



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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Commentary on the Song of Songs, Chapter Five

by James Durham

BRIDEGROOM.

Verse 1. I am come into my garden, my Sister my Spouse: I have gathered my myrrh, with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

This chapter hath four parts, according to the parties that successively speak. In the first part, verse 1. Christ speaks, and that it is he who speaks, doth at the first reading appear; they are kindly words, well becoming him, and are the answer of her suit in the former words: and so depend on them (for the division of this Song, as also of other scriptures into chapters, not being done by the penmen of the Holy Ghost, but by the translators, is not to be stuck on where there is no question in the matter) she desired him, verse last of the former chapter, to come, and now in this verse, behold I am come, saith he, &c. In it we have 1. His yielding to come. 2. His carriage when he is come, as to himself: and also his intimation of both. 3. His invitation to others, which may be also a part of carriage when come, taken up in three. 1. He makes himself welcome; and, 2. Others. 3. He intimates it.

The title being spoken of formerly, the first thing is, 'I am come into my garden' (as thou desired) 'my sister,' &c. Hence observe, 1. Christ hath particular and peculiar ways of coming to his people, and of nearness to them, even as he hath of withdrawing from them. 2. There are some peculiar times wherein he is more near than at other times. 3. Sometimes he will not only draw near to his people, but let them know that he is near, and put them out of doubt that he is come.

Again, if we look to this as the answer of the former prayer, we will see, 1. Christ is easily invited and prevailed with to come to his people; and sometimes there will not be long betwixt their prayer and his answer, it is the very next word. 2. Few words may be an effectual prayer to Christ (as the former suit was) a breathing or sigh will not be rejected by him, where sincerity is. 3. Christ will sometimes not only answer prayer in the thing sought, but he will intimate, and let his people know that he hath answered it.

More particularly, we may consider the answer, 1. As it agrees with her prayer. 2. As it seems defective. 3. As it's beyond it.

1. It agrees fully to her last suit, she prayed he would come and eat, he comes and eats. *Observe*. Christ will carve and shape out sometimes his answer, even according to his people's desires, as if they had the power of prescribing their own answers. For, when our prayers make for our good, Christ will alter nothing in them; but will grant them in the very terms in which they are put up.

Again, I say there seems to be somewhat defective, there is no return recorded of the first suit of liveliness; and her drowsy, lazy case, verse 2,3, gives ground to think, that that petition was not as yet answered. *Observe*. 1. Christ may be particular in answering one petition of the same prayer, when yet he may for a time suspend an answer to another, in itself as acceptable to him. Yea, 2. He may answer the last prayer, and seem to pass over somewhat formerly sought for.

Finally, compare this answer with their last suit, he doth more than she required; for she desired him only to come and eat, but he comes, eats, gathers, &c. Christ will often stuff in more in the answer, than was in the desire of his people; and will do above what they asked or thought, Eph. 3:20.

Next, his carriage (as to his own satisfaction) is in three steps, 1. 'I have gathered my myrrh with my spice:' myrrh and spice signify (as hath been often said) the graces that grow in believers, who are his garden; His gathering of them is his pulling (to say so) and dressing of them, as gardeners do their herbs and fruits, for making them useful; here, ere he eat he gathers, signifying, that as the spices are his, so he must prepare them for himself; she cannot prepare what provision Christ gives her, till he do it: she cannot put forth to exercise the grace she had received, till he breathe on it.

2. 'I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey:' when he hath prepared, he eats: by honey-comb and honey, is signified the same thing (as chap. 4:verse 11.) because as that was savoury and wholesome food in these days and places, so are believers' graces a feast to Christ.

