complaints of our own sinfulness, and to turn our failings into songs; what matter of cheerfulness is there in these may one think? But we say here, she doth so, 'Mine own Vineyard have I not kept' (saith she) Chap. 1:6. 'I sleep,' &c. chap. 5:2. It's a ground of cheerfulness,

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that we may sing over these unto God, with expectation to be pardoned and delivered from them, as Psalm 65.3.

3. When the subject is different from our case, some think it's hard to sing such Psalms. *Answer.* Certainly in this Song, there are different, yea, contrary cases; yet none can think, but a believer may sing it all at one time. Yea, 2. there had never then been a Psalm sung in public; for in no congregation, can all the members ever being in one case. 3. The same might be objected against public prayers also, seeing there may be many petitions that are not suitable to all joiners; yet hath the Lord commanded both public praying and praising.

4. When the subject which is sung, is above us; being a thing we have not yet reached, and so cannot assert it in our particular condition as truth, as these words, Psalm 18:20,21. 'I have kept his ways,' &c. *Answer.* By this Song, all, at least most part of believers, are made to sing many things, beyond their own attainments possibly; yea, chap. 8:12. That phrase, 'My vineyard which is mine, is before me,' is of that same extent with that, Psalm 18:20. Yet will not any think that the Spirit proposing this Song, and that Psalm, as a subject for public praise, did ever intend that none should sing it, but such as were holy as David. Yea, it would seem that if either David, or Solomon, had stuck to the absolute perfection which these words seem to hold forth (if they be expounded according to the strict rule of the law, and not taken in an evangelical sense) that neither of them would, or could have sung them. Yea, it's observable, that in this Song, there are spots mentioned, and not keeping the of the vineyard, chap. 1.6. is one part of the Song, as well as keeping of it, chap. 8. is another.

How then may we join in these? *Answer.* 1. We sing not our own understanding and experience only, but what may attain the end of praise, which is attained in our acknowledging what others have reached, though we ourselves comes short. 2. Not only our own case, as particular members, is to be sung; but in public we take in the praises of the whole body. 3. That expression, chap. 1.6. 'Mine own vineyard,' &c. holds forth the sense she had of her negligence, not as if she had no way done her duty, but she confesseth her failings in it; which she sings to the praise of that free-grace, that had pardoned her. Again, the other expression, chap. 8.12. 'My vineyard which is mine, is before me,' expresseth her sense of her sincerity, blessing God for it, and refreshing herself in the acknowledging of it. Both these may agree, as to some measure, in the believer's experience, at one and the same time; though when the believer sinneth more grossly, they do not so well agree to him, except in respect of different times and cases.

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In praising then, we would neither simply look to our attitude nor to the subject in it self, which is to be sung, nor to the cases we are in, as if these were the warrant of our singing, or the rule to regulate us in it: but unto these three things. 1. The purpose wherefore singing is appointed. 2. The command. 3. The notion, or consideration, in respect of which, the believer to joineth in the duty of praise.

The purposes are principally three. 1. Glorifying God, and making his praise glorious. Thus histories of the Lord's dealing with his People of old, and thus the cases of others, in our singing of them, serve to that end, that he did such works, that such a case was once sung to him, and such a saint was so dealt with. Otherwise, we might scruple to sing, Psalm 44:1. 'We have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us,' and other Scriptures, as well as many cases. In this way, the most part of the subject of praise, and the book of the Psalms, would be laid aside as useless, and not so much as to be read; for we ought not to read, or say an untruth, any more than to sing it.

A second purpose is, edifying of others with whom we join, as well as studying edification ourselves: So, Col. 3:16. The end to be proposed in singing, is, 'teaching and admonishing one another, in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.' And suppose, some found themselves unsuitable in their own case, to the purpose that is to be sung, yet will it not teach them what they should be, and admonish them, because they are not such?

A third purpose we are to aim at in singing, is our own cheering and refreshing, 'Making melody in our hearts to the Lord,' Eph. 5:19. Which ariseth not always from the subject simply considered, as it holds true in our own experience: but, 1. From our conscientious going about it, as a piece of worship to God, and so doing, we are accepted in that. 2. From the heartsomeness of that soul-refreshing exercise of praise. Thus the Scripture which might be more saddening in meditation to us, yet should be cheering in praise, because it's then used in that ordinance. 3. From the possibility that is herein revealed of attaining such a blessing, attitude, or experience, because once a saint did attain it. Since they were men of like passions, and infirmities with us, why may not we aim at, and hope to be made saints of the like graces with them, since they were, what they were, by the grace of God? 4. From this, that it was once made good in another, which mercy should be a motive for us, to mention that to the Lord's praise. 5. From its being a part of Scripture, appointed for his praise, whether it agree with our case, or not: that being the end where for it was designed to be sung, is a sufficient warrant, for our joining in the singing thereof.

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Secondly, we would consider the command we have, not only to praise, but to praise in these words of David, and other Penman of Holy psalms; for which cause, God hath furnished his Church with Songs (but not so with forms of prayers, to which he would have us restrict us) and that for preventing doubt concerning the matter: For, 1. If God did propose these songs to be sung, then they are fit to praise him. 2. If he did allow none to sing them, but such as had no hesitation, or scruple to assert them, with application to themselves; then, either never should they be sung, or never in public: but, 3. Did he not appoint them to be used in David's time? And joiners in then were not all of one size. Surely they had never been committed to public use, if none might have joined in singing them, but these who could sing them from their own experience. Will a believer be challenged for praising God, in the rule and words laid down by him? Certainly not: however he may be challenged, if he be not suitably affected in the singing of them.

Thirdly, we would consider the notion, or capacity under which believers join in this duty; for they join either as parts of the whole church, and so they go about their part of the duty of praise (as the matter holdeth true in any member indefinitely, even as they join in prayers) so being that which is sung, be considered simply material for that end. Or, they join as true believers, and then what points out infirmity, they look on it as agreeing to their flesh; what points out sincerity, they as spiritual, though not perfect, join on that account in the thankful acknowledging of it. What confesseth a sin, if guilty, they acknowledge it, if not, they bless God they are preserved by grace, yet they are made to see their corruption, which hath the seed of that sin in it, and take warning, as in singing the 51st Psalm is requisite, when all are not under that guilt, which David their confesseth.

A fifth case in singing, which hath been matter of doubting to some, is, when they are put to sing with others, who possibly are strangers to God. *Answer.* Such may be cleared from this, that the Bride joineth with the daughters of Jerusalem, often they have a share in holding up this Song; so doth she go out to the Watchmen, being willing to join with them who smote her. Certainly this and other songs, being to be sung in public in the congregation, and such a congregation, as none will plead that it ought to have been separate from, it's clear they joined, and that upon the account of the former grounds.

The second thing we are to observe for application, it is from the commendation of this Song, being for its excellency, a *Song of Songs*: And it is this, that the believer hath the choicest Song, and most excellent mirth in the World; not such songs, or joy as the world hath, or giveth, John 14.27. Yea, their songs, are such songs, as none can learn but themselves, Rev. 14.13. Oh how



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happy and cheerful a life might a believer have, if he did not sometime mar his own comfort! All is most excellent which he hath, his songs are so, for they have the most excellent subject, to wit, Christ, Psalm 45, and the most excellent grounds of rejoicing, and most solid; the largest, sweetest, and most comfortable allowance in the world. Considering all this Song together, though it hath sundry sad and perplexing cases, yet it is most excellent. Right thoughts of Christ, will make every condition sweet, and a Song; nothing will come wrong to a believer. Christ, Christ maketh up all, and maketh all excellent: every condition with him is excellent; whoso covets him, coveteth what is best; whoso neglects him neglects what is only worth the seeking, and what can only afford a song to the owner: and it is clearness in Christ's worth, and an interest in him, that turns all conditions into a song.

Thirdly, from the author (I mean the Penman) consider, that piety and tenderness is not unbecoming, but is rather an ornament to the most noble, most rich, and most wise men in the world. It's a greater glory to Solomon, and a greater evidence of his eternal good condition, that he was acquainted with, and taken up in holy exercises, then that he was a king. Yea, places, parts, riches, &c. are beautiful, when made subservient to piety; piety maketh these to shine in Solomon: and the Spirit also make its use of natural and moral wisdom, which the Lord had bestowed upon him, to set out deep mysteries in these writings. Which shews, that the Lord would have any measure of these gifts he hath bestowed on us, adorned with the exercise of grace, and made subservient to his glory. Also we may see here, that much business in men's common affairs, and a tender walk, are not inconsistent; if men would prudently manage their time, they might be engaged in their employment, and keep a spiritual frame also, as Solomon, David, and others did. It's our corruption, and not the multitude of lawful employments, that distracts us: David went home to bless his own family, in the midst of public affairs, II Samuel 6.20.

Fourthly, from the consideration of the Penman (stained with such faults) made use of by God in the composition of this Song; we may observe, 1. That neither place, parts, nay, nor Graces, will exempt any man from falling. O Believers, what need is there to be watchful and humble! May not these examples of David, Solomon, Peter, &c. lay your pride low, and put you to your arms, and necessitate you to be upon your watch? Who of you will claim to Solomon's knowledge, experience, or privileges? Yet even he, the Penman of this sweet Scripture, had His affections to God cooled, and became an offense even to this day. What is spoken of his fearful backsliding and fall, being still a rock of offense, upon which many still break their necks. 2. There may be much corruption dwelling beside much light and grace, and yet, the one not fully put

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out, or extinguish the other. 3. Grace hath fitted and made use of many a knotty tree for the Lord's work. For what Solomon naturally hath been, may appear in his carriage (seeing men's sinful carriage and way, is but the product of the natural corruption that is in their heart) notwithstanding he is thus made use of. 4. Corruption may live long under grace's fear, and grace may attain to a great height, and that corruption may again strangely break out, and grace be brought very low. What knowledge had Solomon? What preference and clearness had he gotten by the Lord's appearing to him? What hearing of prayer? How useful was he in GOD's work, and building the temple, ordering all the Levites, &c.? And continued thus eminent for many years, even till he was well stricken in years, and then fell so foully? How may this strike us with fear? It's much to win fair off the stage, without a spot. Be humble, and he that standeth, let him take heed lest he fall. 5. Grace can wash foul spots out of believers garments, seeing without question Solomon's was washed; and as he was recovered. So grace is able to recover the saints from their most dangerous and fearful backslidings. 6. Sometimes the spirit will honor the Penman of Holy Writ, by mentioning and recording their names, other times not; as is clear from some books, unknown by whom they are written, the Lord doth in this according to his pleasure, and as he seeth it may tend to edification.

*Verse 2. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.*

**H**aving spoken concerning the title, we come now to the Song itself: which is presented as a conversation, or dialogue. We shall divide the various chapters according to the number of the speakers, and their several exchanges and speeches. And so in this chapter, we have five parts. In the first the Bride speaks to verse 8. In the second the bridegroom, to verse 2. In the third the Bride again, to verse 15. And fourth the Bridegroom speaks, to verse 14. And lastly, the Bride in the last two verses. The Bride begins this sweet conference, verse 2. and continues to verse 8. 1. She speaks to Christ, verses 2,3,4. Then 2. to the daughters of Jerusalem, verse 5,6. Lastly, she turns herself again to the Bridegroom, verse 7.

In the first of these, there is, 1. Her aim and desire, by way of an earnest wish laid down, verse 1. 2. The motives that stir up this desire in her, and whereby she presseth it on him, verse 2,3. 3. There is a formal prayer set down, verse 4.

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which is amplified in these three, 1. In the motive proposed. 2. In the answer obtained, and felt. 3. In the effects that followed on it.

Her great wish is, 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.' That it's the Bride that speaks, is clear; she begins, not because love ariseth first on her side (for here she begins, as having already closed with him, and therefore she speaks to him, as one who knows his worth, and longs for the out-lettings of his love) but because such expressions of Christ's love, as are to be found in this Song, whereby his complacency is vented and manifested toward us, doth first presuppose the working of his love in us, and our exercising of it on him, and then his delighting (that is, is expressing his delight) in us: for although the man first suit the wife (and so Christ first sueth for his bride) yet when persons are married, it's most suitable, that the wife should be very pressingly long for, and express desire after the husband, even as the Bride doth here after Christ's kisses, and the expressions of his love. Of this order of Christ's love, see Chapter 8 verse 10.

In the words consider, 1. What she desires, and that is, *the* 'kisses of his mouth.' 2. How she points Christ forth, by this significant demonstrative, 'Him.' 3. Her abrupt manner of breaking out with this her desire, as one that had been dwelling on the thoughts of Christ, and feeding on his excellency; and therefore now she breaks out, 'let him kiss me,' &c. as if her heart were at her mouth, or would leap out of her mouth, to meet with his.

First, by 'kisses', we understand most lovely, friendly, familiar and sensible manifestations of his love; kisses of the mouth are so amongst friends, so it was betwixt Jonathan and David, and so it is especially betwixt husband and wife.

Next, there are several delightsome circumstances, the heighten the Bride's this esteem of this, the so much desired expression of his love. The first is implied, in the person who is to kiss, it's 'him, let him kiss', He who is the most excellent and singular person in the world,. The second is hinted at in the party whom he is to kiss, it's 'me, let him kiss me,' a contemptible despicable creature; for so she was in herself, as appears from verse 5,6. Yet this is the person, this love is to be vented on. 3. Wherewith is he to kiss? It's with the 'kisses of his mouth;' which we conceive is not only added as an Hebraism, like that expression, 'the words of his mouth,' and such like phrases, but also to affect her self, by expressing fully what she breathed after, to wit, kisses, or love, which are is a more lovely to her, that they come from his mouth, as having a sweetness in it, (Chap. 5:16.) above any thing in the world. That Christ's love hath such a sweetness in it, the reason subjoined will clear, 'for thy love is,' &c. That which is

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here *kisses*, is immediately denominated *Loves*; it is his love that she prized, and whereof kisses were but evidences.

