



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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Commentary on the Song of Songs, Chapter Four

by James Durham

CHRIST.

Verse 1. Behold thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from mount Gilead.

That these are Christ's words spoken to the Bride, is at the first clear; he continues speaking from the beginning unto verse 16, and then verse 16, the Bride speaks by prayer to him, for the influences and breathings of the Spirit.

In Christ's speech there are two parts; the first to the eighth verse, wherein he gives both a general and particular commendation of the Bride. The second, from that forward to the last verse, wherein he begins with a sweet invitation, and then shews how he was affected towards her, and so breaks out in another commendation of her. The matter in both is sweet and comfortable; wonderful to be spoken by such a one as Christ, of such a one as a believer; but there is nothing in his love, but what is wonderful and like himself. The scope of the first part of Christ's speech is twofold. 1. More general, to intimate his love to his Bride, on the back of so much darkness; chap. 3:1,2, (in the midst of which, notwithstanding, her love did appear in her commending him;) and it's subjoined to the commendation that she gives of him to others, in the preceding chapter, to shew, 1. That when believers slight their own esteem, to have it accruing to Christ's commendation, it is never loss but gain to them; for, here Christ comes in

to commend her himself, whereas it was but the daughters of Jerusalem who commended her, chap. 3:6. 2. It shews, that time taken, and pains bestowed for the edification of others, and their instruction in the excellency of Christ, is acceptable to him, and proves often useful for attaining sensible fellowship with him; yea, it proves often to be some way as useful in reference to this as their own particular praying for themselves, the Lord doth so return their pains taken this way into their bosom. That to commend the Bride is the scope in general, is clear from verse 7.

More particularly we take the scope to be, his giving her an answer to her prayer, chap. 2:17, where she prayed for his fellowship 'until the day break,' &c. Here he doth not only materially answer, but verse 6, formally repeats her words, that she may know what he speaks is a direct answer to her prayer: until that day come (saith he) it shall be so as thou desirest (as the words will make it clear) shewing, 1. That a believer's prayers may for a time lie beside Christ, (as it were) and yet he not forget a word of them, but mind well the answer and performance of them. 2. That sometimes he will not only give what is sought by his people, but make them know that he respects their prayer, in the giving of it; and so he not only hears their prayers, but lets them know he hath heard them.

This commendation, whereby he intimates his respect to her, hath four steps. 1. It is done in general, verse 1. Then, 2. He insists on particulars, from verse 1, to verse 6. 3. He shews how his respect to her affected him, verse 6. 4. He sums all particulars up in an universal commendation, verse 7, lest any thing should be missed, or being left out might vex her; whereby he shews, what was his scope in that which preceded.

The general commendation in the beginning of verse 1, is the same that was given her, chap. 1:15, yet here it is repeated with the two 'beholds:' the reasons why he repeats it, are, 1. That Christ might evidence to her the reality of his love, and that he varies not, nor changes in it, even though fits of security on her side had intervened, chap. 3:1. Christ's love and thoughts to his people, are still the same, whatever changes be upon their frame and way, which may occasion sad changes in his dispensations towards them. 2. That she might the more be persuaded of his love to her and esteem of her; Christ would have his own thoroughly persuaded that he loves them, 1 John 4:16, and would have others to know, that he respects them, more than the most mighty in the world. 3. It is

because often believers from all other hands, whether the men of the world, or from themselves, have but little comfort, therefore Christ renews his intimations to support and comfort them: believers' consolation hangs most on his kindness to them, and they who depend most on it are no losers. And further, we may here observe, that even a believer, especially after sad challenges, will need renewed intimations of Christ's love.

The more particular explication and commendation of her parts follows; where we would advert, 1. That bodily members or parts, are not to be here looked unto, but believers have an inner-man, as well as an outward, a new man as well as an old; and so that inner-man hath, as it were, distinct parts and members as the natural body hath, which act in reference thereto, with some analogy to these members in the natural body. 2. As the new or inner-man sets forth the new nature and habitual grace in the believer; so the particular parts, eyes, lips, &c. signify distinct graces of faith, love, &c. which are parts of that new nature. 3. These parts may be looked on as useful in the new man, as the external members are in the body, or as they are evidences of some thing in the renewed disposition. 4. They set forth the disposition, as they are qualified in the commendation, and not simply. 5. Although we cannot satisfy our own, or others' curiosity, in the particular application of these parts, yet there is a particular meaning of every several part here attributed to her, as well as of every part attributed to him, chap. 5:11, 12, &c. and he giveth no idle words nor useth any vain repetitions: we should therefore beware of thinking all this needless, seeing he knoweth best what is needful. 6. Being clear of the scope, that it is to commend graces, and to evidence the beauty of her several graces, we must regulate all the application by that scope, and what is subservient thereto, cannot be impertinent. Yet, 7, There is much need of sobriety here; therefore we shall be short and peremptory in particular applications. 8. There being a connexion amongst all the graces of the Spirit, it must not be thought absurd that some of these graces may be signified twice in different respects, and that one part respect more graces (which are nearly linked) especially when the commendation gives ground to infer it. 9. We take this commendation to set forth especially the invisible church, or true believers, which are the members thereof, as the scope and application do clear.

If it be asked why he insists on particulars in this commendation? I answer, for these reasons; 1. That he may shew, that whoever hath the new nature, and a lively work of grace, hath also particular graces in exercise. 2. That it may

be known that the new nature is not a dead body, but a living: and exerciseth itself by putting forth these particular graces in exercise. 3. That he may shew, that wherever one grace is, all are there, and as it is ordinarily with one grace, so it is with all; where believers are in a good and commendable case, it will not be one grace or two that will be in exercise, or one duty or two in which these graces are exercised, but it will be universally, all graces, and in all known duties. 4. To shew, who may expect Christ's commendation: those who have a respect to all his commands, and make conscience to exercise all graces. 5. To shew what particular notice he takes of believers' graces, he can tell how it is with everyone of them; and takes this exact notice of them, because it is very acceptable to him, when he fords them in good case.

There are seven parts particularly mentioned, every one having its own distinct commendation. The first two of them are in the rest of verse 1. The first thing commended is her 'eyes,' which here have a twofold commendation. 1. That they are as 'doves' eyes.' 2. That they are 'within her locks.' Eyes are the organs of seeing in the natural body, whereby we discern objects that are visible; and so our understandings are thereby set forth in scripture; 'that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened,' saith the Apostle, Eph. 1:18, By eyes also the affections are set forth, because the affection sets the eye on work to look here or there, (Hence is the phrase of a single and evil eye, Matt. 6:21,23,) and because it is some way the seat of these, and somewhat of love or hatred will be, and may be gathered from the eye. Here we understand, 1. A spiritual, sanctified enlightened understanding in the things of God, taking up Christ and spiritual things spiritually, 1 Cor. 2:15, that is by faith, it being 'the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. 11:1. And therefore looking is frequently put for believing in scripture, which presupposeth understanding. 2. Kindliness, or a spiritual, kindly and affectionate carriage to Christ; in a word, it is the exercise of love upon this spiritual and wonderfully excellent object, Christ; a having respect to him, as it is Isa. 17:7, his eyes shall have respect to his Maker, it is such an uptaking of Christ and spiritual things, as works love and delight in them.

The commendation will confirm this, which is twofold, 1. They are 'doves' eyes:' this was opened, chap. 1:15, and it signifieth, I. What is the great object they behold, and are taken up with, it is Christ; and they are chaste to him, and seek to know no other at all but him, 1 Cor. 2:2. 2. It imports that the act of faith whereby they behold him, is simple, single and sweet, their understanding is not subtile, nor politic, nor are they puffed up with it, but it is taken up with

studying Christ and him crucified, opposite to the vain wisdom of the world, 1 Cor. 2:1,2. 2. These eyes are ‘within her locks: locks are that part of the hair that hang about the face, handsomely knit, and was then instead of a veil to women, 1 Cor. 11:7, and so the word in the Hebrew will bear; and it is differenced from that word translated hair, in the words following, which is that part of the hair that covers the head: it implies here, that the believer’s knowledge is not used for frothy ostentation (as the knowledge that puffs up) but is kept within its right bounds, and that they are wise unto sobriety, and that their knowledge is not at the first obvious, but seasonably vents itself and looks out, as eyes that are within the locks.

These things are sure, and may be observed from the words, 1. That a believer should be filled with spiritual knowledge and understanding. 2. Knowledge is no less necessary to a believer, that he may go right in the way of God, and not err, than eyes are to guide a man in a journey; and this necessity extends both to faith and practice. 3. A believer without knowledge, or weak in knowledge, is very far defective in spiritual beauty, he is as a man without eyes; it is not decent that a believer should be so: from this it is, that many are called weak in faith. 4. That knowledge of spiritual things, should ever have faith, love and singleness going along in the exercise thereof; for, every knowledge will not be commendable to Christ, more than every eye will be useful in a body; believers’ eyes must be as ‘doves’ eyes.’ 5. A believer’s eyes, or knowledge, is different from the knowledge of all others. 1. In respect of its object, which is Christ and spiritual things. 2. In that it’s joined with love, it respects him. 3. In that it is chaste, keeping the soul for him alone. 4. It works delight in him. 5. It is denied to other things. *Observe.* 6. Often the most subtile in worldly wisdom, knows least of Christ truly; whereas the most simple that have “doves’ eyes,” take up most of him. 7. Christ respects not how much a man knows, but how he is affected with it; it is not the eagle’s, but the ‘dove’s eyes,’ which he commends. 8. It is good to know and to think little of our knowledge, and not to be puffed up with it. 9. Christ loves it well, when his people seasonably use, and improve their knowledge and parts; then the new man becomes lovely, as the eyes are within the locks. 10. There are extremes in the use-making of knowledge, which are to be shunned; we should neither altogether obscure it that it be not seen, nor by ostentation make shew of it; it is good when it runs in the right minds, then it gets to commendation, and is as ‘eyes within the locks.’

The second thing commended is her 'hair,' having a twofold commendation also. The hair is no integral, or essential part of the body (to say so) yet in all ages a great part of men's decoration, hath ever been placed in it it is the most conspicuous thing of the body, being highest and most discernible, especially in the way it used to be dressed; and this conspicuousness of it, by the commendation, seems mainly to be aimed at. By hair we understand the ornament of a Christian, godly, and sober walk, having the right principles of saving grace within, and the fruits thereof in a well ordered conversation, and suitable profession appearing without in the practice. We take it so, not only because it is a main piece of a christian's or believer's beauty, but also for these reasons, 1. Because as hair sets out and adorns the natural body, though it be no substantial part thereof; so a well ordered conversation commends grace within, and makes it lovely. 2. Because as hair is upmost, and most conspicuous, and therefore seen when the natural body is hid (therefore it was to women a cover, 1 Cor. 11:5) so a suitable practical profession, is (as it were) the cover of holiness, through which it shines, and by which it is conspicuous, which otherwise would not be discernible. 3. And especially, because in scripture this adorning with good works, and with a meek and quiet spirit, is put in the place of decking of the hair, and other external decorations (1 Tim. 2:9,10.) as that wherein christians' beauty should 'shine before men,' (Matt. 5:17.) and which should be to a believer, as decking of the hair is to those who take pains to adorn the body. For sure these do make them beautiful before God and men, more than hair and its decorations can make any person in the world appear beautiful to the men thereof, 1 Tim. 2:9,10, whose 'adorning' (saith the Apostle, speaking of believing women) 'let it not be in costly apparel, brodered hair,' &c. 'but' (what then should be in the place thereof:) 'shamefacedness, sobriety, and good works;' so, 'Pet. 3:3,4,5, 'Whose adorning let it not be the platting of the hair,' but in the place thereof, let it be 'a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.' And this is also mentioned by the apostle, as that which is exceedingly engaging to the husband, for which Sarah there is commended. Next, the commendation of her hair, in both its parts, will confirm this, 1. It is like 'a flock of goats:' goats are stately and comely in going, and a flock of them must be very stately, as they were especially in these parts, Prov. 30:21 and 31. And so this ornament of a good conversation, is an amiable, gaining and alluring thing; by it, saith Peter, the husband's affection may be won (and that both to Christ and to his wife in the Lord) more than by any outward decorating, and this puts them to glorify God, when it shines before them, Matt. 5:16.