3. 'I have drunk my wine with my milk:' milk was for nourishing, wine for refreshing; Christ mentions drinking of both, to shew, how abundantly he was satisfied, and fully feasted, both for meat and drink: and how heart-comely he entertained himself on it, as a friend that thinks himself very welcome. Consider here, 1. Meat and drink are mentioned: Christ will not want entertainment where he is, he will invite and treat himself, where he gets welcome: where Christ gets welcome, he will never complain of the want of fare, he hath there a feast. 2. He accepts all heartsomely; as Christ is easily invited, so is he cheerful and pleasant company: where he comes, he takes what there is to give him, he is not sour and ill to please. 3. There is myrrh and spice, milk and honey and wine; which is not only to shew that there are diversities of graces, but that Christ casts out nothing of grace that is found in his people, he takes the milk as well as the wine; he makes much of the weaker grace, as well as of the most lively. 4. He gathers, and eats; as Christ provides food for himself, (so to speak with reverence) he is his own cook, none can dress dishes for Christ, but himself. 5. Where he gets the most serious invitation to come, there may be much unpreparedness for him when he comes, until he right it, and prepare his own entertainment himself. 6. Though things be not prepared for him, yet sometimes he will not suspend his coming on that, nor will it mar his cheerfulness in his carriage, when he comes and is made welcome, he dresseth and eateth. 7. He intimates all this: sometimes Christ may be well pleased with believers, and be feasting himself on their graces, and yet they not discern it, nor believe it, until he intimate it and make it known to them: and therefore that their joy may be full, he graciously condescends now and then to put them upon the knowledge of it, and persuades their hearts of it.

The last thing, is his invitation to his friends to eat with him, which is pressed, 1. By kindly compellations, 'Friends' and 'beloved.' 2. By three words, 'eat, drink,' and that 'abundantly,' By 'friends' and 'beloved,' are understood believers, there are none other capable of these titles, and it was she that prayed, that is here understood by friends and beloved, and so he answers her. Hence we see, the believer is Christ's friend, as Abraham, James 2:23, and Lazarus, John 11:11, were called. It imports, 1. A privilege on the believer's part, to be admitted to a special league of friendship with him, when others are slaves or enemies. 2. A special friendliness in Christ's carriage to them; familiarly, freely, telling them all his mind, so far as is needful for them to know, John 15:15, and lovingly manifesting himself to them, as one doth to his friend. 3. It holds out a duty lying on the believer, to carry friendly to Christ and them that are his, John 15:14. 'A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly' (Prov. 18:24,) to them and seeing he trusts them, and expects no ill from them, they should be like Christ's friends, answerable to their trust. They are also beloved, the title that the husband

gives the wife, for evidencing special love: all Christ's friends are beloved, and believers are (whatever they be as to their desert, or in the eyes of men) both friends and beloved: no friend hath such bowels for his friends, as Christ hath for his friends. 'Friends' and 'beloved' are in the plural, 1. To shew he excludes no believer, but includes all, and that with the same seriousness he invites and makes them all welcome to feast with him, whether they be strong or weak. 2. Because his mercy to one may be cheering to many, and he allows and would have others of his people to be cheerful, because of his kindness and mercy manifested to one.

His entertaining of them is held out in three words. 1. 'Eat,' that declares his desire to have believers partaking with him in the soul-refreshing blessings of his purchase, by their reflecting act of faith comforting themselves in the privileges, promises, and mercies allowed on them. *Observe.* 1. The same feast, is a feast to Christ and believers both. 2. Where he is cheerful, they should be so also. The second word is, 'drink:' he drinks, that is, satisfies himself as fully feasted, to wit, with the graces of his people (such is the complacency he hath in them, when he stirs them up to any liveliness of exercise) and he allows them in this case to be refreshed, satisfied, and feasted also; it becomes them to drink when he drinks, and bids them drink. The third word is, 'drink abundantly:' that shews the largeness of his allowance, and the heartiness of his welcome: as a gladsome host, so cherishes he his guests; and all this is to be understood spiritually, of the joy and comfort which he allows on his people, even to be 'filled with the Spirit,' in opposition to wine, Eph. 5:18, which is more satisfying, cheering, and refreshing to the inner man, than wine is to the body. The scope and dependance points out these things, 1. There is much notable soul-refreshing to be had in Christ's company; wherever he is, there is a feast, Rev. 3:20. 2. He allows his people largely to share of it; yea, it is his will that all should liberally improve this allowance, he willeth it. 3. If our joy run in a spiritual channel, there cannot be excess in it, if it were to be drunken with it, so as to forget our poverty, and to remember our misery no more. 4. Christ is never fully satisfied at his own feast, till he get his friends feasted and cheered also: he eats not his morsels alone, but is desirous to communicate his good things, according as they are communicable. 5. Christ's preparing and dressing is rather for the welcoming of his friends, than for himself. I have gathered, eat ye, saith he. 6. Christ is a most heartsome distributor to others, and entertainer of his friends: there needs be no sparing to eat where he invites. 7. Believers, even Christ's friends, need invitation, by reason of unbelief, sense of unworthiness (which makes them sinfully modest) and the dulness of their spiritual appetite; and therefore they will need (to say so) bidding and entreaty oftentimes to eat their meat, and to cheer themselves in him, and he will not let them want that. 8. Wherever Christ is present, there is a feast with him for