They are 'kisses' in the plural number, partly to shew how many ways Christ hath to manifest his love, partly to shew the continuance and frequency of these manifestations, which she would be at: And the thing which she here desires, is not love simply, but the sense of love; for she questions not his love, but desired to have a sensible expressions of it, and therefore compares it not only to looks, that she might see him, but to kisses; which is also clear from the reason annexed, while she compares his love to wine.

Again, her manner of designing Christ, is observable, 'him.' It's a relative, where no antecedent goes before, yet certainly it looks to Christ alone, as the reasons shew; herein no rules of arts are kept, for love stands not on these. This manner of speaking is to be found also in moral authors, when one eminent is set forth, who singularly known beside others, as having in the estimation of the speakers no match: so Pythagora's scholars used to say of their master, 'he said it.' And in Scripture, when the saints speak of the Lord they had thus designed him, because they're not afraid to be mistaken, Psalm 87.1. 'His foundation,' &c. and Isa. 53.2 'He shall grow up like a tender plant.' This is neither for want of titles due to him, or rhetoric in her, but because in this manner of expression the saints set forth, 1. Christ's singular excellency, which is such, that he hath no match, or equal, there is but one *Him*. 2. Their singular esteem of him, whatever others think, 1 Cor. 8:6, 'To us there is but one Lord, Jesus:' only Christ is esteemed of by them. 3. A constant and habitual thinking, and meditating on him; for though there be no connexion in the words expressed, yet what is expressed, may have, and hath connexion with the thoughts of her heart; and if all were seen that were within, it would be easily known what *Him* she meant: and so we are to gather its dependence on the affection, and meditation it flows from, rather than from any preceding words; for here there are none. 4. It is to shew, her thoughts of Christ were not limited, or stinted to her words, or her speaking of *Him*: for though there be no words preceding, to make known who this *Him* is, spoken of; yet we may well conceive her heart taken up with desire after *Him*, and meditation on *Him*: and so there is a good coherence,--'let Him,' that is, *Him* I have been thinking on, *Him* whom my soul desires, he only whom I esteem of, and who hath no equal, &c. This sort of abruptness of speech, hath no incongruity in spiritual rhetoric.

Whence we may observe, 1. That Christ hath a way of communicating his love, and the sense of it to a believer, which is not common to others. 2. That this is the great scope and desire of believers, if they had their choice, it is to have sensible communion with Christ: this is their 'one thing,' Psalm 27:4. It is the first

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and last suit of this Song, and the voice of the Spirit and Bride, and the last prayer that is in the scripture, Rev. 22:17. 3. That believers can discern this fellowship (it is so sweet and sensible) which is to be had with Jesus Christ. 4. That they have an high esteem of it, as being a special signification of his love. 5. That much inward heart fellowship with Christ, hath suitable outward expressions flowing from it. 6. That believers in an habitual walk with Christ will be abrupt in their suits to him, sometimes meditating on him, sometimes praying to him. 7. That where Christ is known, and rightly thought of, there will be no equal to him in the heart.

2. In the next place, she lays down the motives that made her so desire this; which are rather to set forth Christ's excellency, to strengthen her own faith, and warm her own love in pursuing after so concerning a suit, than from any fear she had of being mistaken by him, in being as it were, so bold and homely with him in her desires. 1. The reason is generally proposed, verse 2, and enlarged and confirmed, verse 3. The sum of it is, thy love is exceeding excellent, and I have more need, and greater esteem of it, than of any thing in the world, therefore I seek after it, and hope to attain it.

There are four words here to be cleared, 1. 'Thy loves' (so it is in the original) in the plural number Christ's love is sometimes (as the love of God) taken essentially, as an attribute in him, which is himself, 'God is love,' 1 John 4:8. Thus the Lord, in his love, is the same in all times. 2. For some effect of that love, when he doth manifest it to his people; by conferring good on them, and by the sensible intimations thereof to them: so it is, John 14:21, 23. We take it in the last sense here; for she was in *Christ's* love, but desired the manifestations of it; and it is by these that his love becomes sensible and refreshing to believers. It's *loves* in the plural number, although it be one infinite fountain in God, to show how many ways it vented, or how many effects that one love produced, or what esteem she had of it, and of the continuance and frequency of the manifestations thereof to her; this one love of his was as many loves.

The second word to be cleared, is 'wine.' Wine is cheering to men, Psalm 104:15, and makes their heart glad: under it here is understood, what is most cheering and comfortable in its use to men.

3. Christ's love is 'better,' 1. Simply in itself, it is most excellent. 2. In its effects, more exhilarating, cheering, and refreshing, And, 3. In her esteem; to me (saith she) 'It is better;' I love it, prize it, and esteem it more, as Psalm 4:7, 8. 'Thereby thou hast made my heart more glad,' &c. This his love is every way preferable to all the most cheering and refreshing things in the world.

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4. The inference, 'for,' is to be considered: it sheweth that these words are a reason of her suit, and so the sense runs thus, because thy love is of great value, and hath more comfortable effects on me, than the most delightsome of creatures, therefore let me have it. Out of which reasoning we may see what motive will have weight with Christ, and will sway with sincere souls in dealing with him, for the intimation of his love; for the love of Christ, and the sweetness and satisfaction that is to be found in it, is the great prevailing motive that hath weight with them: and sense of the need of Christ's love, and esteem of it, and delight in it alone, when no creature-comfort can afford refreshing, may, and will warrant poor hungry and thirsty souls, to be pressing for the love of Christ, when they may not be without it; which shews,

1. That a heart that knows Jesus Christ, will love to dwell on the thoughts of his worth, and to present him often to itself, as the most ravishing object, and will make use of pressing motives and arguments, to stir up itself to seek after the intimations of his love. 2. That the more a soul diveth in the love of Christ, it is the more ravished with it, and presseth, yea, panteth the more after it: it was *Him* before, 'Let Him kiss me,' as being something afraid to speak to him; it is now, 'Thou, thy love,' &c. as being more inflamed with love, since she began to speak, and therefore more familiarly bold, in pressing her suit upon him. 3. The exercise of love strengthens faith: and contrarily, when love wears out of exercise, faith dieth: these graces stand and fall together, they are lively and languish together. 4. Where Christ's love is seriously thought of and felt, created consolations will grow bare, and lose all relish; wine, and the best of creature-comforts, will lose their savour and sweetness with such a soul, when once it is seen how good he is. 5. An high esteem of Christ, is no ill argument in pressing for, and pursuing after his presence; for to those that thus love and esteem him, he will manifest himself, John 14:21,23. 6. Where there hath been any taste of Christ's love, the soul cannot endure to want it, it cannot enjoy itself, if it do not enjoy him; this is the cordial that cheereth it in any condition, and maketh every bitter thing sweet.

*Verse 3. Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee.*

**T**he second reason (which is also a confirmation and enlargement of the former) is verse 3, and it runs upon these supposed and implied grounds. 1. That there are many precious excellencies in Christ. So that, 2. The

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speaking of his name, is as if a man would open a sweet savouring box of ointment, as that woman did, John 12.

3. There is no title, or office, or qualification in Christ, but all are savoury; his very garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, &c. Psalm 45:8. 3. It suppones that this worth and loveliness of Christ, ravishes all that ever knew him (here called virgins) with love to *Him* and therefore (which is the strength of the reason) it is no marvel, would she say, I love him so fervently, and desire so earnestly the manifestations of his love, which I have found so sweet.

So the verse may be taken up in these four things, 1. Christ's furniture; he hath many savoury ointments, and good. 2. The further explication, and amplification of this his commendation, expressing both what she meant by ointments, and also the abundance and freshness of these ointments which were in Christ, in these words, 'thy name is as ointment poured forth.' 3. The effect that followed on these, or the attractive virtue of them, which is such, that the most chaste, who kept their affections from other objects, are yet without prejudice to their chaste nature, taken up and ravished with that loveliness of Christ: 'Therefore' (saith she) 'do the virgins love thee.' 4. There is the scope, which is partly to shew the reality of Christ's worth, which not only she, but all believers were in love with; partly to show, that it was no strange thing, to see her so taken up with him, it would be rather strange if it were otherwise; seeing it is not possible for any to see and taste what Christ is, and not be ravished with his love.

Ointments are both of an adorning and refreshing nature, especially to the sense of smelling, Psalm 104:15. 'Ointment makes men's faces to shine,' and the house where it is, to savour, when it is precious and good, John 12:3. Men in vanity use sweet powders, and such things as these, which can but little commend them; but Christ's ointments are his graces, Psalm 45:2, wherewith he is anointed, for opening the blind eyes, for preaching glad tidings to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to give the oil of joy for mourning, &c. as it is, Isa. 61:1,2,3. Which qualifications, are both more delightful and savoury, in themselves, and to the soul that is sensible of its need of them, than any ointments the high priest of old used, which were but typical of the graces and qualifications wherewith Christ is furnished: hence is in the gospel, 2 Cor. 2:14,15, (whereby these graces are manifested) called 'a sweet savour.'

Again, these ointments are said to be good: so are they in their nature, and in their effects on, sinners, as is clear from Isa. 61:1,2, &c. And 2. They are said to savour; the scent and smell of them is sweet and refreshful to the spiritual senses. And 3. They are called his ('thy good ointment') they are his, not only as he is God, having all-sufficiency essentially in him, but as Mediator, having purchased

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eternal redemption, and having ‘the Spirit without measure’ communicated to him, John 3:34, and in that respect, ‘anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows,’ Psalm 45:7, that out of his fulness we might all receive, grace for grace, John 1:14. Our graces being of that same nature, that his are of. It’s comfortable, that Christ hath many good ointments; that they are his own, and that he hath the right of disposing of them, and that as Mediator they are given unto him for that very purpose.

*Observe.* 1. Grace is a cordial and savoury thing, no ointment is like it. 2. Christ abounds in grace, he is ‘full of grace and truth,’ John 1:14. Hence our wants are said to be made up, ‘according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ,’ Phil. 4:19. 3. They are good and excellent graces and qualifications, wherewith the Mediator is furnished; such as do exactly answer all the necessities and wants of empty and needy sinners.

2. The commendation is explicated, or illustrated by a similitude: the thing she explains, and which she understood by ointments, is his name: the similitude whereby it is illustrated, is, ‘ointment poured forth,’ Christ’s name is Himself or the knowledge of Himself, or every thing whereby Himself is made known, his attributes, word, works, especially those of redemption, his ordinances, covenant, promises, &c. which are all his name (for so the preaching of the gospel is called the bearing of his name, Acts 9:15, and making known, or declaring his name, Psalm 22:22. Heb. 2:12, &c.) This is the thing illustrated. Now this name is compared, not to ointment simply, as sealed up in a box, but to ointment as poured forth and diffused. Whereby, 1. The abundance of these graces is holden forth; there is no scarcity of them in him. 2. His liberality in communicating of them, he pours them out, as one opening a box of ointment, should so diffuse and distribute it. 3. By this is set out the lively savouriness of his graces; they savour not only as ointment closed up, but as ointment diffused. In a word, there is nothing in Christ (for whatever is in him, is comprehended under his name) but the unfolding of it will be more refreshful, and abundant in spiritual delights, than if men would break and open many boxes of costly ointments, and pour them all out on others.

*Observe.* 1. Believers are not soon satisfied in taking up, or expressing of Christ’s worth. 2. Christ and all that is in him, is as full of spiritual life and refreshing, as a box that is full of the most precious ointment: Christ is well stored with grace, it is ‘poured into his lips,’ Psalm 45:2. 3. This savour of Christ’s graces is not felt by every one, the box of his ointments is not open to all, but only to some, and that is to them that believe; for to them he is precious, and every thing that is in him, is most cordial and savoury to the believer. 4. The more Christ and his worth be enquired into, it will savour the better, and be the more



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refreshful (for it is his name which is this ointment) Christ in his excellent worth, through men's strangeness to him, is unknown in the world; they do not enquire into this savoury name, but if he were once known, they would find that in him, that would make them give over their other unprofitable pursuits, and pant after him. The effect of these his ointments (which is a proof of the reality of this truth, and the third thing in the verse) is in these words, 'therefore do the virgins love thee.' By virgins here, are not understood bare professors, but sincere believers, who are not counterfeit in their affection, nor so common in their love, as to bestow it on any creature whorishly, but who reserve it for Christ only: so the church is called, 2 Cor. 11:2, 'a chaste virgin;' and so these who were kept unspotted, and sealed for the Lord, Rev. 14:4, 5, are called virgins. They are here called virgins in the plural number, because this denomination belongs to all believers, distributively, and in particular. They are said to love Christ, that is, whatever others do, who have no spiritual senses, and whose example is not to be regarded; yet these (saith she) desire thee only, and delight in thee only: and this differenceth true virgins from others.

If it be asked, whether that be single love, which loves Christ for his ointments; we answer Christ's ointments may be two ways considered, 1. As they make himself lovely and desirable; so we may, and should love him, because he is a most lovely object, as being so well qualified and furnished. 2. As by these, many benefits are communicated to us; thus we ought to love him for his goodness to us, although not principally, because no effect of that love is fully adequate, and comparable to that love in him, which is the fountain from which these benefits flow; yet, this love is both gratitude and duty, taught by nature, and no mercenary thing, when it is superadded to the former. Hence observe,

1. All have not a true esteem of Christ, though he be most excellently lovely: for, it is the virgins only that love him. 2. There be some that have an high esteem of him, and are much taken with the savoury ointments, and excellent qualifications wherewith he is furnished. 3. None can love him and other things excessively also they who truly love Him, their love is reserved for *Him*, therefore they are called virgins: it is but common love, and scarce worth the naming, that doth not single out its object from all other things. 4. They who truly love *Him*, are the choice and wale of all the world beside; their example is to be followed and weight laid on their practice (in the essentials of spiritual communion, more than on the example of kings, scholars, or wise men: so doth she reason here from the virgins, and passeth what others do. 5. True chaste love to Christ, is the character of a virgin-believer, and agrees to them all, and to none other. 6. The love that every believer hath to Christ, is a proof of his worth; and will be either a motive to make us love *Him*, or an aggravation of our neglect.