2. It is commended from this, that it is like a flock ‘appearing from mount Gilead:’ this was a fruitful place, and it is like the goats that fed thereon, were more excellent than others in their beauty: and being seen afar, and discernible ere men came near them were pleasant and stately to beholders, and so good works, showing forth themselves in a well ordered conversation, do also as from a mountain appear to others, and set believers up as ‘lights shining in a dark place,’ Phil. 1:15, and also make them lovely and desirable in the consciences of onlookers and beholders. Observe then, 1. That practice should wait upon knowledge, for it is the end thereof, and without it all men’s knowledge is void and vain. 2. Grace and holiness appearing in a christian’s practice, will shine, and be in some measure very discernible. 3. This is a thing that makes the believer’s conversation very beautiful and lovely. 4. It is not enough that believers should be tender, and conscientious in secret before God; but there ought to be a shining, even in their outward conversation before men. 5. This doth exceedingly adorn a believer’s walk, and make it stately to beholders, when the fruits of holiness visibly appear in his conversation.

Verse 2. Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep, that are even shorn, which came up from the washing: whereof everyone bear twins, and none is barren among them.

The third particular commended, is in verse 2, and it is her ‘teeth,’ which have a fourfold commendation given them. The teeth properly taken, are useful for furthering the nourishment of the body, they being the instruments that fit meat for digestion; and what comeliness is in them, is not every way obvious; they are not seen or discerned in their proportionableness or disproportionableness, but by the motion of the lips, otherwise they are hid by them. 2. Again in scripture they are used to evidence and signify these three things, 1. They are used to signify the nature and disposition of a person, as good or evil; hence evil men are said to have ‘lions’ teeth,’ and that their ‘teeth are as spears,’ Psalm 57:4. And that beast, Dan. 7:5, 7, is said to have ‘three ribs in his teeth,’ pointing out its cruel disposition. 2. They evidence good or ill food, that the person feeds on. 3. A healthful or unhealthful complexion, which depends much on the former: hence Judah’s good portion and healthfulness is set out by this, Gen. 49:12, ‘His teeth shall be white with milk.’ According to the first, by teeth in the new man may be understood two things; 1. Faith; believing being often compared to eating, because it furthers the soul’s nourishment, and is the

means by which the soul lives on its spiritual food. This saith, 1. That the inner man must have food, as the natural body hath, for its sustaining. 2. That the believer actually eats and makes use of that food, he hath teeth for that end, and should not only look on Christ, but feed on him. Secondly; Meditation also may be here understood; that serving much to the feeding and filling of the soul, as Psalm 63:6, 7, 'My soul shall be filled as with marrow and fatness,' how? 'While I meditate on thee on my bed, and think of thee in the night watches;' meditation is as it were the soul's ruminating and chewing its cud, feeding upon, and digesting what is understood and eaten, as the clean beast did: which maybe one reason why her teeth are in the first part of their commendation, compared to 'a flock of sheep,' which were among the number of clean beasts by reason of this property: meditation is exceedingly useful for a believer's life, and they who are strangers to it, are not like Christ's sheep.

Again, as the teeth evidence first the nature and inward disposition, so we conceive they are also made use of here (as the commendation also clears) to shew, 1. The zealous nature which is, and ought to be in believers, they have 'teeth' and ought not always to be soft, wherein the Lord's honour is concerned: zeal though it bite not, and devour not, yet it is not senseless, but easily touched with the feeling of that which reflects upon the glory of God. 2. The similitude here is to shew what a meek and quiet spirit believers have, they have not such teeth as lions or tigers, but such as sheep have; nor tusks like dogs and ravenous beasts, but 'even shorn,' shewing a moderation, and equitableness in their way, being 'first pure, then peaceable, gentle,' &c. James 3:17. This will agree well to teeth, as they appear by opening the lips, for, the new nature within is expressed, and doth appear in words, which afterward are spoken of under the similitude of lips. Now this christian moderation which keeps the right midst, is a notable piece of spiritual beauty (as is clear from the second piece of the commendation) for it is 'as a flock of sheep even shorn,' and not unequally, and unhandsomely clipped; so true zeal will not upon bye-respect or interest be high or low, up or down, but keeps a just equality in its way: and this speaks out a well constituted frame, that is, neither too soft, nor too sharp, in biting and devouring one another (as is said, Gal. 5:15.) which carnal zeal sets the teeth a-work to do.

2. This similitude doth evidence and signify a good subject they feed on, to wit, Christ and his promises; and a good subject they meditate on, the same Christ, and what is most precious in him: hence in the third part of the commendation, they are likened to sheep 'coming up from the washing,' white

and clean: neither mixture of human inventions, nor of carnal passions or worldly delights, gets place and entertainment with them; their zeal is pure, their ends are single, their affections are chaste and clean, being ‘purged from all filthiness of flesh and spirit,’ and they appear so.

3. Not only their healthfulness is hereby evidenced, but further also their fruitfulness; whereupon their inward meekness and zeal moderated by pure and peaceable wisdom, have great influence, as is clear by the fourth part of their commendation, ‘every one’ of these sheep ‘bear twins, and none is barren among them:’ the scope whereof, is to shew their abundant fruitfulness, thus their sweet nature is a pleasant possession, like a flock of sheep that enriches their owner, they are so fruitful and profitable. *Observe.* 1. Feeding on Christ is ever fruitful to the soul that makes him its food; whereas other meats profit not them, that are occupied therein. Heb. 13:9. 2: Zeal moderated with meekness, hath also a deal of fruit waiting on it, James 3:17, but bitter zeal (as it is there in the original) or strife, hath confusion, and every evil work following on it, Ibid. verses 14, 15, 16. It is much to be zealous always in a good thing, and no little piece of spiritual commendation, to keep the right midst with our zeal.

Verse 3. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.

In this third verse we have the fourth and fifth particulars that are commended in the Bride. The fourth thing commended is her ‘lips;’ the commendation given them is, that they are like ‘a thread of scarlet,’ that is neat and lovely, and of an excellent colour, as scarlet, which (being of the richest dye) was made use of under the law to represent the blood of Christ, as Heb. 9:19. Next, this is amplified, as we conceive, in the following expression (‘and thy speech is comely’) which is added for the explication of the former, and therefore is joined thereto with a copulative (‘and’) which is added to none of the other parts here commended; and it may be here added, to shew, 1. A way of opening the other expression; for speech is expressed by lips, because they are the organs (to say so) whereby it is formed and uttered. And, 2. To shew, that under lips, come in both our words to God in prayer and praise, and also our words to others, whatever is

spoken or comes out of the lips, as often the phrase is used for both. Also it shews, that in a special way he takes notice of believers' speech (when it's savoury) as a main part of their spiritual beauty, which makes them lovely.

The commendation of her lips and speech is twofold. 1. More general; it is like 'a thread of scarlet.' 2. That is expounded by another expression more clear and particular, namely this, 'thy speech is comely:' the meaning of both which may be comprehended under these four, 1. That her speech is profitable for its matter, as a scarlet thread is precious and useful: the subject of a believer's discourse is not common, but 'good to the use of edifying,' Eph. 4:29. 2. It is pleasant and delightful for its manner, like a sweet, comely, and pleasant voice, opposite to some kind of voices that are harsh and unpleasant; it is by prudence and love sweetened, and made savoury, and therefore is said in scripture to be 'seasoned with salt,' Col. 4:6, and to 'minister grace to the hearers,' and it is called a giving of thanks, Eph. 5:3. It is articulate and distinct, therefore called 'speech' and not a sound; having honest ingenuity in it, speaking as they 'think in their heart,' Psalm 15:2, and opposite to lying, dissembling, &c. whereby one speaks to veil or hide his mind from another. 4. Hereby is also signified, that they hazard not even the best of their prayers on their own bottom and worth, but their work is to have them all dyed in the blood of the Lamb, and to put them up in his name, Heb. 13:15. They are all 'offered up by him.'

Now these are special qualifications, commendations, and characters of a believer; shewing, 1. That a believer, as a believer, is not dumb, but hath renewed lips, whereby he can speak to God in praise for his honour, in prayers for his own good, and also to others for their edification: a believer that can speak nothing to a good purpose, or if he can, doth it not, is not like Christ's Bride; much less those whose discourses tend quite another way. 2. That words are in a special way taken notice of by Christ, and are special evidences of the frame of the heart, according to which we may expect commendation or reproof from Christ, for by 'our words we shall be justified,' or 'condemned,' Matt. 12:37. 3. That there is nothing more commendable in itself, beautiful in a believer, or acceptable to Christ, than the well ordering of the words; he who can 'rule the tongue,' is a 'perfect man,' James 3:2. 4. That believers' prayers are all dyed in Christ's blood, and put up in his name: and we conceive prayer, or the believer's speech to God, is especially understood; partly, because prayer gets this same commendation to be sweet and comely, chap. 2:14, and partly because mutual communication in words among

believers, is expressed afterwards more clearly, verse 11, though it is not to be excluded here.

The fifth part of her commendation (or the fifth character or property of the Bride) is in these words, 'thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.' The temples are that part of the face, that are betwixt the ears and the eyes; and sometimes the signification is so large, as they take in the cheeks; they are a special part wherein the beauty of the face consists, and are the proper seat of shamefacedness and modesty, wherein blushing appears. The commendation is twofold, 1. They are like 'a piece of a pomegranate:' they who write of it say, it is a fruit, which when broken (as here the mentioning of a piece thereof signifies) is pleasant with red and white spots, not unlike blushing in a pleasant face. The second commendation is, that these temples are 'within her locks,' of the colour of a pomegranate, but not discernible fully (as the eyes also were, verse 1.) yet something observable; as sometimes modesty will make blushing, and again will seek to cover it, when hardly will it be gotten done. Here we take tenderness, shamefacedness, modesty in spiritual things, and blushing before God to be understood; Christ's Bride hath a tenderness that is soon affected with wrongs done to him, she easily resents them; and this is opposite to impudence, and a whore's forehead, which cannot be ashamed, than which nothing is more displeasing to Christ, and unbecoming to his Bride; here the temples are not hard, (as the brow that is of brass) but like a piece of a pomegranate, opposite to it; here it is not stretched out impudently, but covered within the locks, and not shameless that cannot blush, but coloured (to say so) with shamefacedness and blushing, which though they seek to hide, yet it appears in them. And this application being safe in itself, and agreeable to the scope; (which shews what Christ is delighted with in her) and this being a main piece of her beauty, and also suitable to the commendation, there is no hazard to fix on it; for, without this she would not be so lovely.