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*Verse 4. Draw me, we will run after thee. The king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.*

**B**eing now more confirmed in her desire, from the reasons she hath laid down, she comes in the 4th verse more directly to propound and press her suit: for rationally insisting upon the grounds of grace, in pressing a petition, both sharpens desire, and strengthens the soul with more vigour and boldness, to pursue its desires by prayer. In the words we may consider, 1. The petition. 2. The motive made use of to press it. 3. The answer, or grant of what was sought. 4. The effects of the answer following on her part, suitable someway to her engagement.

The petition is ‘draw me,’ a word used in the gospel, to set forth the efficacious work of the Spirit of God upon the heart, engaging the soul in a most sweet, powerful, and effectual way to Jesus Christ; ‘None can come to me’ (saith Christ) ‘except the Father draw him,’ John 6:44. It is used here, to set forth the Bride’s desire to be brought into fellowship with Christ by the power of this same Spirit, that as she desires a visit from Christ, so she desires his Spirit, that he may by his powerful operations draw her near to him. And although a believer be not at a total distance from Christ, and so needs not renovation as one in nature doth; yet considering that a believer may fall into a deadness of frame, as to the lively exercise of grace, and a great distance, as to any sensible sweet communion with Jesus Christ, and that it must be by the power of that same Spirit (without which even these that are in Christ can do nothing) that they must be recovered, and again brought to taste of the joy of his salvation (as is clear from David’s prayer, Psalm 51:10, to have ‘a clean heart created in him,’ see ver. 12, of that Psalm.) And that there are degrees of communion with him, and nearness to him, none of which can be got at without the Spirit’s drawing, more than being made near at the first in respect of state: I say all these things being considered, it is clear, that this petition is very pertinent, even to the Bride, and doth import these particulars: 1. A distance, or ceasing of correspondence for a time, and in part, betwixt Christ and her. 2. Her sense and resentment of it, so that she cannot quietly rest in it, being much unsatisfied with her present case. 3. An esteem of Christ and union with him, and a desire to be near, even very near him; which is the scope of her petition, to be drawn unto him, that she may have (as it were) her head in his

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bosom. 4. A sense of self-insufficiency, and that she had nothing of her own to help her to this nearness, and so a denying of all ability for that in herself. 5. A general faith, that Christ can do what she cannot do, and that there is help to be gotten from him (upon whom the help of his people is laid) for acting spiritual life, and recovering her to a condition of nearness with himself. 6. An actual putting at him (so to speak) and making use of him by faith, for obtaining from him, and by him, quickening, efficacious and soul-recovering influences, which she could not otherwise win at. 7. Diligence in prayer; she prays much, and cries for help when she can do no more.

II. The motive whereby she presseth this petition is, 'We will run after thee:' wherein we are to consider these three things, 1. What this is to run: which is, in short, to make progress Christ-ward, and advance in the way of holiness, with cheerfulness and alacrity (having her heart lifted up in the ways of the Lord) for the believer's life is a race, heaven is the prize, 1 Cor. 9:24 and Phil. 3:13,14, &c. and the graces and influences of the Spirit give legs, strength, and vigour to the inner-man to run, as wind doth to a ship, to cause her make way; as it is, Psalm 119:23, 'Then I shall run in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart,' which is, on the matter, the same with drawing here. And this running is opposed to deadness, or slowness in her progress before: now (saith she) I make no way, but draw me, and we shall go swiftly, speedily, willingly, and cheerfully. Hence we may gather:

1. That often when there is desertion as to Christ's presence, that there is an up-sitting in duty and the exercise of grace. 2. That bonds in duty are as observable and heavy to believers, as want of comfort. 3. That there is in them an high estimation, and a serious desire of enlargement in duty, or of liberty to run in the way of God's commandments. 4. This desire is very acceptable with Jesus Christ, and therefore is made use of as a motive in pressing her petition before him: he takes it well, when a believer is like to lie by and sit up, that he look up to him, and pray and pant for help, to set him to his feet again.

2. Consider why the person is changed, 'draw me,' (saith she) and 'we' shall run: if we take the church collectively under 'me,' then 'we' will set out the particular members; and it is this much, do me good, or pour thy Spirit on the church, and we shall run in our stations who are members: it is the better with all the members, when it is well with the church in general. But it would seem to look to particular believers, the effect of drawing being most proper and peculiar on them: and so it is to be understood thus, if thou wilt draw me, and by the power of thy grace work effectually upon me, then many more shall get advantage by it: which holds true, partly, by reason of the sympathy that is amongst the members of that one body; partly, because a work of grace fits and engages one the more to

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be forth-coming for the good of others: partly, because of the influence which liveliness in one, may have upon the quickening and stirring up of others: even as often, when deadness begins in one, it leaveneth and infecteth more; so by God's blessing may liveliness do. This same argument is made use of by David, Psalm, 51, when he is dealing for the establishment and liberty of God's Spirit, then (saith he) ver. 12, 13, 'I will teach sinners thy way, and they shall be converted unto thee.' He was not only purposed to stir up himself, and walk tenderly in the strength he should receive, but that he would lay out himself for the good of others, and he promiseth himself success therein through the grace of God. And so Joshua, 24:15, 'I and my house will serve the Lord:' which speaks, that his serving the Lord, would have influence upon his house. Experience doth often make out, that a lively soul in a congregation or family, will readily occasion and provoke others, to stir and seek with them.

3. The force of the reason, in the connexion it hath with the petition, imports, 1. That she was much in love with holiness, and had an ardent desire after more of it. 2. That she resolved to improve her receipts, for the edification of others. 3. That these designs were very acceptable to Christ. 4. That except she were drawn, she would come short of both. 5. A cheerful engaging to be forth-coming to his honour and the good of others, and to undertake what he shall call to, and fit for: these go well together, that when we see and are sensible, that we of ourselves, as of ourselves, can do nothing. 2. Cor. 3:5. Yet we may humbly engage, 'To do all things through Christ strengthening us:' in a word, I have need (would she say) to be drawn, if holiness be needful: and I hope, thou who respectest holiness in me and others of thy people, will grant what I seek. Her engaging to run, if he would draw, is no vain undertaking; but a humble pressing motive, holding forth some sincerity given from him, but no ability in herself, but as he who hath given her to will, must also work in her to do.

III. The third thing in the verse, is the return, or grant of this suit; the King (saith she) 'hath brought me into his chambers,' he hath indeed brought me where I was desirous to be. The words, 'he hath brought me,' being compared with the petition, 'draw me,' and the effects following, whereby she changeth from praying to praising, and that with expressions holding forth a kind of surprisal, do evidence this to be a real return to her prayer, and a comfortable alteration upon, and change in her condition.

In this answer, consider, 1. What she receives, a noble privilege; she is admitted into the king's chamber to nearness with *Him*, which she longed for, and now she hath it. Chambers are the most intimate places of familiar fellowship, especially with kings, where none but courtiers indeed come. They were the places where the Bridegroom and the Bride rejoiced together; and it hath a tacit

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opposition to a salutation by the way, or admission to outer rooms, this to which she is admitted is more, yet is it something here attainable; which we conceive, is the enjoying of that love she formerly sought for, and which afterward she engaged to remember, as having now obtained it. In a word, she is where she would be, as the effects shew.

2. Consider who brought her into these chambers; it is 'the King,' even *Him* she prayed unto, to draw her, he hath heard her: this King (as being the chief of all that ever bare that name) is called the King by way of eminency; and so, Psalm 45:1,2, and Zech. 4:9. He is not only King, and supreme as God, having the same essential dominion with the Father, over all the creatures; but also, (which is here especially meant) as Mediator, he is a King by donation, Psalm 2:6,7, and also by conquest, having purchased his kingdom with his blood, and by the power of his spiritual arms that are effectual upon the hearts of sinners, brings them subject to him, Psalm 45:5. So he confesseth himself to be a King before Pontius Pilate, John 18:36, 37, although his kingdom be not of this world. It is he, who by his blood hath made access for believers to nearness with God, as it is, Eph. 2:18: through that 'new and living way,' Heb. 10:19,20: so that she may well say, he brought her in. She attributes this to him expressly, 1. For his commendation, and to give him the acknowledgment due to him in this work, which would never have been wrought without him: all nearness and access to God, all progress in holiness, and comfort in duties, should not only be sought by, and from Christ; but he acknowledged for these, and the praise of them returned to him.

2. She observes the return of her prayer, and his readiness to be entreated, I prayed to him to draw (saith she) and he did it effectually; he drew me, and brought me into his chambers. Here we may say, Christ is easily entreated, Isa. 65:24, 'Before they call, I will answer.' 2. Believers should observe returns of prayer, and bless Christ for them. 3. She acknowledgeth he had brought her into the chambers, to magnify and to commend the mercy the more: it is the greater honour, that not only she is there, but that the King himself (like the prodigal's father) met her, and took her in: Christ's convoy is much worth, and sinners may hazard forward with it, and not despair of access. 4. She attributes it to him, that she may keep mind of his grace, whereby she stands and enjoys these privileges; and that she may be still humble under them, as having none of these from herself: it is much, under sense and a fair gale of flowing love, to carry even, and to be humble: and it is rare to be full of this new wine, and bear it well.

3. Consider the importance of the word in the original, it is here translated, 'he brought me in,' as it is, chap. 2:4; but the word in that conjugation, in which it is used in the first language, signifieth, he made me come, or go in; implying, 1. A sort of averseness, and inability in herself. 2. Many difficulties in the way. 3. An

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efficacious work overcoming all these, and effectually bringing her over all, as the same word is used, Psalm 78:71, where God's bringing David from the fold to be king, over so many difficulties, is spoken of.

IV. The last thing in the verse is, the effect following on this her admission, which is both exceeding great, spiritual cheerfulness in herself, and gladness of heart also in others, whereby both her own, and their hearts were much enlarged in duty, as she undertook (and therefore the person from 'me' to 'we' is changed again) for before (she saith) ,he brought me,' &c. but now, 'we will be glad,' &c. The effects by way of gratitude, are in two expressions, 1. 'We will rejoice and be glad in thee.' And 2. 'We will remember thy love more than wine:' and as she took her motive, while she desired Christ's love, from that esteem which all believers (under the title of virgins) had of it, so now, having obtained what she sought, she confirms her estimation of that enjoyment, from the experience of the same believers, under the name of 'upright;' that by such an universal testimony in both assertions, she might the more confirm her faith anent the reality of Christ's worth, seeing her esteem of him did flow from no deluded sense in her, but was built on such solid reasons, as she durst appeal to the experience of all believers, who thought Christ well worthy the loving: and so this is not only brought in here to shew the nature of believers, whose disposition inclines them natively to love Christ; but also to shew the excellent loveliness of Christ, as an object worthy to be loved, in the conviction of all that ever knew him.

The first expression holds forth a warm change upon her affections; no sooner is she admitted into the chambers, but she crieth out, 'O we will rejoice and be glad in thee.' Where, 1. Ye have her exercise and frame; it is to rejoice and be glad: cheerfulness and joy, disposing the heart to praise, are sometimes called for as well as prayer. If we look on this joy as it stands here, it says, 1. There are degrees and steps in communion with Christ; and the saints are sometimes admitted to higher degrees thereof, than at other times; sure it is a heartsome life to be near Christ, and in his chambers. 2. This joy, and that nearness with Christ, which is the ground of it, are both often the effect of prayer, and follow upon it, when faith is in a lively way exercised in that duty. 3. That faith exercised on Christ, can make a sudden change to the better in a believer's case, Psalm 30:6,7, &c. 4. That a believer should observe the changes of Christ's dispensations, the returns of their own prayer, and be suitably affected with them, whether he delay the answer, or give them a present return.

The second thing in the expression, is the subject of this joy, it's 'in thee,' not in corn, or wine; not in their present sense, but in him as the Author of their present comfortable condition, and as being himself their happiness, even in their

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greatest enjoyments, according to that word, 1. Cor. 1:31, 'Let him that rejoiceth, rejoice in the Lord;' and this qualifies joy, and keeps it from degenerating into carnal delight., when he 'that rejoiceth, rejoiceth in the Lord;' and it is a good character to try such joy with, as may warrantably pass under that name of the joy of the Lord, and as will have that effect with it, to strengthen us in his way, Neh. 8:10.

3. We may consider a twofold change of the number in the Bride's speaking, it is 'we,' which was 'me;' 'the King brought me,' (said she) but now 'we' will rejoice. The reasons were given on the petition; and further, we may add here, that it is to show her being conformed in her practice to her undertaking; and to show that that admission of hers redounded to the good of more, and ought to take them up in praise with her. The other change of the person is, from the third to the second, from 'he,' the 'King,' to 'thee,' in the second person (we will rejoice in 'thee') which shews a holy complacency and delight, sometimes making her to speak of him, sometimes to him, yet so, as she loves to have Christ both the object and subject of her discourse, and the more he is to her, she is the more satisfied: this being another character of spiritual joy and exulting in Christ, it still makes him to be the more to them, and they are still pressing under it, to be the nearer to him.