Now we may easily conceive, that this tenderness, modesty, or blushing, is not any natural endowment, which appears in the carriage of man to man; but it is a saving grace, which especially is to be found in believers' carriage before Christ as being their Lord and husband: and it evidenceth itself in believers in these, or the like steps. 1. In their being soon challenged, for any thing that looks like sin. 2. In their being affected easily with challenges, and with the infirmities that are in them. 3. In their thinking shame of them, as of things that are disgraceful. 4. In their not being tenacious of them, or of their own will, nor disputing with Christ

in any thing, but passing easily from their compearance, as it were, and thinking shame to be taken in any sin, or to be found in mistakes with him. 5. In being sparing to speak of any thing that tends to commend themselves, or in seeking their own glory. These are commendable things in a believer, and make him look like the piece of a pomegranate, spotted with red and white: and it shews the result of a believer's looking on their own way, when they take it up, and see that wrong, and this right; and even that which is right, wrong in so many things, and so may ways; whereupon as there is ever some sincerity, so there is ever some shame, and holy blushing; and this is constant, and (as it were) native to them, still to blush when they look upon themselves.

2. This commendation, that her temples are 'within her locks,' imports, that Christ's Bride blushes when none sees, and for that which no other sees: and also that she seeks not to publish her exercises, but modestly covers them; yet the evidences of all these in a tender walk, appear and are comely. *Observe.* 1. Shamefacedness or sobriety becomes a believer, or Christ's Bride exceeding well, 2. Tim. 2:9. 2. Inward heart-blushing, when we look upon ourselves before God, is the best trial of true tenderness. 3. A believer will have many shameful representations of himself, and will think much shame of what he sees, which the world will never be acquainted with. 4. This grace of self-loathing and holy blushing, is much taken notice of by Christ, and most especially recorded by him, however it be much hid from others.

Verse 4. Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.

The sixth thing commended in the Bride, is her 'neck:' the neck being comely and straight, adds much to the beauty of a person, and is placed by nature, as a more eminent and essential part of the body than the eyes, legs, lips, &c. or any other part here mentioned: for it is that whereby the head and body are joined together. The commendation thereof is, that it is 'like the tower of David:' what particular place this hath reference unto, it is hard to say, possibly it is that mentioned, Neh. 3:16,19,25, called the tower of the mighty, or the armory; it is like, that some strong hold built by David, eminent for beauty and strength, is

hereby signified; which might have been employed for keeping of arms, for times of danger, as the words following seem to bear.

This tower is more particularly explicated. 1. From the end and use for which it was intended, it was built 'for an armory,' that men might be furnished with arms in time of need. 2. The store of arms there laid up, is here set down, 'whereupon hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men,' that is, it is furnished especially with defensive arms (the believer's war being most defensive) as shields; but with abundance of these, for number a 'thousand;' and for quality excellent, and such as 'mighty men' make use of.

If we consider the neck here, in respect of its use, it holds forth the vigorous' exercise of the grace of faith; for it is that by which a believer is united to Christ the head: it is that which strengthens them, and is their armory furnishing them with shields, because it provides them out of Christ's fulness, which is contained in the promises; which promises, or rather Christ in them, being made use of by faith, are for a believer's security, against challenges, temptations, discouragements, &c. as so many excellent shields: therefore, Eph. 6:16, it is called 'the shield of faith,' and for their safety, it is commended above all the rest of the spiritual armour: and this being the believer's great defence, and especially tending to their commendation when it is in lively exercise, this similitude cannot be so well applied to any other thing.

Observe. 1. Faith in exercise is a noble defence to a believer, against all assaults and temptations; there is no such shield as faith is; every promise and every attribute of God, is as a shield to those that exercise this grace of faith thereupon. 2. Faith exercised on these, is exceedingly well pleasing to Jesus Christ. 3. That all believers have their arms out of one armory, there is but one store-house for them all, to wit, faith acting on Christ's fulness. 4. Faith will never want a buckler, there is a thousand laid up in a magazine for the believer's use. 5. He is the most mighty and valiant man, who is most in the exercise and use-making of faith. 6. Faith is the grace that makes a man valiant and victorious, as all the 'cloud of witnesses,' Heb. 11 proves.

Again, if we consider the neck, as it is commended here, as being like a tower for uprightness and straightness, it signifies a quiet serene mind, and a

confident boldness in doing and suffering; in which sense, it is opposite to hanging of the head, which speaks discouragement: and as a stretched out neck, in a carnal sense, Isa. 3:16. signifies haughtiness and pride: so here in a holy and spiritual sense, it implies cheerfulness of heart, and confident holy boldness, which proceeds from the spirit of adoption; and this waits upon, and follows after the exercise of faith, being fixed and stayed upon the Lord and his word against all events, Psalm 112:6. Bold in duties, and valorous in sufferings, and in undergoing any difficulties. So then, this is no small commendation which Christ gives his Bride, and it is well consistent with that holy blushing, shamefacedness and sobriety, for, which she was commended in the former verse.

Verse 5. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.

The seventh and last part that is commended in the Bride, is her ‘two breasts,’ or paps. For clearing of this similitude, we are to consider, 1. That the breasts in nature are a part of the comeliness of the body, Ezek. 16:7. 2. They are useful to give suck and food to others. 3. They signify warmth of affection, and loveliness, as Prov. 5:19, ‘Let her breasts always satisfy thee;’ and chap. 1:13. the Bride expressing her affection to Christ, saith, ‘he shall lie all night between my breasts;’ and so the wife of the bosom is the chaste and beloved spouse; and thus Christ is called the Son of God’s love, or ‘of his bosom.’ For this cause, we conceive these things are here understood, 1. A believer’s fitness to edify others, and that believers are in a condition suitable to a married wife, or mother, that brings forth children, and hath breasts to nurse them: and so to have ‘no breasts,’ chap. 8:8. is opposed to this: a believer is, as it were, a nurse with breasts fitted to edify others. 2. That believers being in case to be useful to others for their edification, is a special ornament to their profession, and the third thing that is here understood, is believers’ warmth and kindness to Christ, and those that are his, taking him and them (as it were) in their bosom; the believer hath warm affections to receive them into. And two breasts are mentioned, to shew there is no defect as to the extent, but both her breasts are in good case, and always ready in love to communicate their furniture, for others’ edification.

The commendation is in two steps, each whereof is qualified for the further enlarging of the commendation. The first is, they are like ‘two roes,’ that are lovely and kindly, Prov. 5:17, (often mentioned before) and like ‘young roes,’

because these are most lovely, and suit best to be a similitude to set forth the comeliness of that part of the body; they are like young roes, not too big; for, when breasts are too big, it's a deformity; and so when private edification exceeds its true bounds, it's not approvable or lovely. And these roes to which her breasts are compared, are 'twins:' which shews, an equality and proportionableness in their love to God and to others, giving each of these their own place, and keeping their love to creatures in the right subordination; and also their communicating their love to others, in admonitions and rebukes, &c. equally, keeping a proportionableness in all.

The second part of the commendation, is, they 'feed among the lilies:' as roes would not maintain their pleasantness long if they did not feed; yea, if the pasture were not good: so, these must needs be pleasant and useful, because they feed, and that not in a wilderness, but amongst the lilies; which shews, that believers in fitting and furnishing themselves that they may be forthcoming for others' edification, do not neglect their own advantage and edification, but feed on good pasture, whereby they are yet more fitted for being useful to others.

By 'feeding' in this Song, is understood. 1. To be present in such a place, as chap. 2:16. 2. To make use of that which is food for the entertaining of life. 3. To delight in a thing for satisfying of the affections. Next, by the Bride's 'breasts' (being 'like roes which feed amongst the lilies') three things may be understood. 1. As this expression respects Christ's feeding, (so to speak) for he is said to 'feed amongst the lilies,' chap. 2:16, and so it says, that the believer loves to feed in Christ's company, and where he is. And, 2. That this makes believers' breasts run to others, when they are much with him, and in his company. 3. As it respects believers, who are called 'lilies,' chap. 2:16, and 6:2; and so it says, 1. That all believers have one pasture, they feed together as a flock doth. 2. That one believer loves and delights in the company of another, they are the excellent and the lilies of the earth, their delight is with them. And, 3. That this helps a believer's growth, and fits him to be useful for others' edification, and to improve well the spiritual fellowship of other believers. 4. As it respects Christ himself, who is called a 'lily,' chap. 2:1. and his 'lips' are said to be 'like lilies dropping,' &c. chap. 5:13. Whereby is holden out, his words, promises, ordinances, &c.

And so it says, 1. That Christ and his word is the great and main food, upon which believers feed, that is their proper pasture; to be much drinking-in the

‘sincere milk of the word’ is their meat and drink. 2. That much acquaintance with Christ in the word, enables one for being very useful to others. In sum, it says, 1. That a believer is no bare novice, but hath breasts that yield milk and nourishment to others. 2. That a believer hath a good pasture to feed on. 3. That believers’ breasts run to others, according as they feed themselves; if they hunger themselves, others will not be edified by them; if they feed on wind and empty notions themselves, it will be no healthful food that others will from receive them. 4. That it is a pleasant thing and acceptable to Christ, when a believer so communicates what he hath received to others, as he is still feeding on Christ himself, and not living on the stock he hath already received.

Verse 6. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

The words in this sixth verse, express the second way, how Christ evidenceth his respect to his Bride, he is so affected with her beauty, that he tells her, he cannot but haunt her company and answer her prayers. For, comparing this verse with verse 17, chap. 2, we find it a clear answer of her petition she puts up there. The words contain, 1. A promise. 2. A term set to the performance of it, shewing the continuance of his performance. The promise is, ‘I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense:’ by this in general is understood no withdrawing of Christ’s, or shutting of himself up in heaven from her; for, that will not agree to the scope, which is to shew how he loves her, and comforts her; nor will that be an answer of her prayer, but the contrary: it must then hold forth some comfortable act of Christ’s, evidencing his respect to her for her consolation; which we conceive to be a promise of his presence with her to the end of the world. By ‘mountain’ is often understood the church (as Isa. 2:1, and Mic. 4:1) called so for her endurance and stability; for typifying of which, the temple was built on mount Moriah. And it is called a ‘mountain of myrrh, and hill of frankincense,’ to difference this one mountain (which is in the singular) from the mountains, or excellencies in the world, after mentioned, verse 8, which are many: it is a sweet mountain, not of leopards but of ‘myrrh’ and ‘frankincense:’ these were spices much used in the ceremonial services, Exod. 30:23,24, and signified the preciousness, and savouriness of the graces of God’s people, and of their prayers, Psalm 141:2. ‘Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense,’ &c. Here then is understood that place of the world

(namely the church) where the graces of God's people flow, and their prayers (as acceptable sacrifices) are put up to him; and so it answers the scope, and is opposed to the mountains of the world, mentioned in the eighth verse. The church is called the 'mountain of myrrh,' and 'hill of frankincense:' 1. Because it is the place, where the graces signified by these are to be found; it is only in believers they do abound. 2. Because there they abound in prayers and praises, which ascend before him as incense from a high place. 3. Because he accepts so kindly of their duties, that they are pleasant to him, and he delights to rest amongst them beyond all other places, as being a 'mountain of myrrh:' in which respect, the house of God is called the house of prayer, because of the exercise of that duty frequently performed there.

The second thing is the term he sets to the performance of this promise, in these words, 'until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me' (saith he) 'to the mountain of myrrh,' till that day; the sense is, amongst all the places of the world, the church is the place in which I will choose to reside, and with believers abounding in the exercise of grace and prayer; they shall not want my presence, for there will I abide, until the everlasting day of immediate fellowship with them break up; and so this makes for the Bride's comfort; thou mayest my spouse (saith he) expect my company, and the acceptation of thy prayers (which are an incense to me) until that day come, as thou desirest: where we may see, (besides what was spoken upon this expression, chap. 2:17.) 1. That Christ conforms his answers to our suits, and makes the one as extensive as the other; the term she proposed is that he accepts of. 2. His hearing of one prayer, gives ground to his people to expect that he will hear all their prayers, and so he is called the 'hearer of prayer' indefinitely, Psalm 65:2, and this is the reason why he says not, he will turn to her: (which would look to that one prayer, chap. 2:17) but he saith, he will 'get him to the hill of frankincense,' which looks to all her prayers, and so his answer is more extensive, than the particular sought; which shews, 3. That as Christ will not mince his answers to believers, and make them less than their prayers, so he will often enlarge them, and make them more extensive than their prayers.

Next, from this that he gives believers such a name, as the 'hill of frankincense,' which is a special way, with respect to their prayers. Observe 1. That believers ought to be very frequent in prayer, like a hill that abounds in incense. 2. That Christ's presence is ever to be found, where these spiritual sacrifices of prayers and praises abound; for, wherever he hath an altar built to

himself, and records his name, there he will come and bless his people, Exod. 20:24.

And that he sets down this by way of promise, it gives us ground to observe, 1. That even our sense of Christ's presence is in, and by, a promise; and it's the promise thereof that should comfort and satisfy the believer, even when sense is removed, and is not for the time enjoyed, John 14:21,23. 2. Christ limits himself to no other term-day, for continuing of the fulfilling, and performing of his promises, than that very time when believers shall be entered into the possession of what is promised; for I will grant thy desire (saith he) 'until the day break,' &c. that is, until the great day come, I will keep this course with believers. 3. Christ's promise of coming, and his making that sure, is one of the greatest evidences of love which he can bestow on his people. 4. There is no society or place (to speak so) but the church, nor any person in the church, but such as abound in spiritual sacrifices, who hath a promise of Christ's presence. 5. Christ would have the thoughts of eternal life, and of immediate enjoying of himself, entertained in his Bride, and would have her confirmed in the faith of it; and therefore is there here a particular repetition of the term which had been mentioned, chap. 2:17. 6. He would by this repetition also express, that (some way) he longs for that day of the consummation of the marriage, as well as she doth, and that he would gladly have all shadows gone betwixt him and her; which serves much to confirm her in the faith of it, and comfort her till it come.

Verse 7. Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.

This verse contains the last piece of the commendation which Christ gives to the Bride, and it is the scope of all; whereby, having spoken of some particular parts, he now sums up all in a general, 1. Positively expressed, 'thou art all fair, my love,' then, 2. Negatively, 'there is no spot in thee.' The reason why, thus in a general, he closes up her commendation, is to shew that his forbearing the enumeration of the rest of her parts, is not because of any defect that was in her, or that his touching of some particulars was to commend these parts only, but to shew this in general, that all of her parts, as well not named as named, were lovely. This universal commendation is not to be understood in a popish sense, as if she had had no sin; for, that will not agree with other express scriptures, nor with this Song, where she records her own faults, as chap. 1:6, and 3:1, and 5:2, 3. And also this commendation agrees to all believers, who yet are

acknowledged by themselves not to be perfect. Neither is it to be taken in an Antinomian sense, as if their sins and failings were not sins to them, and did not pollute them; for, 1. That is not consistent with the nature of sin. Nor, 2. With the Bride's regrets and confessions in this Song: nor, 3. With the present scope, which is to shew the Bride's beauty: and he doth thus highly commend her beauty, not because her sins were not sins in her, as they were in others, but because her graces were more lovely, which were not to be found in others: hence the particular parts of the new creature, or inherent holiness, are insisted on for the proof of this; further this commendation did agree to believers before Christ came in the flesh. And this love assertion, 'thou art all fair,' holds true of the Bride, in these four respects, 1. In respect of the justification and absolution; she is clean, though needing washing in other respects, John 13, 'Ye are clean by the word that I have spoken,' yet they needed to have their feet washen. Thus a believer is in a justified state, and legally clean and fair, so as there is no sin imputed to him, or to be found in him to condemn him, because the Lord hath pardoned them, Jer. 50:20. 2. It is true in respect of sanctification and inherent holiness, they are all 'fair,' that is, they are wholly renewed, there is no part but it is beautiful in respect of God's grace (though in degree it be not perfect.) Thus where grace is true, it is extended through the whole man; and makes an universal change. 3. It is true in respect of Christ's acceptation; and so where there is sincerity in the manner, he overlooks and passeth by many spots; thus 'thou art all fair,' that is, in my account thou art so; I reckon not thy spots, but esteem of thee as if thou had no spot: Christ is no severe interpreter of his people's actions; and where there is honesty, and no spots inconsistent with the state of children, Deut. 32:2, he will reckon of them, as if there were none at all. 4. It is true of Christ's Bride that she is 'all fair,' in respect of Christ's design, he will make her at last 'without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,' Eph. 5:25, &c. And because of the certainty of it, it is applied to her now, as being already entered in the possession thereof in her head, in whom she is set in heavenly places. Hence we may see, 1. The honest believer ere all be done, will be made fully fair and without spot. 2. Christ often expounds an honest believer, from his own heart-purpose and design; in which respect they get many titles, otherwise unsuitable to their present condition; and believers themselves may someway reckon so also. If all were put together, it were a great matter for a believer to conceive and apprehend these words as spoken to him in particular from Christ's mouth, thou, even, 'thou art fair,' and without this, they will want their lustre, for certainly Christ speaks so upon the matter to some, and he allows that they should believe that he speaks so unto them.

Verse 8. Come with me from Lebanon, my Spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir, and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

From this 8th verse to verse 16, follows a second way how the Bridegroom manifests his love to his Bride in other three steps, 1. He gives her a kind invitation and call, verse 8. 2. He sheweth her how he was taken with her love, and in a manner could not want the enjoyment thereof, verse 9,10. 3. Upon this occasion, he proceeds to a new commendation of her; and all of these are wonderful, being considered as spoken by him.

The invitation in this 8th verse, besides the title he gives her, (which we may take in as a motive) hath three parts. 1. The state wherein the Bride was, is set down; and this is contained in the term from which she is called. 2. The duty laid on, included in the term to which she is called. 3. The motives pressing and persuading her to give obedience thereto.

I. The term from which she is called, gets divers names, 1. Lebanon. 2. Amana. 3. Shenir, and Hermon. 4. The lions' dens, and mountains of leopards, which are added for explication of the former. Lebanon is a hill often mentioned in scripture, excellent for beauty, and therefore Christ's countenance is compared (chap. 5:5) to it: Moses desired to see the goodly Lebanon, Deut. 3:25. It was profitable for cedar-wood, and sweet in smell by the flowers that grew on it, verse 11, and Hos. 14:6. It was on the north side of Canaan, a stately place, Isa. 35:1. Therefore Solomon built his dwelling for pleasure there, in the forest of Lebanon, as some conceive, though others think it was built at Jerusalem, and gets the name of the forest of Lebanon, for the pleasantness thereof. As for Amana, we read not of it, except it be that which is mentioned, 2 Kings 5:12, called Abana, but on the margin, Amana. It is like that river there spoken of, flowed from it, which being pleasant and stately, is preferred by Naaman to Jordan, in which the prophet appointed him to wash. Next, Shenir and Hermon, were two hills (or two tops of one hill) mentioned, Deut. 3:9, beyond Jordan, pleasant and fertile, and from which they might see the land of Canaan before they crossed Jordan: and which were conquered from Og, king of Bashan. The tops also of these are mentioned, to shew their height, and she is here supposed to be on the top of them. Lastly, it

is added “from the lions’ dens, from the mountains of leopards,” not designing any new place; but shewing that lions and leopards often rove upon hills, and it is like upon these, notwithstanding all their beauty: therefore mountains are called ‘mountains of prey,’ Psalm 76:4, because wild beasts that used to make prey, often lurked in them. There is somewhat, Hab. 2:17, that confirms this, where the ‘violence of Lebanon,’ and the ‘spoil of beasts,’ is mentioned, supposing that there, beasts used violently to spoil.

2. By these ‘mountains’ here, we conceive are understood the most excellent, eminent and choice satisfactions that are to be found amongst the creatures, wherein the men of the world delight, who are often compared to ravenous beasts: and the reason is, it is something that is conceived to be excellent, that is here implied by the description, yet such as hath no true excellency in it; therefore the Bride is called from it, and commanded to look over it, even at its height, and to leave it to the men of the world, whose portion properly these heights and excellencies are, for they have not another to enjoy or look after. By lions and leopards, we understand covetous, worldly men, who pursue the world to the destruction of themselves and others; so they are often called in scripture, as Psalm 57:4, &c. 1. For their devouring insatiable nature, that can never have enough, but use always to prey on others. 2. For their unreasonable, brutish nature, being in their way like brute-beasts, rather than men, Psalm 49 *ult.* 3. For their malicious nature, that are always hurting the godly that are amongst them. Again, these heights and excellencies of the world are called the dens and mountains of these beasts, 1. Because often ungodly men have the greatest share of those, and have no more to claim unto; ‘their portion is in this life,’ Psalm 17:14. 2. Because they rest in them, and seek after no more, as lions do in their dens. These mountains then are the excellencies of the creatures; for the enjoyment of which, men often use great violence, therefore they are called, Psalm 76:5, ‘mountains of prey’ as having such beasts, as cruel men lurking in them, above which God (who is the portion of his people) is there said to be far more excellent; and thus these mountains here are opposed to the mountain of myrrh, verse 6, where Christ hath his residence. Next, the church (whose state and case is supposed to be the same naturally with the men of the world) is called from this her natural state, and from the remainders of such a frame, in two words, 1. Come, quit it, saith he, and come with me, which is the same with that command chap. 2:10, ‘Rise up and come away,’ implying the exercise of faith in him, and the delighting of herself in communion with him, (as the spouse should do with her husband) and a withdrawing from those created concernments, wherein men of the world sought their happiness. The second word is, ‘Look from

the top of these,' which word sets out faith also, so Isa. 45:19, 'Look unto me,' &c. and looking from these, signifieth her elevating and lifting of her affections higher than the highest excellencies of the earth, even towards heaven and the enjoyment of Christ, Col. 3:1,2. And so it saith, she is not to look to what is present, but to what is not seen, and coming, which is by faith only to be discerned and apprehended: and this is to be done, by looking over the tops of the highest of created excellencies. Now this word being added to the former, doth shew, that when they cannot 'come,' they are to 'look,' and that their looks are not to be fixed on created things, as their objects, but must ascend higher, as the Israelites from these mountains, Hermon and Shenir, beheld Canaan, with desire to be there.