The second effect is, 'we will remember thy love more than wine.' What is understood by 'love' and 'wine,' as also, why the number is changed from the singular to the plural, hath been formerly cleared. The word 'remember,' doth import these three things, I. A thankful acknowledgment of the favour received, and a making of it to be remembered to his praise; this remembering is opposite to forgetting, Psalm 103:2, from which we may observe two things, 1. The acknowledgment of the mercies we have received, is a necessary piece of the duty of praise; they will never praise for a mercy, who will not acknowledge they have received it: forgetfulness and unbelief do much mar praise. 2. They that pray most for any mercy, will most really praise when it is received; and this last is a duty as well as the former, but is not made conscience of, nor suitably performed, but by hearts that acknowledge God's goodness to themselves. II. It imports, a recording of this experience of God's goodness, for her own profit for the time to come: thus every manifestation of his grace is to be kept as an experience for afterwards, when that frame may be away, and he may hide his face, whereupon there will follow a change in the believer's frame: it is good keeping the impression of his kind manifestations still upon the heart; so the Psalmist endeavoured, Psalm 119:93, 'I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.' III. It imports, the doing of both these with delight, 'we will remember thy love' (saith she) 'more than wine,' that is, the thoughts of Christ's love doth and shall

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relish more sweetly than wine, or any comforts amongst creatures; the very thoughts of it are, and will be so cordial and refreshful.

The last expression, 'the upright love thee,' is added for confirmation, as was said on verse 3, and may be looked upon as brought in by way of obviating an objection. Who (might it be said to the Bride) will so rejoice in Christ with thee? She answers, whatever the most part of the world do, yet those who have spiritual senses, love Christ as I do. The difference betwixt this and the former expression, in the end of the third verse, is in two, 1. Though the persons be the same, yet she gives them different styles; there she calls them 'virgins,' as being chaste in their love, not joining themselves to idols, nor going a whoring after creatures: here she calls them 'upright,' as being sincere, neither dissemblers, nor hypocrites, but such as were really that which they appeared to be, having a practice suitable to their profession; such was Job, Job. 1:1. 'An upright man;' such was Nathanael, John 1:47, 'An Israelite indeed.' these have not double ends, nor double hearts, but are straight, and may abide the touch-stone, their practice being their very heart turned outward. The other difference is in the scope: formerly they were brought in, as being desirous of Christ, as she was; here as delighted with Christ when he is enjoyed, both go together: and whoever are desirous after him, will be delighted in him, while present; and afflicted for, and affected with his absence: in both she evidenceth a suitableness in her frame to the generation of God's people, and cares not from whom she may differ, if she be conformed to them.

*Observe.* 1. Where there is love to Christ, there is sincerity in practice; neither is there true love to be found in any hypocrite; for, sincerity and love to Christ go together. 2. Sincerity is a characteristic of a virgin, and true believer: if we would know who are the 'virgins' spoken of, verse 3; she tells us here, they are the 'upright.' 3. All who are sincere, or upright, come in one category and reckoning; they are all of the same spiritual nature, or disposition, and what may be said of one of them (as to that) may be said of them all. 4. God reckons believers, not by the degree of their progress, but by the kind and nature of their walk, if it be sincere, or not; that is, if they be straight as to their ends, motives, and manner in duties, or not. 5. These characters which agree in common to believers as such, and these cases which agree with the ordinary way of all the saints in scripture, are solid, and weight may be laid upon them in concluding our sincerity, or the goodness of our state; but peculiar evidences, or singular experience, should not be leaned unto in that, as if our uprightness, or the goodness of our state, could not be made out without these, wherein possibly an hypocrite can go nearer to resemble a child of God, than in that which is more ordinary to saints as such.



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*Verse 5. I am black, but comely (O ye daughters of Jerusalem) as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. 6. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me, they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*

**I**n the fifth and sixth verses, we have the second piece of the Bride's first discourse, and it is the speech she hath to the 'daughters of Jerusalem:' wherein, verse 5, she gives a description of herself: then verse 6, applies and ears it for some edifying use unto these beginners.

For clearing of this place, let us, 1. See, who these 'daughters of Jerusalem' are. 2. What is the scope of these words. 3. What is their dependence upon, and connexion with, the former. 4. What is more particularly the meaning of them.

By 'daughters of Jerusalem' in common, are certainly understood professors, members of the church; and so born in and belonging unto Jerusalem; but because there are members of several sorts, some strong, some, weak, some sound, some unsound, some tender, some profane; we must inquire a little further who are meant by these 'daughters of Jerusalem,' they being often mentioned in this Song.

First, We look on them as distinct from 'mother's children,' mentioned in the following verse as a party different from the 'daughters' here spoken to; and so they are not to be accounted amongst the profane, bitter heart-enemies of godliness, who yet live in the church: they are not the worst then of them that are in the visible church. 2. We take them also as distinguished from the 'virgins' and 'upright,' who loved and delighted in Christ in the former verse. For, chap. 5:8, 9, and 6:1, we will find them very ignorant of Christ, although they have some affection. In a word, we take them to include two sorts of professors, 1. Such as are weak and scarcely formed, yet are docile, and have respect to outward ordinances' and godliness, in the practice of it: so their respect to the Bride, and the question propounded by them, chap. 5:9 doth clear. 3. They comprehend such as are formed believers, really honest, and who. have some sound beginnings, yet mixed with much weakness, ignorance and infirmity, and so not come up the length of grown Christians; such who need milk, and cannot endure strong meat; so their question and undertaking, chap. 6:1, Both evidence: they were daughters, while yet they were really very ignorant of Christ, and were ready to provoke him before he pleased, (as the often repeated charge the Bride gives them throughout

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this Song imports) and they were daughters still, even after they were something better taught and engaged.

We find, 1 John 2:13, the apostle speaks of three sorts, 1. 'Fathers,' that are grown a believers, rich in experience, such we esteem to be understood by the Bride in this Song. 2. 'Young men,' who are strong well advanced believers, such were the virgins and upright here made mention of. A third sort are styled 'little children,' that is, some who (as it were) are yet on the breasts, and that in knowledge, practice, or experience, had not come to a consistence, or to have their senses exercised to know good or evil, as it is, Heb. 5:14, such we account these 'daughters of Jerusalem,' and so may comprehend under them professors, who stand not in the way of their own edification, though they be weak.

2. The scope of her discourse to them, is to prevent their stumbling at the cross, or being deterred from godliness, because of any blackness, or spots that were to be seen in her; it being a great stumbling to weak professors, to see sufferings accompanying tenderness (especially when it is persecuted, and pursued by professors of the same truth) as also to see infirmities and sinful blemishes in persons eminently godly; now her scope is, for their edification, to condescend to satisfy them in both.

3. The reason why she breaks in with this discourse upon the back of the former (which shows the connexion) may be twofold, 1. To remove an objection that might be made, if any should say, what needs all this rejoicing? Are ye not both stained with sin, and blackened with sufferings? She answers by a distinction, granting that in part she was black, and that was truth, yet that blackness was not inconsistent with comeliness, which she clears, and that therefore she might in part rejoice also. The other way that this depends on the former, is, that she may further her project of engaging others to rejoice with her, she endeavours to remove these two occasions of stumbling (taken from the failings and sufferings of the godly) out of the way of weak professors, that she may get them along with her: and so it agrees well with the scope.

More particularly consider the words, wherein she endeavours to satisfy these doubts, and ye will find these things in them, 1. She concedes what is truth. 2. Qualifies it by a distinction. 3. Illustrates it. And these three in the 5th verse. 4. In verse 6, she applies it. And 5, more particularly explicates it. 1. then (saith she) I answer, by conceding what is truth, 'I am black,' both with crosses and corruptions; that cannot be denied. 2. She qualifies her concession, though I be black yet I am comely, that is, I am not universally, or altogether unlovely, mine estate is mixed, being made up of crosses and comforts, corruptions and graces, beauty and blackness. 3. She illustrates this description of herself, or her mixed

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condition, by two similitudes, both tending to one thing, or one of them tending to set forth her blackness, the other her beauty, I am (saith she) like ‘the tents of Kedar’ which were blackish and of no great value, being, by those who lived in them, so frequently transported in such hot countries; this sets forth her blackness.

The second similitude is, that she was like the ‘curtains of Solomon:’ he built glorious dwellings, and being a rich king, no question had rich hangings; this sets forth her beauty; as if she would say, Ye must not judge of my worth from one side, especially my outside, or upon one consideration, for I have in me both to humble and comfort me. It may be also, though these tents of Kedar were not outwardly beautiful, yet they were within well furnished; and that the curtains of Solomon which were most rich, had outer-coverings of smaller value, as the tabernacle had of badgers’ skins; and so the similitudes illustrate her condition, and set out the thing more to the life. As Kedar’s tents (saith she) look poor and base like, yet if ye look within, they are glorious; so think not strange, if I appear without beauty to the eye, there may be, yea, there is comeliness within, if ye could discern it, for ‘within the king’s daughter is all glorious,’ Psalm 45:13, which way of distinguishing, is a notable piece of spiritual wisdom and learning, and a great means of peace in ourselves; when what is true of infirmities is acknowledged, and yet the conclusion that temptation would infer is denied. Here observe, 1. The conditions of believers, even the best of them are mixed of good and ill, sin and grace, comfortable privileges and sad sufferings. 2. There is a mixture of blackness in believers’ beauty even in their best frame and condition, for she is now in the king’s chamber, and yet we find her saying, ‘I am black.’ 3. Believers, if they would consider what they are rightly, would look on themselves as having contraries in them. 4. Where challenges are just and well grounded, they should be acknowledged and taken with. 5. It is wisdom so to acknowledge our sin, as we may difference it from any work of God’s grace in us. 6. Believers, their observing of their sinfulness, should not make them deny their grace; and their observing their grace, should not make them forget their sinfulness. 7. The cross that follows godliness, or the stain and spot that is on a godly person, is sooner taken notice of by onlookers, than either the advantages that follow holiness, or the graces and spiritual beauty of holy persons; this makes it needful to remove this offence. 8. When it may be edifying, believers should assert the worth and beauty of holiness, and their own comeliness thereby, as well as confess their own infirmities; and Christian communion will require both.

Having illustrated her answer, in the fourth place she applies it, verse 6, ‘Look not upon me’ (saith she) ‘because I am black,’ seeing I am comely as well as black; look not on me only as such, and think it not strange that I am so: looking here, implieth indignation and disdain. And so, ‘look not,’ is here to be

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taken, 1. As being a caveat against indignation or disdain: 'look not,' &c., that is, disdain me not as if nothing desirable were in me; for sin often waiting on the affliction of God's people, obscures the beauty of grace, and makes them to be disdained and undervalued in the world. 2. This 'look not,' is a caution to dissuade them from gazing, or curious wondering at any cross that was on her, or sin that was in her: it should not be the object of their curiosity, much less of their delight or contentment to see it so, Obadiah 12. It is condemned in Edom, 'thou shouldst not have looked upon the day of thy brother.' Next, while she saith, 'look not upon me, because I am black,' she doth not dissuade them from looking on her blackness simply, but from looking only on it; that should not be the alone ground of their search into their condition, but they should take notice of what good was in her as well as what was wrong: so then her blackness should not be the only cause of their looking on her, it should not be their work to ask after her crosses and infirmities, and no more; this she supposes may affright and terrify them and so it is implied here, that onlookers often pore more on believers' infirmities, than on their graces; and this is the fruit which follows, they procure a stumbling and a fall to themselves.

4. In the rest of the 6th verse, she doth more fully explicate her answer, in so far as concerned her blackness, (for so the words run in this 6th verse) two ways, 1. In setting out her sufferings in general. 2. In a more particular distribution of the kind and occasions of her seeming an loveliness. Generally her sad condition is expressed in these words, 'the sun hath looked upon me.' The sun in those countries had great heat, as we see in Jonah 4:8, where the beating of the sun upon him did sore vex him; Jacob also says, it burnt him in the day-time, Gen. 31:40. Therefore, Matt. 13:6 and 21, the Lord expresseth persecution under the similitude of the scorching heat of the sun. Here the meaning is (as if she had said) it's no marvel I be black, I have been made obnoxious to all sorts of persecution, and therefore can have no outward beauty, but must be in the eyes of the world contemptible, even as one cannot endure the hot sun-beams and not be blackened. So there are in this expression these things imported, 1. Persecution. 2. Vehement persecution. 3. Visible effects following it, she is thereby made black. 4. A continuance under it. So the sun's looking on her, till she be made black imports. 5. There is her patient enduring of it. 6. There is her sense of it. Yet, 7. She is not ashamed of it, while she shews this her suffering to be no cause, why others should stumble at her.

Afterward, she proceeds more particularly, to describe, first her sufferings, then her infirmities. She describes her sufferings, 1. In the instruments of them. 2. The cause of them. 3. The nature of them. The actors are not heathens, but, 'mother's children;' the visible church is the common mother, who hath children

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born after the flesh, as well as after the Spirit; these children are professors of the same truth, but really not only strangers, but heart-enemies to godliness, and true tenderness; such was Ishmael, and such are all unrenewed persons, who are children of the flesh, and such there will be (Gal. 4:29) so long as there is a church visible: such instruments the apostle complains of, 2 Cor. 11:26, that he had perils from false brethren within, as well as from strangers without. This is not only mentioned to shew there are such enemies, but to set out more fully the church's strait; she is often more bitterly, and more subtilly persecuted by those who are called Christians or professors of the gospel, than by heathens themselves.