Observe. 1. The world hath its own taking excellencies, its heights and mountains, whereby it looks very pleasant to many. 2. The most beautiful created excellency hath a palpable defect in it, the most pleasant hill hath a wild lion lodging in it, that mars all the satisfaction that can be found there to a believer: God hath wisely so ordered, that every gourd to them hath a worm at its root. 3. Often the men of the world are much taken with these created excellencies; they love to live in them, and dwell in them, as beasts in their dens, and know no higher design to drive, than their satisfaction in created excellencies yea, 4. Believers are in hazard to fall into this sin, when things go well with them in the world, they are ready to sit down there; therefore are they here called upon, that this hazard may be prevented. 5. Addictedness to the world, when men excessively pursue either after its gain, honour, applause, or pleasure, transforms men into beasts, and makes them irrational, brutish, and violent, forgetting what should be their main work and end. 6. Often violence towards others, and oppression with much cruelty, is the fruit of addictedness to the things of the world: if he profit himself, such a man cares not whom he undo. 7. There is nothing more unreasonable, bitter and cruel, than a worldly Atheist, whose designs are only after things that are within time; they are lions and leopards. 8. Carnal men are often by their neighbourhood to the saints exceeding troublesome, even as lions in a mountain. 9. Addictedness to the world, and a surfeit with its contentments, can hardly stand with fellowship with Christ, and is most unbecoming his Bride; therefore he calls her from it. 10. Believers have, and ought to have a more high, noble, and excellent design, than the greatest conqueror that ever was in the world; the believer in this is beyond Alexander the great, who desired more created worlds; but he looks over from the highest top of all these, as undervaluing them, and longing to be at something else. 11. Believers should have their looks directed towards heaven, and their thoughts and affections

(even before hand) should be fixed there, Col. 3:1; Phil. 3:20,21, their face should be set that way. 12. It is faith that looks toward Christ, as coming, when he is for the time absent; and when believers cannot win to walk and move towards him, they may look to him; and sure, Christ who calls for this, will accept of it, till the other be attained. 13. Often in the most excellent parts of this world, such as 'Lebanon, Hermon,' &c. men are most cruel and carnal; and the Bride of Christ hath most enemies, and fewest friends. 14. The most excellent of created contentments, for profit, honour, and pleasure, should be denied and forsaken when Christ calls. 15. There is nothing a believer should watch more against, (as that which mars fellowship with Christ) than taking excessive contentment in created things. 16. Often a condition which abounds in worldly contentments and delights, is very scarce of Christ's company; therefore when he allows her his presence, he calls her to leave them, in her affection at least.

3. Because he knows the world is most bewitching and the affections of his Bride are not so soon weaned from it (though this be most necessary) therefore three ways he presseth her to deny herself in these, and follow him (which is the sum of the call.) 1. Saith he, thou art 'my Spouse,' that is, my Bride: it is the same word which (Jer. 2:32.) is translated Bride, 'can a Bride forget her attire?' This title is frequently given her in this chapter, and verse 1, chap. 5. Importing, 1. A marriage-tie and relation betwixt him and her. 2. Love in him, owning that relation, and claiming thereby an interest in .her. 3. A duty in her to own him as her husband, and to forsake all her lovers, that she go not a whoring after any other, as a wife should cleave to her husband: it is the same with what is pressed, Psalm 65:10, &c. My Spouse (saith he) thou hast not thy portion in the world therefore come away from it. 2. He presseth it from the advantage of his own company, which she should enjoy upon her obeying his call: 'come with me' (saith he) my Spouse, and this is repeated, 'come with me,' that is, thou art mine, and I am thy husband, wilt thou not then come with me, 'with me?' This is a weighty argument, and none will prevail, if this do not; Christ's company should have more weight and be of more force to engage a believer to Christ, than all the pleasantness of the world can have to divert them: he is more excellent by far than the 'mountains of prey.' Psalm 76:4, therefore is his company to be preferred to them all. 3. He presseth it, from the heartless condition which she could not but have in the most excellent things in the world without Christ, they were but 'dens of lions,' not for her to stay with, nor yet any way agreeing with her state and case. Hence observe, 1. When Christ and the most excellent things in the world are opposed, there will be great odds, and a vast difference seen betwixt them. 2. All the defects that abound in created excellencies, should necessitate the believer

to take himself to Christ, there is no satisfaction for him till he come there. 3. Men have no great loss that loose their affections from the world, and set them on Christ; it is but leaving the dens of lions, &c. and coming to him, who is more 'excellent than all the mountains of prey.'

We may also read these words, by way of promise, 'thou shalt come with me;' and the scope will not be against this, it being no less an evidence of Christ's love, and no less comfortable to the church, to have his promise, than to have his call; and all his calls having promises implied in them, both will well agree. And so that which is set down by way of precept, Rom. 6:12, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body,' is set down by way of promise, verse 14, of that chapter, 'sin shall not have dominion over you.'

Verse 9. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my Spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

10. How fair is thy love, my sister, my Spouse! How much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments, than all spices!

Although what Christ hath spoken in the former verse be wonderful, yet these expressions, verse 9,10, being spoken by Jesus Christ to a poor sinful creature, passeth admiration: they may be looked on as the reason of his former call and promise, he thus seriously invites her to come to him, because he cannot want her company; for, his heart is ravished with her. The scope in both verses is the same, but is more clearly expressed, verse 10. Not so much setting forth the church's loveliness (though that is not to be excluded) as his loving-kindness, who is admirably affected towards her, as every word in matter and manner of both shews. In them consider, 1. The titles given her, which are the same in both verses. 2. What is asserted, and that is, that his heart is ravished. 3. The manner how this is expressed, in a sort of holy passion, doubling the expression. 4. Wherewith it is his heart is so ravished, it is (saith he) 'with one of thine eyes,' &c. in the end of the 9th verse, and more fully amplified, verse 10.

The titles are two; one of them, namely that she is his ‘Spouse,’ hath been spoken of; but his repeating of it, shews a kind of glorying in it, as being very much delighted therewith. The other title, ‘my sister,’ is added, and it doth import these five things, 1. A condescending upon Christ’s part to be thus joined in kindred to the believer, and so it takes in his incarnation, whereby he was made ‘in all things like to his brethren,’ Heb. 2:17. Our blessed Lord Jesus is man, believers are his brethren and sisters, they are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh; and for his Bride’s consolation this is asserted. 2. A privilege whereto she is advanced upon her part, and that is, that by adoption believers are become sons and daughters to the Lord God Almighty, not only friends but children, and so ‘heirs,’ and ‘joint heirs’ with Jesus Christ, Rom. 8:17. So as now they are as brethren and sisters, which is an unspeakable advancement. 3. It imports a change of nature, as well as of state in believers, so that they partake of the divine nature and Spirit with Christ Jesus, as it is, Heb. 2:11, ‘He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are of one;’ which is a special ground of his sibness and kindred to believers, not common to others, but special to them, and founded on their sanctification. 4. It implies sympathy, friendliness, and a kindly esteem in him that takes her up and speaks of her, and to her, in all the most sweet relations of ‘mother sister, Spouse,’ &c. Matt. 12:ult. 5. It shews his owning of all these relations; he is not ashamed to call believers, ‘sisters’ and ‘brethren,’ Heb. 2:11. *Observe.* 1. There are many wonderful, near, and sweet relations betwixt Christ and the believer. 2. Christ is the most faithful owner of them, and is in a most friendly way forth-coming to them, according to them all.

2. The thing asserted here, is, ‘Thou hast ravished my heart:’ The word in the first language is one, and it signifieth, ‘Thou hast hearted me,’ or so to speak, ‘Thou hast unhearted me;’ it is no where in scripture, but here; Christ’s unspeakable love, as it were, coins new words to discover itself by, it is so unexpressible: The word is borrowed from the passionateness of love, when it seizes deeply on a man, it leaves him not master of his own heart, but the object loved hath it, and (as it were) possesseth it, and commands it more than the man himself; so the gospel saith, ‘where a man’s treasure is’ (that is, the thing a man esteems most of) ‘there’ (as it were) ‘his heart is,’ and not in the party that loves. Matt. 8:21. So the common phrase is, such a man hath my heart, when he is dearly beloved; and thus in a subtile way, Absalom is said to have ‘stolen away the hearts of the people from his Father.’ It is in sum, ‘my Spouse thou hast my heart,’ thou hast won it, and as it were by violence taken it away, I am not master of it, I cannot but love thee.

It is hard to draw observations, that may suitably express the thing here spoken of; only we may hint at these things. 1. Love in Christ to a believer, hath strong and wonderful effects on him, in reference to them. 2. The believer hath Christ's heart, he hath a seat in his affection, he possesseth his love (for no other thing hath his heart) and he may promise himself from Christ, whatever he can desire for his good, even as if he had his heart under his command; for (so to speak) he can refuse believers nothing, which they seek, and which he knows to be for their good. 3. Love in Christ to a believer, it is at a height, or, it is a love of the highest degree: there is no greater intenseness thereof imaginable; for to have the 'heart ravished,' is the expression of the greatest love.

3. The manner how he expreseth this, is by doubling the expression, 'Thou hast ravished my heart--thou hast ravished my heart:' and this is to shew, that this word fell not rashly from him, but was drawn out by the vehemency of affection in him. 2. That he allows believers to believe this great love and affection he hath to them, and would have them dwelling on the believing thoughts of it; and therefore, he doubles the expression while he intimates his love unto them: only remember there are no disorderly passions in Christ, as in us; yet, that there is sympathy and love in him, and passionate effects of love from him, cannot be denied.

The fourth thing is, wherewith it is his heart is so ravished: it may be thought it is some great thing that thus prevails over Christ: now what it is, is set down in two expressions, which are joined to the former, to make this love of his the more wonderful; that which was conquered, or ravished, was 'his heart;' that which doth it, is her eye, the eye or the look of a poor sinful creature, even of such a person as maybe despised in the world, and Lazarus full of sores, and not admitted to men's company. It is not with 'both her eyes,' but (saith he) with 'one of thine eyes,' that is (as it were) with a squint-look; a side-look of the Bride prevailed thus with him. One eye is not there mentioned, as preferring the beauty of one of her eyes to the other; but to shew what excellent beauty is in her, and much more what infinite love is in him, that he could not (because he would not) resist a look of one of her eyes cast toward him. We shew what is understood by eyes, verse 1, and it is explained in the following verse, to hold forth love especially here, (lovers using to signify affection by their eyes) yet it takes in knowledge, as being presupposed; and faith as going along with it. The second expression is, 'with one chain of thy neck:' these chains are spoken of, chap. 1:10. Whereby we shew, was signified her inherent holiness, with imputed

righteousness, which by faith she possessed; and so here also it signifies her graces, especially her exercising faith on him, for so the neck was expounded, verse 9, to be understood of faith, which joined the believer to Christ as his head: and it is said to have chains, because it never wants excellent fruits, wherewith it is adorned, when it is exercised. One chain is spoken of, not as if she had not had more, or as if he did not respect them all, but to hold forth this, that one of her chains (as it were) did overcome him; and so it maybe gathered, what will both eyes do, and more chains, when one so prevails.

The scope then here doth shew, 1. That Christ is easily prevailed with by his people, O how easily is he overcome by them, who have love to him, and faith in him! 2. That Christ stands not on the degree of his people's graces, nor doth he suspend his love and acceptance of a person, upon such or such a degree; but wherever reality and sincerity are, if it were in the meanest degree, and but one look, or one chain, he will yield to it, and accept of it. 3. It is to provoke and encourage believers to cast a look to Christ, when they find their faith to be so weak that they can do no more; and to confirm them in the expectation of good from him freely, without any rigid reckoning; it is not only the strong believer, and the strong acts of faith and love, that prevail with Christ, but he condescends to be overcome, even by the weakest, with whom the sincerity of these graces is to be found.

This is further followed and explicated, verse 10, and that two ways, 1. By an indefinite question, 'how fair is thy love!' 2 By two comparative questions, whereby in two similitudes, her love is preferred to the most excellent things, 'how much better,' &c. The thing commended, is, 'her love,' that is, the love wherewith she loves him, wherewith her heart breathes after him, delights in him, esteems him, and is zealous to please him, &c. The commendation he gives her love, is, that it is 'fair.' And by the way we may observe, that this clearly shews, that by all the former parts of her beauty, are understood spiritual graces: now (saith he) 'thy love is fair,' that is, it is lovely and acceptable to me: as beauty and fairness are much esteemed among men: so this grace of love is a beautiful thing in Christ's Bride. The manner of the expression is by way of question, and admiration, 'how fair!' I can get nothing (saith he) to compare it with a wonder, that Christ should be so taken with the love of sinners, as to admire it, or think that their love exceeds all expression; for, so men use to express what they cannot express: but this doth indeed shew, that the height and depth, and length and breadth of that love, which Christ hath to believing sinners, passeth all

knowledge, and is beyond all words. *Observe.* 1. That a believer is one that loves Christ, and true faith hath always this grace of love joined to it. 2. That love where it is sincere and true, is a property of Christ's Bride and Spouse, there are no other in the world who love him, but those who are espoused to him. 3. Where love to Christ is, there Christ loves; he cannot but love them, that love him, and there is nothing more acceptable to him, than the faith that is working by love. 4. Our Lord Jesus takes special notice of the frame of the heart, and what seat he hath in the affections of his people, he lays more weight on their love, than on their work, though true love can never be without works.

The second way how he explains and illustrates this, is more particular, by two comparisons, yet keeping still the former manner of expression, by way of question and admiration: the first is, 'how much better is thy love than wine!' Wine may be looked on in two respects, 1. As it is useful in man's life, and refreshful, Psalm 104:15, 'It maketh glad the heart of man, and Eccles. 5:19, 'It maketh the heart merry:' wine is one of the most comfortable creatures, therefore she calls 'his love better than wine,' chap. 1:2. Thus observe, 1. Christ will not be behind with his people, neither in kindness, nor in the expressions of it; for, this is beyond hers, chap. 1. 2. Not that he hath a better object to love, but because the love wherewith he loves her, is like himself, and more excellent than hers. 3. There is no such refreshful thing in all the work of creation to Christ, no such feast, as the warming of a sinner's heart with love to him is: this (Luke 7:47.) is thought more of by Christ in a poor woman, than all the great feast he was invited unto by the rich Pharisee.

Again, we may look on wine as used in the ceremonial services and drink-offerings, Levit. 23:13, &c. Thus the meaning is, thy love is preferable to all outward performances and sacrifices, as Hos. 6:7. Love being the principle within, from which all our performances should flow, it is not opposed to sacrifice simply or to obedience; but, 1. Supposing these to be separate, he prefers love; if it were to cast in but a mite of duty out of love, it will be more acceptable than the greatest bulk of duties without love, as is clear in the case of the widow, Luke 21. Yea, if men would 'give their bodies to be burnt,' with out this, 1 Cor. 13:3. it will avail nothing. 2. It saith, that where both the inward principles, and the outward fruit or work are, the Lord respects that more than this, and he respects this in a manner but for that.

The second comparison is to the same purpose in these words, 'and the smell of thine ointments than all spices.' Ointments typified the graces of the Spirit, the pouring out whereof, is called, 'the unction,' John 2:20, and 'the oil of joy,' Psalm 45:7. The 'smell' thereof signifieth the acceptableness of these graces, when in exercise: our Lord Jesus finds a sweet savour in them, as ointments cast a smell that is refreshful to men (as we said upon chap. 3:6.) the grace of love mentioned before is here included; but under 'ointments' there is more comprehended, to shew, 1. That where one grace is, there are all the rest of the graces of the Spirit to found. 2. That love to Christ, and zeal for him, holds believers stirring, and makes them send forth a sweet and savoury smell. This smell is preferred 'to all spices,' not to one or two, but to all: spices were either used as gifts, because they were precious and costly; so the queen of Sheba propined Solomon with them, 2 Kings 10:2, and the wise men offered such to Christ, Matt. 2:11. And so it saith, there is no such propine can be offered to Christ, as love, and the graces of the Spirit, when they are in exercise. Again, spices were used in the Levitical services, and holy oil, Exod. 30:23, 24, and so they are to be considered as wine was in the last sense formerly spoken of, and it shews how preferable the inward exercise of grace, is to all external duties. Lastly, They are not only preferred while he saith, 'thy love is better,' &c. but as passing comparison, they are extolled far above all these things with which they are compared, How fair, or how much better is thy love than wine! &c. O my Spouse (saith he) it is not to be wondered that thy love ravishes my heart; for, there no is created thing so precious, nor any external service so acceptable to me, as it is. Hence observe, 1. That inward love, or the inward exercise of grace, and outward performances are separable. 2. That when outward performances are separate from the inward exercise of love and other graces, the Lord respects them not. 3. That love is a good and necessary principle of all duties and especially of the duties of worship. 4. Those who have any thing of the lively exercise of love to Christ, want never a propine that will be acceptable to him; if it were but a mite, or a cup of cold water, or a look to Christ, if love be the principle from which these flow, they will be very acceptable with him.

*Verse 11. Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb
honey and milk are under thy tongue, and the smell of thy
garments is like the smell of Lebanon.*

Having thus expressed his affection to his Bride, he breaks forth in a positive commendation of her (which may be looked upon as the ground of the comparative commendation in the former verse) and he describes and commends her at once, these two ways, 1. Touching, as it were, at some particulars (which are indeed generals) wherein her loveliness appears in actual fruits, verse 11. 2. In seven comparisons he holds forth her fruitfulness from the 12 to the 16 verse, wherein he not only commends her by the fruits which she brings forth, but from her fitness or aptitude to bring forth these fruits, so that she cannot but be fruitful; as if one commending an orchard from the fruit, apples, pomegranates, &c. or whatever other fruits are in orchards, should then fall upon the commendation of the orchard itself, in its situation, fences, waters, or kinds of the plants, &c. so is it here. And this last commendation, is to be looked upon as the cause of the former.

In this 11th verse there are three particulars commended: under which we conceive much of the series of a believer's walk is understood. The 1. is her 'lips:' which are commended from this, that they 'drop as the honey-comb.' By lips, as verse 3, and frequently in the Song (and so in the Proverbs, a man of lips is taken for a man of talk) is understood her speech, words or discourse, especially to others. These her words (or her speech) are compared for the matter, to 'honey' or 'the honey-comb,' that is sweet, nourishing, healthful and pleasant as Prov. 16:24, 'Pleasant words are as the honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones:' and by 'honey' in scripture, is often understood that which is excellent, and useful for the life of man: and therefore it was a property of Canaan, that it flowed with milk and honey, which are put together in the following piece of her commendation. 2. Her speech or words, are commended from the manner, or qualification of them, 'they drop as the honey-comb,' &c. Dropping words signify, 1. Seasonable words, which are like dew, dropping for the edification of others, as dew by its dropping makes the fields fruitful. 2. Prudence and moderation in discourse, and so dropping is opposed to floods, that with violence overflow. 3. This phrase signifieth a continuance in seasonable, prudent, and edifying discourse, as Job 27:22, 'My words dropped on them,' and Deut. 31:2, 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain:' Thus 'the lips of the wise feed many,' Prov. 10:21. *Observe.* 1. A believer's words tend to edification, and are for the true

benefit and advantage of others. 2. Every subject is not the matter of their discourse; but, as the 'honey,' it is excellent and choice, and that which ministereth grace to the hearers. 3. Mens' words give a great proof of what is in them; and when rightly ordered, they are a good evidence of their love and respect to Christ. 4. A well ordered tongue is a most commendable thing before Christ, and every word that proceeds from the mouth, is observed by him. 5. Christ's Spouse should be observably different, as to her words and discourse, from all others, 'Thy lips, O my Spouse' (saith he) 'drop as the honey-comb:' implying, that whatever be the way of others, it becomes the Spouse of Christ, to have her words seasonable, savoury, and edifying.

The second thing here commended, reacheth more inwardly, and it is in these words, 'honey and milk are under thy tongue:' there will be sometimes smooth words as butter, when there is much venom within; it is not so with Christ's Bride. By 'under the tongue,' which is the part commended, we understand the heart or inward man, as it is distinguished from the bare expression of the tongue or words, which are only spoken (as we say) from the teeth forward: so, Psalm 66:17, He was exalted under my tongue, (as it is in the original) is expounded in the following verse, by 'heart-regarding:' there was an agreement betwixt his words and his heart, without which God would not have accepted his words. And seeing, when it is said of the wicked, that mischief and vanity are under their tongue, Psalm 10:7; Rom. 3:13, whereby their deceitful rotten heart, and the venom that is within is signified; so here must be understood inward sincerity, and a good frame of heart within, as well as good words without. The commendation is, that there are 'milk and honey under her tongue:' it is almost the same with the former; as her words were edifying, so there was much edifying matter in her heart, or under her tongue; the honey-comb (as it were) was there, and it by words dropped to others. 'Milk' is added, because it is also sweet and nourishing. In a word, that which he here points at, is, that her inward constitution and frame is like a Canaan, flowing with milk and honey; so fertile and fruitful is Christ's Bride, Here, observe, 1. That Christ takes not only notice of words, but of what is under the words; the disposition and frame of the heart, and the thoughts thereof are observed by him. 2. There is a suitableness often betwixt the heart within, and the words without; when there is honey under the tongue, then the tongue cannot but drop, for, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 3. It is a most commendable thing in the believer, when the inner-man is right, in a lively and edifying frame, and when the heart is watched over, so that no thought enters in, or word goes forth, but what is edifying. 4. The heart should be furnished with edifying, profitable purpose and thoughts, as well as the mouth

with pertinent and useful words; and that is as the fountain, from which this must run and flow. 5. They will feed and edify others best by their words, who feed best upon the most healthful subjects, and savoury thoughts themselves.