2. The cause of her sufferings, as from men, is 'they were angry with me,' (saith she;) she had not done them any personal wrong (as David often asserts of himself, in the like case) though she was not free of sin against God; but it proceeded from a malicious, malignant disposition of the natural men of the world, who, as they hate Christ, so do they hate all that are his, John 15:18,19, accounting them as the off-scourings of all men, and troublers of the world continually, upon no other ground, but because they are not such themselves, and because God hath chosen them out of the world. This shews both the causelessness of their persecution, as also the degree of bitterness that it did proceed from. From which, *Observe*. 1. There are no such bitter enemies unto a godly person, as a graceless malignant professor: see Isa. 66:5. 2. No sort of persecution doth blacken, or obscure the beauty of an honest believer so much, as the foul, bitter reproaches of malignant professors. Yet, 3. Believers are often even under that cross. And, 4. The best-beloved believer, even Christ's Bride, will not in the world eschew it; innocency will be no guard, but to the conscience within. And if the Bridegroom himself, while he was in the world, did not escape it, the Bride cannot think to go free. 3. The nature of her sufferings is expressed thus, 'they made me the keeper of the vineyards.' That this implies suffering, and no trust put on her, the scope and her complaint make it clear: besides that it is given as the evidence of the hatred and malice of these persecutors. This general expression then, being compared with other scriptures, will import these ingredients in her suffering, which occasioned her blackness. 1. That her suffering was heavy and painful; for it was a great drudgery, to be put to keep the vineyards; to be made keeper, was to watch both night and day, and so no wonder she was scorched. Matt. 20:11. The bearing burdens in the vineyard, in 'the heat of the day,' is spoken of as the greatest weight, and heaviest piece of their work. 2. That her suffering was reproachful; for, the keeping of the vineyards was a base and contemptible service, therefore it is said. Jer. 52:16, that the poor, who were not taken notice of, were left to dress the vines; and it's a promise, Isa. 61:5, that his people should have freedom from that drudgery, and strangers should be

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employed in it for them. 3. That her sufferings occasioned sad distractions to her in the worship and service of God; for, in scripture sometimes, vine-dressing is opposed to the worshipping of God, as a distracting, diverting exercise, which is very afflicting to God's people: therefore when they have a promise of more immediate access to God's worship, it is said, they shall be liberated from such diverting employments, Isa. 61:5,6, and instead of these, they shall get another task, to wit, to 'be priests to the Lord, and ministers of our God,' as if these exercises were somewhat inconsistent together, and so she opposeth her own proper duty to this, in the next words; in a word, these malignant brethren procured her pain, shame, and distraction from the service of God, as much as they could, and in a great part prevailed.

*Observe.* 1. Malice in rotten professors against godliness, will sometimes come to a great height. 2. Malice in wicked men thinks nothing of true tenderness, or of those who truly are so; but esteems them, and useth them as if they were base and vile. 3. Often in outward things, the profanest members of the church have the pre-eminence; and the most godly, as to these things, are in the meanest and basest condition; so as sometimes, they appoint the godly as their slaves, to their work. 4. Often while wicked professors are in power, the truly godly are under affliction.

Though this suffering was sharp, yet she resents her sinful infirmities much more sadly, in the words following, 'But' (saith she heavily) 'mine own vineyard have I not kept:' and this her slothfulness and unwatchfulness made her black, and also procured the blackness that was on her by her sufferings. This part of the verse implies, 1. The Bride's privilege. 2. Her duty. 3. Her sin. 4. Her sense of it. Her privilege is, she hath a vineyard of her own, besides these she was put to keep: The similitude of a vineyard here, is to be taken in another sense than in the former expression: neither are we to think strange of this, seeing similitudes are to be interpreted according to the different scope of expressions, and places in which they are used. By 'vineyard' then here, is to be understood the particular privileges, graces and talents of any sort, which are given of God to a believer: these are the things she should have watched over; the neglecting thereof, brings blackness on her, and procures heavy challenges, called a 'vineyard' here; and also, chap. 8:13, partly, because there are many several graces to be found in believers, as plants planted in them; partly, because these will furnish them matter of continual exercise and labour; and partly, because what they have, they are to improve, that there may be fruit on them, and rent brought in to the master that intrusted them, chap. 8:12, 13. This vineyard is called 'hers,' because the special oversight and charge of it was committed to her. 2. Her duty is to keep and watch over this vineyard, that is, to improve the talents she hath gotten, to see that no

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plants be unfruitful, and that no hurt from any cause inward, or outward annoy them: Christianity or godliness, is no idle talk, every privilege hath a duty waiting on it. 3. Her sin is, that what with other diversions, and what from her own unwatchfulness, she had neglected the keeping of this vine-yard; so that this one task which was put in her hand, she had not discharged; but laziness came on, and the vineyard was not dressed, thorns and nettles grew, and tentations brake in, and this marred her fruitfulness: in a word, she was no way answerable to the trust that was put on her by Christ. 4. She resents this: where these things may be taken notice of, 1. She sees it, and observes it. 2. She acknowledges it. 3. She is sensible of it, and weighted with it, as the greatest piece of her affliction. It is ill to be unwatchful, for that may draw on both fruitlessness and heaviness on a believer; but it is good to observe and be affected with it, and to be walking under the sense of it, even in our most joyful frame, such as hers was here.

Here then, Observe, 1. Believers have a painful laborious task of duty committed to them. 2. They may much neglect this work and task wherewith they are intrusted. 3. Neglect and sloth make the weeds to grow in their vineyard, and the building which they ought to keep up, to drop through. 4. It is not unsuitable, or unprofitable for believers, in their most refreshing conditions and frames, sadly to remember their former unwatchfulness, and to be suitably affected therewith. 5. Believers should be well acquainted at home, how it stands with them as to their own condition and state. 6. They who are best versed in their own condition, will find most clearly the cause of all their hurt to be in themselves; whatever is wrong in their case, themselves have the only guilty hand in it.

If any should ask, how makes this last part of the verse for her scope, in removing the offence before these weak beginners? I answer, it doth it well: for, saith she, there is no reason ye should stumble, or be troubled because of my afflictions, they were without cause, as to men, though I am under much sin and guilt before *God*: neither scare at godliness or joy in *Christ*, because of my infirmities; for, these spots came from mine own unwatchfulness, and not from godliness in itself (which is the soul's special beauty) therefore take warning from my slips, and study to prevent the bringing on of such a stain and blot upon your profession, by security and negligence; but esteem not the less, but the more of *Christ*, his people and ways, and the beauty of holiness, which is to be seen in them, because by my unwatchfulness and untenderness, I have marred this beauty in myself, and that is the reason I look so deformed-like.

*Verse 7. Tell me (O thou whom my soul loveth) where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why*

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*should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?*

**I**n the seventh verse, we have the third part of the Bride's first speech; in which she turneth herself from the daughters to the Bridegroom; and the scope of what she speaks here, is, that by applying herself by prayer and faith to Christ Jesus (who is, and whom she for comfort acknowledges to be, the great and good Shepherd of his sheep, John 10:11,) she may be guarded against the hurtful effects of those two evils which she acknowledged in the former verse, viz. afflictions and sinful infirmities; in respect of the one, she desires Christ's guiding and in respect of the other, his consolation; that so she being under his charge, may be upheld by him, and kept from miscarrying. that this is the scope, and so depends upon the former verse, especially the last part of it, will be clear by comparing the last part of this verse, and the last part of the former together. There are these three in it, 1. The title given to Christ. 2. The petition, or thing sought. 3. The argument whereby it is enforced.

1. The title is a sweet and affectionate one, 'O thou whom my soul loveth.' In this title these things are implied, 1. A loveliness in Christ, and such a soul-affecting and ravishing loveliness, as no creature-beauty hath, or can have. 2. An ardent and vehement love in her towards him, so that she might say, her soul loved, honoured, desired, and esteemed him. 3. A disrelishing of all things besides Christ, as nothing; he is the only object her soul loves, he alone hath her heart, and is in the throne as chief in her affections, and hath no allowed co-partner there, to whom this title may be applied. 4. It is implied, what tide Christ will best accept of, even that which bears out most affection to him; there can be no greater honour, or more acceptable piece of respect put on him by a believer, than this, to own him, and avow him as the only object of his soul's love; as the Bride doth here, 'O thou whom my soul loveth!'

2. The thing that is here sought by the Bride, is set down in two petitions, meeting with the two-fold strait she was in, viz. of crosses and infirmities; and because fear of sin weighted her most, she begins with the suit that might guard against that, and in the reason presseth it most. The first petition then is, 'tell me where thou feedest,' (to wit, thy flock,) for 'feeding' here, is to be understood actively, that is, where he feeds others: and not passively (as in other places) where he feeds and delights himself. The second petition is, 'Tell me where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon:' that is, make me know where and how thou comfortest and refreshest thy people, under scorching persecutions and trials: so these petitions go upon the relation that is between Christ and his people, of



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shepherd and flock, which is frequent in scripture. In sum, that which she seeks, is this, thou who guidest all thine, as a shepherd doth a flock, let me know how thou orderest thy people, and carriest them through in times of snares, and where thou refreshest them in times of trouble: these being the two great duties of a shepherd, are well performed by Christ. 1. It's his work to feed them, and lead them in wholesome and safe pastures, Psalm 23. And, 2. To give them quiet and cool resting places in the time of heat, when the sun becomes scorching; and therefore prayeth she to him, seeing thou dost both these to thine, let me know the right way of partaking of the benefit of thy care. Which two petitions imply, 1. That there is a near relation betwixt Christ and all believers; he is the Shepherd, and they the flock, Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:11,12; Psalm 23:1,2. 2. That Christ's flock may be, yea, usually are in hazard both of sin or straying, and also of affliction. 3. That Christ Jesus is tender of his people, in reference to any hazard they are in of sin or suffering; he is 'the good Shepherd,' John 10:11, 'He carries the lambs in his bosom,' Isa. 40:11. 'He stands and feeds his flock,' Mic. 5:4. 4. That he hath resting places, and shadows for refreshing and hiding his people, in all the storms and heats they may meet with. 5. That believers sometimes under straits, may not know well how either to rid themselves out of temptations, or to quiet themselves under crosses, till he help them with light and strength: they cannot know the well whence their supply and consolation cometh, till it be discovered, as it was to Hagar. 6. That even then, when they know not how to be guarded against sin, and shadowed under suffering, Christ knows both, and hath help in both these cases provided for them. 7. That as it is he who must guide them in snares, and support them in sufferings; so believers, when they are at their own wit's end in respect of both, ought even then to look for help and direction in these from him.

The reason presseth for his guiding, with a great weight; 'for why' (saith she) 'should I be as one that turneth aside, by the flocks of thy companions?' in which these things are implied, 1. That Christ may have companions, (not who are indeed so, but) such who set themselves up equally beside him, and make it their design to have others to follow them, but do not follow Christ themselves; thus heretics, false Christs, Matt. 24:23,24, lusts, idols, or whatever is equalled or preferred to Christ, and not subjected to him, is made, as it were, his companion: sure, the scope shews, they were not friendly companions; but it speaks the nature of corrupt men, who are seducers, and the sin of seduced people, that the one seek to themselves, and the other attributes to them, too much. 2. That these companions may have flocks, and many followers, even as our Lord Jesus hath, so Matt. 24:23; 2. Peter 2:1, &c. 3. That believers, if not by Christ's care prevented, may go astray after some of these companions, and throng on in a way of error and defection with them. 4. That believers will be afraid of this ill, and also

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sensible of their own propensness to it. 5. It imports an abhorreny and indignation at that evil, of being carried away a-whoring from Christ, 'why' (saith she) 'should I be,' &c.? 6. She accounts it a great mercy to be kept in Christ's way, and makes it a main piece of her prayer, that this may be granted to her as her mercy. 7. She exercises faith on Christ, and vents her requests by prayer to him, concern-every thing she wants; he wanting what [he] will, she betakes herself to him, for the obtaining of it. 8. Where there is a loathness to go astray, or fall in snares, it will stir up to serious wrestling with Christ to prevent it. 9. Hazard of sin to believers, (who are sensible of their inclination to go astray) and weakness to hold on in God's way, is a great motive, that being made use of in prayer, hath much weight for obtaining direction, and an hearing from Christ; as it is a notable spur to stir up to pray seriously, 'for' (saith she) 'why should I be,' &c. which speaketh forth her indignation against every wrong way, and her expectation, that if any thing prevailed with him, that would; and so we will find her success in this suit, to follow in the next words.

## PART II -- CHRIST'S WORDS.

*Verse 8. 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.*

**F**rom the 8th verse to the 12th, follows Christ's express return to her former suit; and because it is he that speaks, we take it up as the second part of the chapter. In the Bride's condition there was, 1. Crosses and afflictions. 2. Sins and infirmities. 3. Snares and hazard of new failings. Now Christ so frames his answer, as he may meet with all her necessities most comfortably and lovingly; and because she was most affected with the fear of sin, he answers that first: and so he doth, 1. In order to her being guided against snares, give a direction for her duty, verse 8. 2. In order to her consolation under her suffering, and the sense of her failings, he commends her, verse 9, 10. 3. He gives her a promise, in order to her further consolation, verse 11. The scope of all is, to comfort her; and every part of the answer being from *Christ's* mouth, may be effectual for that end.

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In the direction, verse 8. there is, 1. The title he gives her. 2. The directions themselves, which are two. 3. A supposition, or ground upon which he gives them.

1. The title he gives her is, 'O thou fairest among women', which is much from Christ to the Bride, who immediately before styled herself black: believers who are humble under the sense of their own infirmities, are nevertheless highly esteemed by Christ; nor are always his thoughts of believers as theirs are of themselves; nay, by the contrary, blushing at their own deformity, is a chief part of their beauty. The giving her this title, implies these three things, 1. A real worth in a believer, beyond the most noble person in the world. 2. A real respect unto, and esteem that Christ hath of them, which he hath of none other. 3. Wonderful tenderness, condescending for her consolation, to intimate these his thoughts of her to herself, now when she was otherwise sadly afflicted, and under a double distress.