The third thing commended, is, ‘the smell of her garments:’ garments are that which cover our nakedness, and are for decoration externally put upon the body; sometimes by them is understood Christ’s righteousness, which we are said to put on, Gal. 3:27, sometimes our own inherent holiness, which makes our way comely before others, and hides our nakedness from them; so, Job 29:19, saith, ‘I put on righteousness, and it clothed me:’ Now, here it is to be taken especially in the last sense (though not only) as setting forth the outward adorning of her walk with holiness; and this is the third part of her commendation, distinguished from the other two, which pointed at her words and thoughts. And so it is the practice of holiness that is here commended, which is compared to ‘garments,’ because good works are called the clothing of such as profess godliness, 1 Tim. 2:9, and 1 Pet. 3:3, 4. The ‘smell’ of them, is the savour and relish of these good works to others, and also to him; even as it is said, that Jacob’s garments did smell to his father (to which this may allude) so our holiness, being washed in the blood of the Lamb, is very savoury to him, and is also savoury to others; yea, the smell thereof is as ‘the smell of Lebanon,’ which was a hill that abounded with trees and flowers, exceeding savoury and delightsome: whereas a corrupt conversation, is exceeding unsavoury, as rottenness and dead mens’ bones. In sum, this completes believers’ commendation, when their words are edifying, their heart answerable to their words in true sincerity, and their outward walk adorning to the gospel, so as their natural nakedness and pollution appears not in it. *Observe.* 1. Where there is true holiness within, it will appear in the fruits of holiness without. 2. There is no garment or clothing that can adorn or beautify men, as holiness doth a believer. 3. Though outward profession alone be not all, yet is it necessary for the completing the commendation of a believer. 4. Although good works be not the ground of our relation to Christ, but follows on it, and though it be not on the account of our works, that the Lord is pleased with us to justify us; yet are the good works of a believer and of a justified person, when done in faith, acceptable to God, and an odour and sweet savour to him. Phil. 4:18.

Verse 12. A garden inclosed is my Sister, my Spouse: a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

Having thus summed up her carriage in the former three-fold commendation, now he proceeds both to describe and commend her, by a seven-fold comparison, wherein (to say so) the rhetoric of our Lord's love abounds: each of them may point out these three things, 1. They describe somewhat the nature of a believer, or Christ's Bride. 2. They evidence Christ's love and care, which he hath to ward her. 3. They hold forth her duty in reference to herself. We shall shortly explain them, as they relate to this scope.

In this 12th verse, we have three of these comparisons, whereby she is described and commended. 1. She is compared to a 'garden enclosed:' a garden is a plot of ground, separate from other places, for delight and recreation of the owner, having many flowers in it, and much pains taken on it: so believers are, 1. Set a-part by God beside all others in the world, and much pains is taken on them; the trees in Christ's garden are digged about and dunded, Luke 13:8. 2. They are his delight, being separate from others for his own use, with whom he dwells, in whom he takes pleasure, and amongst whom he feeds, chap. 6:2. 3. They are furnished with many excellent graces, fruits of the Spirit, which are planted in them as flowers in a garden, Gal. 5:21. Next, this garden is 'inclosed:' it is a special property of gardens to be so. To be inclosed, is by a wall or hedge to be fenced from the trampling and eating up of beasts, and also from the hazard of winds; so, Isa. 5:2, the 'vineyard of the Lord of hosts,' (which is his church) is said to be fenced, a wall is built about it, to defend it from the danger of beasts, and storms. And this sheweth, 1. His care of her, in watching over her, Isa. 27:23. And, 2. Her watchfulness over herself, whereby she is not common or accessible to every one; but as she is defended by his care, so also she hath a watch herself at the door of her lips, of her eyes, of her ears, &c. she is not like a city without walls, obnoxious to every assault and temptation, but hath a hedge of divine protection, which is as a wall of fire about her to defend her; and also a guard of watchfulness and holy fear, in the exercise of which the believer hath rule over his own spirit, which (Prov. 25:28) is implied to be as strong walls about a city.

The second similitude wherewith she is compared, is 'a spring shut up:' springs were of great price in those hot countries, and served much for making gardens fruitful, as is implied, Isa. 58:11, where it is promised to the church, 'thou

shalt be as a watered garden:’ hence the righteous is called, ‘like a tree planted by the rivers of waters,’ Psalm 1:3, and on the contrary, the barren condition of his people is described, Isa. 1:30, by the similitude of ‘a garden, that hath no water.’ In a word, she is not only a garden, but a spring, that is furnished with moisture and water, for making her fruitful. More particularly, by this may be set out the graces of the Spirit, compared to waters, John 7:38, 39, and said to become ‘a well of water’ in those that believe in Christ, John 4:14, for, these graces of the Spirit, and his influence on them, doth keep all things in the believer’s soul’s case fresh and lively, as a spring doth make a garden green and fruitful. Next, this spring is ‘shut up,’ for so were springs in these countries, where they were rare, as we see by Jacob’s rolling the stone away, Gen. 29:8. And this kept the waters from being corrupted by the sun, and also from being bemudded by beasts: this signifieth the preciousness of the graces and influences of the Spirit, wherewith believers are furnished. 2. Pureness and clearness in them, as in waters that are not bemudded. 3. A care she hath to keep them pure from carnal passions, or fruits of her own spirit, that would bemud all.

The third comparison is on the matter the same, but adds a further degree to the former; she is (saith he) ‘a fountain sealed:’ a fountain may signify waters springing in greater abundance; and sealing doth signify not only shutting up, but securing it by a seal, after it is shut up so the den of lions was sealed, after Daniel was cast into it, Dan. 6:17. And the stone was sealed, that was put on Christ’s grave, that so it might not be opened by any, but by those that sealed it. And though there be other uses of sealing, yet we conceive that which is aimed at here, is, 1. To shew that the church is not common, but well kept and sealed, so that none can trouble believers’ peace without Christ’s leave, who hath ‘sealed them by his Spirit to the day of redemption,’ Eph. 4:30, &c. 2. To shew Christ’s particular right to the church and her graces, and his owning of her and them, she bears his seal (as the one hundred and forty four thousand, Rev. 7, are sealed) there is none but himself, that hath access to these waters; her graces and fruits are all reserved for him, chap. 7:13. 3. It shews (to say so) her closeness, and resolute watchfulness, so that there is no gaining upon her to bemud her condition without advertency and observation, more than waters can be drawn from a sealed fountain, the seal not being broken: like that phrase, Prov. 5:15, ‘Drink out of thine own cistern, let them be thine own,’ &c. She hath her own distinct fountain, from which she draws influences, and that she preserves and secures to herself. 4. It shews a kind of sacredness in this fountain, so that nothing may meddle with it, more than that which is marked and separated by a seal. In sum, the first comparison shews that Christ’s Bride or the believer is to be fruitful. The second,

what makes her fruitful, the spring of the Spirit. The third shews her care to keep it clear, and to have it running and flowing, that she may be fruitful.

Verse 13. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard;

14. Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh, and aloes, with all the chief spices.

The fourth comparison follows, verses 13, 14, wherein she is compared to an orchard (as before to a garden) planted with divers and excellent plants. Now this includes these three things, which he adds to the former commendation, 1. That the believer hath many graces, he is an orchard that is planted with many trees and plants. 2. That the believer's graces, as they are many, so they are various; and therefore trees and spices of divers sorts are reckoned here. 3. That the believer's graces are excellent for kind, as well as many for number and variety, they are as 'spikenard, saffron,' &c. 'with all the chief spices.' And as it commends an orchard, to have many plants, and great variety, and to want none; so to have them of the best kinds, adds much to the commendation, when it is fruitful of these. Thus the believer is furnished with many various graces of the Spirit, as plants planted in his soul, and these of the best kind, rising from the most excellent seed that can be, the Spirit of Christ. And so the graces of believers are rare and precious, in respect of any thing that natural men have, which are but like shrubs in a dry wilderness.

Besides these, we may further observe, 1. That to have fruit, and abundance of fruit, will not prove one to be a believer, except it be choice fruit which he brings forth. 2. Believers' fruits, and the graces that are in them, differ from the most excellent parts and gifts that can be in natural men, or most refined hypocrites. 3. It is excellent and commendable, when all the graces of the Spirit flow and increase together in the believer.

It is like, the Holy Ghost may here signify the effects and properties of divers graces, by these several spices and fruits; and, it may be, Solomon understood the particular signification of every one of them; for, having so great

an insight in natural and spiritual things, it is like he did not conjecturally, but on knowledge, mention such spices and no others; but we must hold on the general they are precious, medicinal, savoury and delectable fruits, and so are the graces of the Spirit to one that path them, to others they converse with, and to Christ in respect of his acceptation; they are like an orchard, or garden, that abounds with these: this is the scope, wherein we rest.

Verse 15. A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh similitudes, are contained in this verse, wherein the Lord, following the same scope, further insists and explains what manner of fountain this is, which makes the believer so fruitful. 1. She is ‘a fountain of gardens.’ A fountain was spoken of, verse 12, whereby is signified an inward principle (to say so) or spring, which from within sendeth forth and furnisheth waters: here she is called ‘a fountain of gardens,’ she was called a garden, verse 12, here ‘a fountain of gardens’ in the plural number. By this is holden forth, 1. The end of grace in a believer, it is given him, not only for himself, but also for the use of others, as the gifts of the Spirit are given to everyone ‘to profit withal,’ 1 Cor. 11:7. 2. It shews that believers act and exercise their graces for others’ edification, as a fountain that someway is common for the use of more gardens, and so it points out what public spirits they should have, intending the edification of all to whom they can conveniently communicate their gifts and graces. 3. It shews the abundance of spirit and life (to say so) wherewith Christ’s Bride is furnished, so as she may communicate for the admonishing, strengthening, and edifying of others with herself, as it is, Rom. 15:14, where believers are said to be full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another.

The sixth similitude is, ‘A well of living waters:’ this is not only to difference her from a cistern that hath water, but hath no spring in it, but also to show the nature of the Spirit of grace in believers, it proves quickening and healing to those that have it: both these are held forth, John 4:14. He that drinks of this ‘water shall never thirst,’ for it shall be in him ‘a well of living water, springing up to eternal life.’ So is it also, John 7:38,39, where the Spirit of grace is, it will be springing; and grace will never dry up, where it is true.