If it be asked, how these excellent titles and commendations may be applied to a sinful believer. *Answer.* These four ways, 1. By communication and participation of the divine nature, they have a stamp of the Spirit of holiness imparted to them, whereby they resemble God, 2 Peter 1:4, and none other in the world can compare with them in this. 2. In respect of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, wherewith they are adorned, and which they have put on, which makes them very glorious and lovely, so that they are beautiful beyond all others, through his comeliness put upon them. 3. In respect of Christ's gracious acceptance, whereby he doth esteem otherwise of them than of the most royal and beautiful in the world, they find such favour in his eyes. 4. In respect of his design, project and purchase; she is so, and to be made so in end; he will have his people made completely beautiful and spotless, before he have done with them, Eph. 5:27: 'Without spot and wrinkle:' all which are peculiar to a believer, of whom glorious things are spoken and written, which are applicable to none other.

2. The directions are two. Wouldst thou know, saith he, how to be kept out of snares? then 1. Look how the old worthies walked, and follow their way. 2. Have respect to the public ordinances, and hold near them, that you may have direction from the word, by these to whom I have committed the trust of dispensing the same: I have (saith he) no new light to give you, nor any new way to heaven to shew you, nor any new means, ordinances, or officers to send amongst you, nor yet must ye expect immediate revelations; but walk in the light that shines to you, by the preaching of the word by my ministers, who are the under shepherds, which I have set over you: for thus I guide all by my counsel, whom I afterward receive to glory.

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The first direction ('go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock') holds forth, 1. That all believers, of old and late, are of one flock, of one common concernment, and under the care of one chief Shepherd: this is the flock spoken of, verse 7, whereof Christ is Shepherd. 2. That there is but one way to heaven, for the substantial of faith and godliness, in which they that went before have walked, and these that follow after must walk in the same way, if ever they think to come there. 3. That there are many in all ages, whom God hath helped in trying times to keep in his way, and have been carried well through all difficulties to heaven. 4. That believers should observe these beyond others, as being especially worthy of imitation. 5. That they should, and may follow the commendable practices of believers in former times, and not affect singularity. 6. That it is commendable, and often safe in times when new opinions and doctrines bear sway, to follow their way, who we are sure went before us to heaven, Heb. 13:7; 1 Thess. 2:14; Heb. 6:14. This imitation of others, is to be limited with that necessary caution, in so far as the practice of others agrees with the first pattern, Christ, 1 Cor. 11:1. In a word, this direction shews there is no way, but the good old way to be asked for, and followed in the most declining times, Jer. 6:16, and that we should keep the very print of their steps, studying to be followers of their faith, who have been honourably carried through before us.

The second direction puts them to the right use and improvement of the ministry of the word, which he will have them to respect; 'feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.' Shepherds here in the plural number, are the servants of that one Shepherd, whose own the sheep are: so ministers are called often shepherds, or pastors, both in the Old and New Testament, 1. Because of their relation to Christ, by whom they are intrusted to feed his sheep; he is the owner, they are but shepherds, Ezek. 34:2. Because of their relation to the flock, which is committed to their care, and for which they must give an account, Heb. 13:17. 3. Because of the nature of their charge, as being assiduous, difficult, and tenderly to be gone about; for, such is the work and care of a shepherd, as we may see by what Jacob speaks of himself, when he had the charge of Laban's flock, Gen. 31:40. 4. To shew the necessity of that ordinance. And 5. The respect people ought to have to them who are over them in the Lord: no flock needs a shepherd more than a congregation needs a minister; people without labourers, being like sheep without a shepherd, Matt. 9:36, under a sad necessity of wandering and being lost. Next, 'shepherds' tents' are mentioned, with allusion to these parts where shepherds in the wilderness carried tents about with them; and so to be near the tent, was to be near the shepherd: it is like they kept lambs and kids nearest unto their tents, because they needed more oversight than the rest of the flock; for a lamb to be at its liberty in a large place, was dangerous, Hosea 4:16. By 'kids,' we understand

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young, unexperienced believers or professors, whereby it is clear, 1. That there are kids and young ones in Christ's flock. Yea, 2. That the strongest believers, even the Bride, have their own infirmities; and there are some particulars wherein they are weak: for this direction is given to the Bride, as a particular and experienced believer; and seeing ordinarily weak believers are called lambs, and unrenewed men goats, it may be kids here are mentioned to point at the relics of sinful nature, even in believers, which is the reason why they need still over sight. 3. It is clear, that the office of the ministry, is a standing, perpetual, and necessary office in the church, otherwise this direction would not always satisfy the believer's question here proposed. 4. The strongest believers, have need and use of a ministry. 5. It is a great part of a minister's charge, to keep believers right in snaring and seducing times, Eph. 4:12,13, &c. 6. Believers should make use of public ordinances, and Christ's ministers, especially in reference to snares and errors; and they should take their directions from them, and in their difficulties consult with them, and their counsel should be laid weight upon. 7. Allowed dependence on a ministry, is a great means to keep souls from error; whereas on the contrary, when no weight is laid on a ministry, unstable souls are hurried away. 8. Christ hath given no immediate, or extraordinary way to be sought unto and made use of, even by his Bride, in her difficulties; but the great means he will have her to make use of, is a sent ministry, and therefore no other is to be expected: it is no wonder therefore the devil (when his design is to cry down truth and spread error) seeks to draw the Lord's people from the shepherds' tents; and no wonder souls, who once do cast off respect to their overseers, be hurried away with the temptations of the times, as in experience hath often been found a truth. 9. Ministers should have a special eye on the weakest of the flock, their care should be that the kids may be next them; our blessed Lord doth so, when the lambs are carried in his own bosom, Isa. 40:11. And therefore, seeing weak believers have most need of Christ's oversight, if they begin to slight the ministry and ordinances, they cannot but be a ready prey; and the devil hath gained much of his intent when he hath once gained that. O that men would try whose voice that is, that saith, come back from the shepherds' tents (when Christ says, abide near them.) It is as if a wolf would desire the lambs to come out from under the shepherd's eye: and lastly, when Christ gives this direction to his own Bride, we may see he allows none to be above ordinances in the militant church; it will be soon enough then, when they are brought to heaven, and put above the reach of seducers.

3. The supposition is in these words, 'If thou know not,' &c. which is not any upbraiding answer, but tendeth to insinuate the direction the more; I have given you means (saith he) and so he puts her back to the serious use of these, as he sent Paul, Acts 9, to Ananias, to have his mind made known by him: which

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implies, 1. That a believer may be in many things ignorant. 2. That Christ pities the ignorant, and hath compassion on them who are out of the way, or in hazard to go out of the way, Heb. 5:3. That believers should not in praying to Christ, neglect the ordinary means in seeking knowledge: nor in using them, neglect him; she prays to him, and he directs her in them. 4. Directions for a believer's walk, given by Christ's ministers from his word, are his own, and are accounted by him as if he did immediately speak them himself. 5. Christ would have his ministry and ordinances kept up in esteem and request amongst his people: therefore, he will not be particular in giving answer to his Bride, but sends her to them, that she might know the usefulness of them, and learn to know his mind from them. 6. They cannot expect to make great progress in religion that neglect the ministry, seeing it is to them that Christ recommends his own Bride; if people were enquiring at Christ, what should they do now in a time, when temptations to error and defection abound? No other answer were to be expected, than what he gives to his Bride here: yea, if Abraham were entreated to send some from the dead, to advise people to abhor profanity and error: his answer would be, they have Moses and the prophets, they shall have no other, and no other would prevail, if these ordinances do not: people should conscientiously, and thriftily use the means and light they have; for, it is by such the Lord trains his own Bride and though he will admit her as a courtier to his chamber, yet this familiarity he admits her to, is in the use of ordinances, and he will have no believer above ordinances and need of ministers, while he keeps them within the compass of snares.

*Verse 9. I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.*

*10. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.*

**T**he commendation follows, verses 9,10, in which the Bridegroom hath respect to two things, which afflicted her most in her condition, 1. That she was in hazard to be a prey to every sin, and to every enemy. 2. That she lay under many blots, and was made black by her own miscarriages; therefore the Lord, that he might comfort her against those, is brought in speaking thus; thou art neither so weak, nor so black and unbeautiful as the world thinks thee, and as thou esteems of thyself; my testimony of thee is better to be believed, than either the world's, or thy own; and I assert thee to be stately and strong, beautiful and comely.

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First, verse 9. He sets out her stateliness, strength and courage, by a similitude taken from horses, are (saith he) horses stately and strong? For so in Job is the horse described, chap. 39:19,20, &c. And is not a company of them much more stately, especially a company of Egyptian horses, which were the best in the world? 2 Chron. 1:17; Isa. 31:1. And if any in Egypt were beyond others, certainly Pharaoh the king had such in his own chariots. Now (saith he) if these be lovely, strong and stately, then thou art so; for, 'I have compared thee' to such: this expression, 'I have compared thee,' bears out the confirmation of the assertion; for, it is not men that thinks thee so, but I who know where true worth is, and who can be surety for my own assertion, I have said thou art as strong as these, I have likened thee to them, and made thee like them. This holds forth these things, 1. That there is an excellent courage and boldness, wherewith the believer is furnished beyond others, he is bold as a lion, Prov, 28:1, both in duties and sufferings. 2. That there is in believers an undauntedness of spirit, and an unconquerableness, that overcome they cannot be; better fight with all Pharaoh's chariots, than with them, Zech. 12; Rev. 12. 3. The words hold out, that there is an infallible certainty in this truth; we have here Christ's verdict of it, he in his reckoning counts believers so, and he cannot be mistaken. 4. There is the cause, why the Bride is so strong and stately, he makes her so: and so these words 'I have compared thee,' may be taken efficiently, I have made thee comparable, or made thee to be like them; and there is an article in the original, which may confirm this, and the words may be turned, like my company of horses, or of my horses; which shews that, as believers themselves are Christ's, so also, whatever stock of spiritual strength and courage they have, it is his, and from him; and that they are Christ's and made use of by him, shews the use of their strength, Micah 4:13, and so, Zech. 10:3, they are called my 'goodly horse.' 5. It implies this, that it becomes not believers to droop, faint, or be discouraged under difficulties, seeing he hath past such a sentence, or given such a verdict of them; it is a reflecting on him, as if it were not so with them as he affirms, or as if he did bear false testimony concerning them. Now this courage, strength, and boldness which is here attributed to believers, is to be understood of that which is competent to them peculiarly as believers; and their success in all their spiritual conflicts, is still to be looked upon with respect to the event, which is ever to be more than conquerors, in the issue at least, whatever appears for the present.

The second part of the commendation is, verse 10, wherein her comeliness and beautiful adorning is set out: though thou think thyself black (saith he) yet, 'thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels,' and 'thy neck with chains of gold:' what is meant by neck, or cheeks, or chains, or rows of jewels, we think not necessary to be particularly inquired into; the allusion is to women, who in those

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places, by such ornaments used to be adorned; and possibly there is here also an allusion to the horses of great ones, who are said to have chains of gold about their necks, Judges 8:26.

The scope and sum of the verse may be taken up in these things, 1. That though the Bride have some infirmities, yet there is exceeding great comeliness and loveliness to be seen in her, she is said to be comely, and that out of Christ's own mouth: certainly grace puts much real beauty upon the person that hath it. 2. That she hath more ornaments than one, there are here jewels in the plural number, and chains of gold also; one grace goes never alone, neither is imputed righteousness and sanctification ever separate; who ever hath one grace, hath all. 3. That this beauty which is to be seen on believers, is universal, as to the subject; for, here one part of the body is adorned, as well as another, both neck and cheeks; the whole man is renewed, and the person is justified. 4. This comeliness grows not of any stock within the believer, nor is it natural to him, but it is communicated, or imparted beauty, such as is put on; a comeliness proceeding from the beneficence of another, and is the work of a cunning workman. See Ezek. 16:10,11, where similitudes, like these in this text are made use of.

*Verse 11. We will make thee borders of gold, with studs of silver.*

**I**n the 11th verse for confirming of the former consolation, he gives her a promise; the scope whereof is to obviate an objection which jealous sense might make against what he hath said: how shall beauty be obtained, or continued, might she say? Whence shall it come, seeing I am so black and loathsome? To this he answers, as it were, by a sweet promise, 'we will make,' &c. Wherein we may consider, 1. The thing promised, it is 'borders of gold' and 'studs of silver.' 2. The party promising, and undertaking the performance of it: 'we will make them to thee,' saith he.

Borders of gold and studs of silver, (it's like) have been some special ornaments in these days, and that which is here pointed at by them, in general seems to be an addition to what formerly the Bride possessed, he would add to her beauty, and gloriously complete it: and certainly it must be an excellent work; which needs such workers as are here spoken of. We take the thing promised, to comprehend the increase, continuance and perfecting of her comeliness and beauty; in which work the blessed Trinity are engaged: and so, the second thing is, who undertakes it. 'We will make thee' saith the Bridegroom; this word make, in the original is used for making of man at first, Gen. 1:26. As also, for renewing of



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him, and begetting holiness in him, Psalm 100, because it is no less work to renew, than to create man. The number here is changed from the singular, 'I have compared,' &c. verse 9, to the plural, 'we will' &c. As it is also in the first making of man, from the singular, 'He made' heaven and earth, to the plural, 'let us make man according to our image;' as if the Holy Ghost, purposely in mentioning this renewing-work of grace, did allude to the first work of man's creation. And this, 1. To show the excellency of it, not that God was put to any deliberation, but that the work was and is, exceeding excellent, and therefore deliberately as it were gone about. 2. To show, that man hath no more hand in his renovation than in his first creation, that is, he is no more of himself able to bring about the one than the other. By this 'we,' we do not understand God speaking of himself in the plural number, as in some languages, for honour's cause, kings do of themselves: for, 1. If that were more honourable, then it would have always been used for God's honour, especially at solemn times, such as when the law was given; but we find the contrary true from the scripture. 2. Although that manner of speaking be used in some other languages, yet it is never so used in the Hebrew tongue (as by those who understand it, is asserted, and by some of the most learned Jews is acknowledged) and therefore we understand the Trinity of persons in one Godhead to be here understood; for, this one is also three, the Father, Son and Spirit, having a joint design in promoting the salvation of the elect, Isa. 61:1,2. And grace being a work, and gift prayed for, from them all, Rev. 1:4,5, it must be understood of these three blessed persons of the Holy Trinity, this work being common to the three persons of the Godhead, and communicable to no other. This then makes the consolation strong: for, saith Christ, although the perfecting of your grace be a great task, and far above your reach, yet fear not, we the Father, Son, and Spirit have undertaken it, and shall make it out to you.

Hence we may learn, 1. That grown believers, even the Bride, hath need of more grace and spiritual comeliness; there is a necessity of looking after a further growth in those, even to be transchanged from glory to glory, 2 Cor. 3:18. 2. That growing in grace, and perseverance therein, is a great consolation and comfort to a true believer; and therefore the promise of it is given to the Bride for that end here. 3. That neither growth in grace, nor perseverance therein, is a work of the believer's own working, but the omnipotency of grace is exercised here. 4. There is plurality of persons in the one Godhead; the Godhead, that is, 'I,' is also 'we.' 5. All the persons of the blessed Trinity concur, and are engaged in promoting the holiness, and in perfecting the beauty of a believer. 6. All the graces of a believer are pieces of the workmanship of the Holy Trinity: grace then must be an excellent thing. 7. The perfecting and perseverance of a believer is infallibly sure and certain, seeing all the persons of the Godhead are engaged in this work, and

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they who this day are believers, may promise this to themselves. 8. Much of believers' beauty is yet in the promise, and in the perfecting, so that it hath its defects and imperfections while they are here. 9. What is promised is so sure, that it ought to be no less comfortable, than if it were enjoyed; for the promise ought to have no less weight for that end, than the former commendation. 10. Christ allows his people freedom from anxiety, because of things that are to come, and to be comforted in him against the fears of those as well as to draw consolation from him against any evil that is present; therefore is this intimated unto them. 11. Believers ought still to hold all their enjoyments and privileges as from him, and the expectation of what is coming, as well as the performance of what is past. 12. Faith in the promise, hath a large comprehensive object to rest upon, and to draw consolation from, even the power of the Godhead, and what may be by the Father, Son, and Spirit created, and brought about for a believer's good, even though it have not at present a being; 'we will make thee' what is wanting, and what is needful, says the promise; creating power is engaged to through his work concerning them, 'I create the fruit of the lips,' Isa. 57:19; And 'I will create Jerusalem a joy,' &c. More cannot be desired, and less the Lord allows not.

### PART III.-BRIDE'S WORDS.

*Verse 12. While the King sitteth at his table my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.*

*13. A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.*

*14. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.*

**T**he third part of the chapter follows in these three verses, 12,13,14. In it the Bride expresseth how refreshful Christ was to her, and how she did solace herself in him; this she holds forth, not only in the sweet and warm title she gives him; but further in these three things, 1. She declares the comfortableness of the fellowship she had with him, verse 12. 2. By two comparisons she illustrates it, in the beginning of the 13th and 14th verses. 4. She sets forth the warmness of her own affections to him in the end of verse 13.

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The titles she gives him are two, 1. 'The King,' whereby his sovereignty and majesty is set forth. The second is, 'beloved' or 'well-beloved,' a title importing much love and affection: it differs from that title, 'my love,' which he gave her, verse 9, for that is a compellation given to her by him, as from a superior to an inferior, or as from an husband to a wife; this title which she here gives him, is as from an inferior, as a wife to her husband. The first holds forth condescending tenderness; the second respective love; but both agree in this, that they are most loving and affectionate titles.

She sets forth the comfortableness of Christ's fellowship, verse 12. Where, we are to consider these three things, 1. The privilege of his sweet company which she enjoyed, in these words, 'the King sitteth at his table.' 2. The effect thereof, held forth in this similitude, 'my spikenard,' &c. 3. The connexion of these two, in this expression, 'while the King sitteth,' &c.

First, the King here spoken of, is Christ, as was cleared, verse 4. 'His table,' or feasting-house is the gospel, Prov. 9:1, &c. where the 'feast of fat things' is prepared, Isa. 25:6. His sitting at his table, or her sitting with him at it, imports familiar fellowship with him by the gospel; so the 'table of the Lord' is taken, 1 Cor. 10:21, and Matt. 22:4. The comfortable fellowship that is to be had with him by the gospel, is held forth under the similitude of a great feast; as fellowship in glory and enjoying of him there, is set out by eating and drinking with him at his table, Luke 22:29,30. Now this is most friendly, when Christ not only furnishes a table, Psalm 23:5, but he comes and sits down, and sups with them, and admits them to sup with him, Rev. 3:21. It is called his table, because he both furnishes it, and is master and maker of the feast, yea, the matter of it also.

2. The effect of this fellowship is 'my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.' Spikenard here, signifies the graces of the Spirit wherewith the believer is furnished out of the treasure of the sweet spices that are in Christ: which are compared to spikenard, because grace is precious in itself, and savoury and pleasant to God, Psalm 141:2, and to others also, who have spiritual senses. To send forth the smell, is to be in lively exercise, and to be fresh and vigorous; grace without smell, or lively exercise, being like flowers somewhat withered, that savour not, or like unbeaten spice, that sends not forth its savour.

3. There is the connexion of this effect (which is so comfortable to her) with Christ's presence, as the cause; it is while she sits, that her spikenard sendeth forth its smell, it is then, and not else, that her graces flow; such influence hath his presence on her, as a cool wind hath on a garden, for making the smell thereof to flow out, as it is, chap. 4:16.

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Here *Observe*. 1. Christ the Bridegroom is a king. 2. It makes all his condescending to sinners the more lovely, admirable and comfortable, that he is so excellent; that he being such a King, sitteth at the table with poor believers, is much; love in Christ, brings his majesty, as it were, below itself, to feed and feast his poor people. 3. There is a way of most sweet and comfortable communion to be had even with the King in his own ordinances. 4. There is a great difference betwixt an ordinance, or duty, and Christ's presence in it; these are separable. 5. It is Christ's presence that makes a feast to a believer, and makes all gospel ordinances, and duties so refreshful. 6. Believers may, and will observe when Christ is at the table, and when not: and it will be empty to them when he is absent. 7. All the provision wherewith believers' table is furnished, and they are feasted is Christ. 8. Christ should have a continued dwelling in the believer, and they a continual conversing with him, as those who diet ordinarily at one table.

The effect (namely the flowing of her graces) and its connexion with his presence, as the cause, shows, 1. There is a stock of grace, and spikenard in them, with whom Christ useth to sup, and there is no other but such admitted to his table. 2. The graces of the Spirit in believers, may be in a great part without savour, void of lively exercise, almost dead as to their effects. 3. It is exceedingly refreshful to believers, to have their graces flowing and acting. 4. Christ's presence hath much influence to make all things lively and savoury; where he sits, all things that are beside him (as it were) blossom and savour: the graces of his people are then very fresh and lively. And, 5. Though grace be savoury in itself, yet in Christ's absence, that savour will be restrained, and not seat forth; for it is implied, that when the King sat not at his table, her spikenard did not send forth its smell. 6. Christ's company, or fellowship with him, will not only be prized by believers, as it brings sensible comfort to them; but also as it revives their graces, and makes them lively.

2. Her satisfaction in Christ's fellowship, verses 13, and 14, is illustrated in two similitudes, whereby her holy fondness (to speak so) on him appears. The first similitude is, 'a bundle of myrrh.' Myrrh was a precious and savoury spice, made use of in the 'anointing oil,' Exod. 30:23. and in embalming Christ's body. A bundle of it, signifies abundance of it; not a stalk, or a grain, but a bundle that must be of more worth, and virtue than a lesser quantity. The second similitude, to the same scope is a 'cluster of camphire,' or cypress; a sweet odoriferous and precious wood in these parts; and a cluster of it, implies a congeries of it, having much of its excellency bound up together: and under these two similitudes (because one is not enough to set forth the thing) is understood a most precious, refreshful excellency which is to be found in Christ, and wherewith the most desirable excellency amongst the creatures being compared, he is much more

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excellent than they all; he is more sweet and precious than a cluster, even of that camphire which grows in the vineyards of Fngedi, where, it is like, the most precious of that kind grew. Now these expressions hold forth, 1. Christ's preciousness. 2. His efficacy and virtue. 3. His abounding in both; the worth and virtue that is in him cannot be comprehended, nor told. 4. The Bride's wisdom in making use of such things to describe Christ; and her affection in preferring him to all other things, and in satisfying herself in him, which is the last thing in these verses.

This respect of hers, or the warmness of her affection to him, is set forth two ways, 1. In that expression, 'he is unto me,' (which is both in the beginning of the 13th and in the beginning of the 14th verse) whereby is signified, not only Christ's worth in general, but, 1. His savouriness, and loveliness to her in particular: she speaks of him, as she herself had found him. 2. To express what room she gives him in her affection, he was lovely in himself, and he was so to her, and in her esteem, he is (saith she) a bundle of myrrh unto me, a cluster of camphire to me: this is further clear from that other expression, namely, 'he shall lie all night' (saith she) 'betwixt my breasts,' even as one hugs and embraces whom they love, or what they love; and keeps it in their arms, and thrusts it into their bosom; so (saith she) my beloved shall have my heart to rest in, and if one room be further in than another, there he will be admitted. Which imports, 1. Great love. 2. A satisfying her spiritual senses on him. 3. Tenaciousness in keeping and retaining him, when he is gotten, and great lothness to quit, or part with him. 4. It shews his right seat and place of residence; the bosom and heart is Christ's room and bed. 5. It shews a continuance in retaining him, and entertaining him, she would do it not for a start, but for all night. 6. A watchfulness in not interrupting his rest, or disquieting of him, he shall not be troubled (saith she) but 'he shall lie all night,' unprovoked to depart. These are good evidences of affection to Christ, and offer ground for good directions how to walk under sensible manifestations, when he doth communicate himself.

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#### PART IV.-CHRIST'S WORDS.

*Verse 15. Behold, thou art fair, my love: behold, thou art fair, thou hast doves eyes.*

**T**hese words contain a part of that excellent and comfortable conference between Christ and the Spouse: there is here a mutual commendation one of another, as if they were in a holy contest of love, who should have the last word in expressing of the other's commendation. In the verse before, the bride hath been expressing her love to Christ, and he again comes in upon the back of this, expressing his esteem of her, and that with a behold: 'behold,' &c.

If ye look upon this verse in itself, and with its dependance on the former words, it will hold out these things. 1. That love-fellowship with Christ must be a very heartsome life, O the sweet, mutual satisfaction that is there! 2. That Christ must be a very loving and kindly husband; so have all they found him, that have been married to him: and therefore, Eph. 5:27. He is proposed as a pattern to all husbands, and may well be so. That our Lord Jesus thinks good sometimes to intimate his love to believers, and to let them know what he thinks of them: and this he doth, that the believer may be confirmed in the faith of his love: for this is both profitable, and also comfortable, and refreshful. Lastly, from the connexion observe, that there is no time wherein Christ more readily manifests and intimates his love to believers, than when their love is most warm to him. In the former verse, she hath a room provided between her breasts for him, and in these words our Lord comes in with a very refreshful salutation to her: for though his love go before ours in the rise of it; yet he hath ordered it so, that the intimation of his love to us, should be after the stirring of ours towards him, John 14:21.

In the commendation that he here gives her, consider these five particulars, 1. The title he gives her, 'my love.' 2. The commendation itself, 'thou art fair.' 3. The note of attention prefixed, 'behold.' 4. The repetition of both. 5. A particular instance of a piece of that beauty he commends in her.

1. The title is a very kindly and sweet one: and this makes it lovely, that therein he not only intimates, but appropriates his love to her, allowing her to lay claim thereto as her own; 'my love,' saith he; and it says, that there can be nothing more cordial and refreshful to believers, than Christ's intimating of his love to them; and therefore, he chooseth this very title for that end: the men of the world

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exceedingly prejudge themselves, that they think not more of this, and study not to be acquaint with it.

The commendation that he gives her is, 'thou art fair.' If it be asked, what this imports? We may look upon it these three ways, 1. As it imports an inherent beauty in the Bride. 2. As it looks to the clearness and beauty of her state, as being justified before God; and this she hath, as being clothed with the righteousness of Christ. 3. As it holds forth Christ's loving estimation of her, that tho' there were many spots in her; yet he pronounces her fair (and lovely, because of his delight in her, and his purpose to make her fair) and without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: from all which, these three truths may be gathered, 1. That such as are Christ's, or have a title to him, are very lovely creatures, and cannot but have in them exceeding great loveliness, because there is to be found with them a work of his grace, a new creature, and a conversation some way levelled to the adorning of the gospel. 2. Christ Jesus hath a very great esteem of his Bride, and tho' we cannot conceive of love in him, as it is in us; yet the expressions used here, give us ground to believe, that Christ hath a great esteem of believers, how worthless soever they be in themselves. Lastly, comparing this with verse 5, we may see, that believers are never more beautiful in Christ's eyes, than when their own spots are most discernible to themselves; and oft times when they are sharpest in censuring themselves, he is most ready to absolve and commend them.

The third thing is, the rousing note of attention which is prefixed; and this is here added to the commendation of the Bride, for these reasons, which may be as observations, 1. That he may shew the reality of that beauty that is in believers, that it is a very real thing. 2. That he may shew the reality of the estimation, which he hath of his Bride. 3. It imports a desire he had to make her believe, and a difficulty that was in bringing her to believe, either the beauty that was in her, or his estimation of her; and therefore is this note of attention doubled. She hath her eyes so fixed on her own blackness, that she hath need to be roused up, to take notice both of the grace of God in her, and also of the esteem that Christ had of her.