The last similitude is, 'And streams from Lebanon:' which saith, that Christ's Bride is not only a fountain, but also she is a stream: and it holdeth forth, 1. That grace in her hath its rise from another, though it beget a spring in her, as if Lebanon sent a stream to a garden, which did become a spring by its constant flowing there. 2. By a stream also is set forth the abundance of grace in believers, it is in them not as a brook, but as a stream. Next, Lebanon was a hill much commended, it is like sweet streams issued from it: it is written that Jordan which watered much of the land, had its rise and spring there. In the 5th chapter, verse 15, Christ's countenance is compared to Lebanon, and so here, while the flowing of grace in her is called a stream from Lebanon, the derivation of grace, and of the Spirit from Christ Jesus is holden forth; which though it have a seat, and becomes a fountain in the believer, yet it hath its rise from him, and is kept flowing and springing by him; it is as a fountain derived by a stream from Lebanon, and otherwise any spring of grace, that is in a believer would soon run dry. All these being put together, and compared with what is before, shew, 1. That the believer is fitted by Christ not only with spiritual life, and a stock of habitual graces, but also with every thing that may make him lively and fruitful in the exercise of these. 2. This contrivance of spiritual influence that makes believers fruitful, is a most lovely and excellent thing. 3. The great commendation of believers is grounded upon the graces of the Spirit that is in them, and upon the influences of the same Spirit that comes from Christ to them. 4. Where grace is, it will have fruits, and be savoury in the conversation, in the exercise thereof. 5. It is the best evidence of grace, and of Christ's influence and Spirit, when it appeareth in the fruits, these prove the believer to be an orchard and a fountain. 6. Those graces that make a believer fruitful, have not their rise in, or from a believer, but from Christ, and the fountain that is in them, is but a stream that comes from him.

BRIDE.

Verse 16. Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

Christ having now been large in commending the Bride, she steps to in this verse (as it were, taking the opportunity of his nearness) and puts up her desires to to him, briefly in two suits, which are grounded on the commendation that he gives her, and shews what is the great design that she aims at now when she hath Christ's ear; and she follows these suits so, as she acknowledgeth all her fruitfulness (for which she is commended) to flow from him, and to depend on him, who is therefore so much the more to be commended and extolled himself. In sum, the sense is this, though I be a garden (saith she) and have good plants, habitually in me, yet will they not bud nor flow, nor can they be fruitful except the Spirit (which is as the stream from Lebanon) blow to make them so; therefore, O Spirit come, and let me partake of thy influences and breathings, that my beloved may have an invitation thereby, to come; and when come, may be entertained upon his own fruits.

The first petition is, for liveliness and fruitfulness: the second is, for the beloved's presence, which is the end of the former. And these two, life and sense, are (as it were) the air that kindly-believers love to breathe into. That both these are the Bride's words, may thus be collected. 1. Because they look prayer-like, and it is more suitable to her to say, 'come,' than for him: yea the Spirit being invited, 'to come,' to the garden, it is clear the party that speaks hath need of his presence: and that it is not said go, but 'come,' with reference to the necessity of the party that speaks, doth make it evident, that it cannot be spoken by the Bridegroom, but by the Bride; for, so the phrase every where, and in the next, words, 'let my beloved come,' imports. 2. That the last part of the verse is her suit, none can deny; and there is no reason to conceive two different parties, seeing both the matter of the suits, and the manner of speaking, will agree to the same party.

In the first petition, we may consider these two, 1. The thing sought. 2. The end wherefore that which she seeks and prays for, is held forth, as it were, in three steps or degrees, in three expressions, 'awake, O north wind, come thou south, blow upon my garden.' For understanding whereof, we are to look, 1. What these 'winds' signify. 2. What this 'garden' is. And, 3. What these acts, of 'awaking, coming' and 'blowing' are. By winds often in scripture is understood the Spirit of God in his mighty operations, as Ezek. 37:3, and 14. And the special work and operation of the Spirit is compared to wind, 1. For its purifying nature. 2. For its cooling, comforting, refreshing power and efficacy. 3. For its fructifying virtue, winds being especially in those hot countries, both exceeding refreshful,

and also useful to make trees and gardens fruitful. Lastly, for its undiscernible manner of working, as John 2:6, 'the wind blows where it listeth,' &c. yet hath this operation real effects with it. And it is clear that the Spirit is here intended, because it is the Spirit's blowing that only can make the spices or graces of a believer to flow, as the wind doth the seeds and flowers in a garden. Next, by 'north and south wind,' are understood the same Spirit, being conceived and taken up in respect of his divers operations (as it's, 1 Cor. 12:6,7,8, &c. and therefore called 'the seven Spirits of God,' Rev. 1:4,) sometimes cooling, and in a sharper manner nipping, as the north-wind, sometimes working in his people more softly and warmly, and in a still and quiet manner like the south-wind; yet, as both winds are useful, for the purging and making fruitful of a garden; so are the divers operations of the Spirit, to the souls of believers. In a word, hereby is understood, the different operations of the Spirit, whether convincing and mortifying, or quickening and comforting, &c. both which contribute to make her lively and fruitful, which is the scope of her petition.

2. By 'garden,' is understood the believer, called a garden, verse 12, and an orchard, verse. 13, because the believer doth abound in divers graces, as a garden doth in many flowers. And she calls it 'my garden,' as he calleth the plants her plants, that were planted there, verse 13, and as she called the vineyard hers, chap. 1:6. and 8:12, which also is his, verse 11, as also this garden is called his in the following words, chap. 6:1. It is his by propriety, as the heritor and purchaser: as also, all these grace, in her are hers as being the servant that hath the oversight of them, and who hath gotten them as talents to trade with for the Master's use. All that we have, viz. a soul, gifts, graces, &c. are given to us as talents, which we are to dress for bringing forth fruit to the owner, as the following words do clear.

3. The actings and workings of the Spirit, are held forth in three words, which are so many branches of her petition. The first is, 'awake.' This word is often used by God's people in dealing with him, 'awake, put on thy strength, O arm of the Lord,' &c. Isa. 51:9. It is not as if the Spirit were at any time a-sleeping, but she desires that by some effects, sensible to her, he would let it be known he is stirring. The second word, 'come,' is to the same purpose: the Spirit considered in himself, cannot be said to come or go, being every where present; but this is to be understood, in respect of the effects of his presence, and so he is said to come and go: thus, while she saith, 'come,' the meaning is, let me find some sign of thy presence, quickening and stirring my graces. The last word is, 'blow upon my garden:' blowing holds forth the operation, whereby the Spirit

produceth his effects in believers; It is not the Spirit himself, nor the fruits of the Spirit that are in believers, that are here understood, but the operation of the Spirit, whereby, he influenceth, or (if we may so speak) infuseth them (as God breathed into Adam the breath of life) and whereby he stirs, excites, and quickens them for acting. The prayer then, is directed to the Spirit (as Rev. 1:14.) considering the Spirit essentially as the same God with the Father and Son, (in which respect, to pray by name to one person of the Godhead, is to pray to all the three, who in our worship are not to be divided) that he would by his operations (which are divers and various for believers' good) so stir and quicken his own graces in her, that, seeing she is a garden wherein the Beloved takes pleasure, her graces for his satisfaction may be exercised, and made to savour, to the end that he may the more manifest himself in sweet communion with her.

Next, The end wherefore she presseth this suit so much, is, that her spices may flow out: in a word it is, that she might be fruitful; for, though there were many graces in her, yet, without the Spirit's breathing and influences, they should be as unbeaten spices, that did not send forth their smell.

Observe. 1. Although a believer have grace, yet it is not always in exercise; yea, it may be, and often is interrupted in its exercise, 2. That the believer's great desire is to be fruitful, and to have grace in exercise, that he may be delighted in by Christ: it is not only his desire to have grace habitually, but actually to have it in exercise. 3. There is nothing can make a believer lively and fruitful, but the influences of the Spirit: and that same Spirit, that works grace, must quicken it and keep it in exercise. 4. There may be an interruption of the influences of the Spirit, so as his blowing may in a great measure cease. 5. The same Spirit hath divers operations, and divers ways of working and manifesting himself: sometimes as the south wind, more smoothly; sometimes as the north wind, more sharply. 6. All his operations, how rough soever some of them may appear, are always useful to believers, and tend to make them fruitful: and to this end the most sharp influences contribute, as well as the more comfortable. 7. Believers should walk under the conviction of their own inability to act their graces, and of the necessity of the Spirit's influences, for drawing them forth to acting and exercise. 8. They, who are thus sensible, may seek after the Spirit for that end: and it is a good frame in order to the obtaining of life and quickening by the Spirit of Christ, when the sense of their own inability, their love of fruitfulness, and the faith of attaining it by his Spirit, puts them to seek after it, 9. Prayer is a necessary and excellent means for stirring up one in a secure frame,

and for attaining the Spirit to revive and quicken the work of his grace. 10. Believers may beg the Spirit to quicken them, when they find themselves lifeless; as well as they may ask pardon, when they find themselves under guilt. 11. Believers will be, and should be as desirous of liveliness and fruitfulness, as of sense yea, this is the order by which they must come, and should seek to come to the obtaining of sensible presence. 12. No commendation of any attainment in believers, nor any clearness of interest, should make them sit down on their attainments, or become negligent; but, on the contrary, should stir them up to aim at the more liveliness and spiritualness, that they may be answerable to that interest they have in him, and to the commendation he allows upon them: for which cause, this petition follows immediately upon the former commendation.

The second petition, which goes along with the former, is for the Beloved's presence, 'Let my beloved,' (saith she) 'come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits:' her desire here, is twofold, 1. That Christ would 'come:' this doth respect a greater degree of nearness, notwithstanding of any thing she enjoyed. 2. That he would 'eat his pleasant fruits,' that is, familiarly, and friendly delight in his own graces; and therefore it was she prayed for the influences of the Spirit, that there might be abundance of fruits for his satisfaction. The way she presseth this petition is very kindly, though the words be short. 1. She presseth it from the relation she had to him, 'Let my Beloved' (saith she) 'come:' this makes her request and invitation warm and kindly. 2. From the kind of the fruits; they are 'pleasant fruits,' that is, delectable in themselves, and acceptable to him. But, 3. Lest this should derogate from him, and arrogate to herself, she adds 'his pleasant fruits;' they are 'his,' and that makes them pleasant, so that he cannot but accept them: they are 'his' being purchased by him, wrought by him, kept in life by him; though he hath made me the garden (saith she) wherein they grow (and the garden, as it hath weeds, is hers) yet all the good fruits, in so far as any of them are to be found in me, are his: in sum, all my desire is this, 1. To be fruitful, then 2. To have Christ's company, shewing himself pleased and present with me. *Observe.* 1. Whatever believers have, they neither will, nor can rest upon it; nay, not in the most eminent measures of holiness attainable here away, without Christ's presence and company. 2, Fruitfulness and liveliness help and contribute much to the enjoyment of Christ's manifestations, John 14:21, 23. 3. Believers, that aim seriously at the exercise of grace in themselves, may confidently invite Christ to come, and may expect his presence. 4. All believers' fruits, even when quickened by the Spirit, are Christ's. 5. This should be acknowledged, and when we are most fruitful, we should look on our fruits, not as our own, but as his still. 6. Christ will feed or delight in nothing, but what is his own; and is acknowledged

by his people to be so and there can be nothing, which he will accept of set before him, but such. 7. Believers' end and design, in pursuing liveliness and fruitfulness, is not, and ought not so much to be their own satisfaction, and the feeding of themselves, as the satisfaction of Christ, and the pleasing of him; for, that is his eating his pleasant fruits; which is the Bride's great desire and design, when she calls for the north and south wind to blow upon her garden.

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