The particular that he commends in her, in the last part of the words is, 'thou hast dove's eyes.' He insists not only in the general, but is particular in this commendation he gives her. And this shews, 1. Christ's particular observation not only of the believer's state, frame and carriage in general, but of their graces in particular. 2. That there may be some particular grace, wherein believers may be especially eminent; even as it is in corrupt, natural men, that are still under the pollution and dominion of the body of death; yet there is some one or other predominant lust that is strongest: in some sort it is so with the believer, there is some one thing or other, wherein grace especially vents, and puts forth itself in

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exercise. Abraham is eminent for faith, Moses for meekness, Job for patience: and hence the believer is considered sometimes under the notion of one grace, and sometimes of an other, as we may see, Matt. 5:3. That our blessed Lord Jesus hath a particular delight in the holy simplicity and sincerity of a believer: or, holy simplicity and sincerity, puts a great loveliness upon believers; for, by this, 'thou hast dove's eyes,' we conceive to be understood a holy simplicity, separating her in her way, from the way of the men of the world: for, while their eyes, or affections run after other objects, hers are taken up with Christ; for by eyes are set out men's affections in scripture; so, Matt. 6:22, and often in this song, the eyes signify the affections, as in that expression, 'thou hast ravished me with one of thine eyes,' &c. The eyes being some ways the seat, and also the doors of the affections. Now 'dove's eyes' set out not only the Bride's affection, and love to Christ, but also the nature of her love, which is the thing here mainly commended, as simplicity, chastity, and singleness, for which that creature is commended, Matt. 10, 'Be simple as doves.' And this is the commendation of the love that true believers have to Christ, that it is chaste, single and sincere love: singleness is the special thing Christ commends in his people. It is that for which believers are so much commended, Acts 2:46.

#### PART V. -- BRIDE'S WORDS.

*Verse 16. Behold thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant also our bed is green.*

*17. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.*

**W**e come to the last part of the chapter, in the two last verses, in which the Bride commends Christ's beauty, and the sweetness of fellowship with him: he had been commending her, and now she hastens to get the commendation turned over on him, 'behold thou art fair,' &c. And there are two things which she here commends, 1. She commends the Bridegroom himself, 'behold thou,' &c. 2. She commends fellowship with him under the similitude of bed, house, and galleries, verse 16,17. From the connexion of this with the former purpose, ye may see how restless believers are, when they meet with any commendation from Christ, till they get it turned over to his commendation and praise; and this is the property of believers, to be improving every good word they get from Christ, to his own commendation that speaks it; this is the end and



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design why grace is bestowed upon believers, that it may turn in the upshot and issue to the commendation of his grace. 2. That there is nothing [which] more readily warms the hearts of believers with love and looses their tongues in expressions of commending Christ than the intimation of his love to them; this makes their tongue as the 'pen of a ready writer,' Psalm 45:1.

More particularly in this commendation the Bride gives him, ye will find these four things, 1. There is the style she gives him, 'my beloved' 2. There is the commendation given, and it is the same with the commendation which in the former verse he gave her. 3. The note of attention prefixed, 'behold.' Lastly, an addition to the commendation Christ gave her, while she turns it over upon him, and which is as a qualification of Christ's beauty; because one expression will not do it, she makes use of two, 'thou art fair' (saith she) 'yea, pleasant' he had said she was fair; nay, (saith she) 'thou art fair,' &c. She turns it over to him, because the same things that are commendable in her, are infinitely and much more commendable in him; that which is in a believer, being the extract of the principal which is in him, Christ being the principal, and the graces that are in the believer but the transcript, or copy: all these things are in Christ like the light in the sun, and in the believer but like the light in the moon, communicated to it by the sun; and they are in Christ as in their own element and ocean, and in the believer but like some little stream communicated from that infinite fountain; and it is upon this ground, that the same commendation given by Christ to her, is turned over by her to him: and it is even as much as if she had said to him, my beloved, what is my fairness? It is thou who art fair, I am not worthy to be reckoned fair, the commendation belongs to thee, thou art worthy of it: and this is the nature of love in believers, to blush (in a manner) when Christ commends them, and to cast all such commendations back again upon him, that they may rest upon Christ, as the party who deserves them best.

From the title ye may see here, 1. Much humility in the Bride, and also much reverence and respect to Christ, which is the reason why she will not let the commendation lie upon her, but puts it back upon him: love to Christ, and estimation of him, aims always at this, that whatever is commendable in the believer, should ultimately resolve upon him. 2. Here is much familiarity, notwithstanding of her humility, in that she calls him 'my beloved' as he called her 'my love.' Humility and reverence, an high estimation of Christ, and confidence in him, and familiarity with him go all well together in the believer; and the believer should labour to have all these in exercise together, and should never let one of them part from another. In a word, it is a humble familiar way in believing, which we should aim at. 3. One special thing that makes Christ lovely

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to believers, and natively stirreth them up to commend him is, when they are clear anent his love to them.

If it be asked, why she turns over this commendation to him in the second person, 'thou art,' &c? *Answer.* She doth it, 1. To testify her sincerity, that she was not flattering, nor complimenting, but she durst make him witness of what she said. 2. To show that there are many spiritual conferences, and sweet colloquies between the souls of believers and Christ, wherein they are familiar with him, which none knows, nor can know, hut Christ and they; for, she is speaking to him when no body knows, and he to her. 3. Because there are many divine experiences of believers, that are scarcely communicable to any other, but Christ: and therefore she will tell them over to him.

The commendation she puts upon him, is even the same which he before gave her, 'thou art fair' (saith she) and that which she aims at in this, is, 1. To set forth the exceeding great beauty that is in our Lord Jesus; which beauty is spiritually to be understood, namely of the qualifications wherewith he is furnished, having grace 'poured into his lips,' Psalm 45:2; John 1:14. 2. The great esteem that the believer hath of Christ, and that both for what he is in himself, and for what he is to him: 'thou art fair' in thyself (saith she) and 'fair' to me; and it says, a little glimpse of Christ's beauty, has an attractive efficacy upon the heart of a believer: when Christ Jesus is seen, it puts a wonderful stamp of love upon the hearts of his people; he hath a very amiable aspect, that cannot but get love in the beholders: as they said that heard him, never man spake as he speaks; so they that have seen him, will say, never man's countenance looked like his; amongst all the sons of men he bears the standard, and hath a loveliness wherein he is beyond them all: no wonder, he being 'the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.' 3. It is to shew, wherefrom all her beauty was derived (as was hinted before) it was from his; if I be fair (saith she) it is because thou art fair, it is thy beauty that puts beauty upon me.

The third thing, is, the 'behold' prefixed, and it holds out these three, 1. The excellency and admirableness of the matter: Christ's beauty, is a subject of a most transcendent and admirable excellency. 2. Her seriousness in the expressions of his commendation, as having her heart at her mouth, while she speaks of it, being so affected and taken up with it. 3. Though he needed not, yet she needed upstirring herself: and there was need she should stir up others, and therefore this word, for her own, and others' cause, is prefixed.

The last part of this commendation, is (as we said) an addition to what he spoke in her commendation: 'yea, pleasant,' saith she; this pleasantness and loveliness doth relate to the communicativeness of Christ's worth, his

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communicating of what is lovely in him to others; it had not been enough for us, that he had been lovely in himself as God, if he were not also lovely by that relation that is between him and a believer in the covenant of grace, whereby there is not only a communicableness, but also an actual communication of these things to a believer, which may make him lovely and beautiful before God. And this makes Christ pleasant, that of 'his fulness we receive, and grace for grace,' John 1:16. When the believer shares of Christ's fulness, he cannot but be beautiful, and Christ cannot but be pleasant; and indeed if we could express any thing of the importance of the word, it is a most material and massy expression of that inexpressible worth that is in him, and likewise of a believer's estimation of it; and, 1. In the general it imports this, a difficulty in commending Christ rightly; there cannot be words gotten for it; the thing that is commendable in him, is so large, that words, yea, the most superlative of them, come far short in setting him forth. 2. It sets forth, how unsatisfied believers are with their own expressions of that worth, which they see to be in him; they think the first word unsuitable, and therefore they pass on to another, and in the close, they are forced as it were to give it over, and to say, thou art altogether lovely. 3. It imports, that there is no kind of thing that may commend Christ, wherein he is defective; he hath not only the materials of beauty (so to say) but he hath the form: all things that are in Christ, are wonderfully delightful and pleasant to look on. Lastly, this expression implies, an exceeding great refreshfulness and contentedness, which Christ Jesus doth yield to a believer; and that exceeding great satisfaction and delight, that a believer may have in looking on Christ: this word 'pleasant,' speaks their actual feeding upon the beautiful sight they have gotten of him, so that they cannot be withdrawn from it: must not Christ be lovely, when his people get eyes to see him? And must it not be a heartsome life to be in heaven, where they behold him, who is fair and lovely, as he is, and have their eyes fixed on him for ever, when he is so beautiful even here-away, where we see him but darkly, through a glass, and much of his beauty is veiled from our eyes?

That which follows, is the enlargement of the Bride's commendation of Jesus Christ, as he is called a beloved, or husband, for she follows that allegory in commending his bed, house, and galleries; and this is the scope, to show how excellent and stately a husband he was. And, 2. How happy and comfortable a life his Bride had in communion and fellowship with him. In the words, these three are to be cleared, 1. What is commended, as 'bed,' 'house,' &c. 2. The several commendations given to these. 3. The title of claim or relation under which they are commended, 'our bed,' &c.

That which is commended, is expressed by three words, 1. 'Bed.' 2. 'The beams of our house,' . 3. 'Rafters.' In sum, it is this, that as husbands (who are in

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good condition) have beds to solace in with their Brides; houses to dwell in, and galleries to walk in, for their refreshing, and have these excellently adorned according to their rank; so our blessed Husband excels in these. By bed, is understood the special means of nearest fellowship with, and enjoying of Christ; the bed being the place of rest, and of the nearest fellowship between the Bridegroom and the Bride.

Its commendation is, that it is green: that is, 1. Refreshful, like the spring. 2. Fruitful, and so the similitude of greenness is opposed to a disconsolate, barren, unfruitful condition, Psalm 92:12,13, and Jer. 17:8. So then, that which is here pointed at, is, that nearness with Christ, is both exceeding heartsome and refreshing, and also hath much influence on believers to keep them fresh, and make them fruitful.

The second thing commended, is ‘the beams of the house;’ the house is of a larger extent than the bed: it signifies the church, wherein Christ dwells with his Bride; the beams of it, are the ordinances, word, sacraments, promises of the covenant, &c. whereby the house is, both compacted together, and sustained; there being no living with Christ, nor fellowship with him, without these. The commendation is, that it is of cedar, 1. Cedar was a durable wood. 2. Excellent and precious, chap. 3:10. 3. It was typical of Christ, and therefore used in the ceremonial services: so this commendation holds forth the excellent nature of the ordinances, and promises, being of great worth, precious and perpetual in their use to the church, while upon earth: but it doth especially hold forth the eternal excellency and worth, and the durable power and strength of Christ, the main corner-stone of this building, Eph. 2:20,22.

The third word is, ‘rafters’: it is on the margin, ‘galleries,’ and so we take it, being rendered so, chap. 7:5. The word signifies, to run alongst: and the scope here is to show what pleasant walks there are with Christ; or, how pleasant a thing it is to walk with him. As to dwell with him, and lie, or bed with him, so to walk with him, must needs be pleasant: and this metaphor (with the rest) is here made use of, it being ordinary in this Song, under such expressions, to hold forth the love-fellowship, that is betwixt Christ and his church. Now these galleries are said to be of ‘fir,’ or cypress, a durable wood. This word is not elsewhere in scripture, but the scope shews it is some fine thing, and points out the unspeakable satisfaction and pleasure which is to be had in a life of walking with him.

She claims title to all these, bed, house, galleries; she saith not, thy bed, nor my bed (whereby chap. 3 she signifies her own carnal ease and rest) but, our bed, our house, &c. whereby she points at somewhat which both of them had joint

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interest in, and did together converse into; although her interest be communicated from him; yet she keeps the manner of speech suitable to husband and wife.

These words show, 1. That there be several degrees of fellowship with Christ, and several ways and means, for entertaining of it: some more near, as when he lay betwixt her breasts: some more mediate (when, as it were) he and she only live together in the house, which may point at her trading with Christ in the ordinances, but without sensible manifestations: and also believers walking with him in their ordinary callings, even when they are not in duties of immediate worship which is signified by galleries. 2. Any of these degrees and means of fellowship, are excellent in themselves, and to be pressed and sought after by the believer. 3. The nearest means of fellowship with Christ, is most refreshful to spiritual sense; the bed more than the house. 4. Yet though it be so, believers should not divide them; but should think much of all the means and ordinances, even as long as they abide here. 5. There is a mutual relation betwixt Christ and his Bride, which gives a mutual interest in, and relation to all that is his; whatever is his, it is ours, his bed is ours, his house ours, &c. 6. Believers that can lay claim to Christ, may and should claim interest in all that is his. 7. This makes every dispensation lovely, and every step of our walk heartsome, when under every dispensation, and in every step of our walk, we are living a life of fellowship with Christ: to be spending all our time in lying, dwelling and walking with Christ, O how sweet a life were that! 8. The means of fellowship with Christ in all places and times, are so well contrived, and so large and refreshful, as they contribute exceedingly to make a believer cheerful in all duties of worship, and in all his conversation; for we here see, there are bed, house, and galleries provided in order to her keeping company with Christ.

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