them that are in his company; he sups with them, and makes them sup with him; and all is his own, and of his own dressing. 9. It is a gift of Christ's mercy, not only to have grounds of consolation, but to be enabled to comfort ourselves in these grounds; (as in outward things, it is one gift to have, and another to have the cheerful use of that which we have) for the believer may have the one when he wants the other; and when he hath the one, to have the other added is a double mercy, as the exhortation, 'eat, drink,' &c. imports. 10. It is not every one who is Christ's friend, nor every one that hath that honour to comfort and feast themselves with him; it is a privilege that is peculiar to them who are his friends indeed.

Verse 2. I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

From verse 2, unto the ninth, (which is the second part of the chapter) the Bride speaks, and sets down a very complex piece of her condition, which we take up in these three, 1. Her condition is shortly set down. 2. The mutual carriage of the Bridegroom and Bride are recorded; wherein (as it were) grace and loving-kindness in him, and unkindness in her, are wrestling together for a time. 3. The out-gate, and the way how she attained it, by several steps on his side, and hers, are particularly insisted on from verse 4, with what followed thereupon.

Her case is in short, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh,' or (as it is in the original) 'I sleeping, my heart waking.' It is made up of contraries, and seeming paradoxes; she is distinguished from her heart, and the sleeping of the one is opposed to the waking of the other both this sleeping and waking are spiritually to be understood; the first signifies a ceasing from spiritual duties, or a suspension of the acting of spiritual life, by a rising of some inward corruption, that dulls and binds up the spiritual senses, as in natural sleep the external senses are dulled and bound up: so 1 Thes. 5:6, and Rom. 13:11, 'Let us not sleep, but watch and be sober.' This is a further degree of spiritual distemper, beyond what was, chap. 3:1,2, where she was on bed, and yet seeking, but here she sleeps and lies still, as we see, verse 3. It imports, 1. An interruption of liveliness and actual exercising of grace. 2. An indisposition and laziness in the frame of the spirit, added to that. 3. A sort of acquiescing and resting securely in that indisposition, with a loathness to stir and be interrupted, such as useth to be in the bodily sleep, and such as

appears to be here from the following verse: it is sleepiness, or to be given to sleep, such as the sluggard is subject unto, who sleepeth excessively and out of due time.

This 'I' that sleepeth, is the believer, but considered in so far as unregenerate; as, Rom. 7:18, 'I know, that in me (that is in my flesh) there dwelleth no good thing,' For, as the believer hath two different natures, which have opposite actings; so are they considered as two different persons. Hence is that, Rom. 7, 'I, yet not I,' &c. by which Paul as renewed, is distinguished from himself as unrenewed. By waking, is understood, some liveliness and sensibleness, or at least life, in opposition to the former deadness and dulness, as, Rom. 13:11, 'It is high time to awake:' and 'Thess. 5:6, 'Let us watch, and be sober;' which is opposite to that spiritual drowsiness, wherein we are scarce at ourselves. 'My heart,' looks to the renewed part, which is often called 'the spirit that lusteth against the flesh,' as Gal. 5:17, and the 'law in my mind,' Rom 7, 'Circumcision in the heart,' Rom. 2:25; the 'new heart' in the covenant Ezek. 36.

In sum, it is this, things are not right with me, and indisposition to duty or lifelessness in it, is great (as it is with one that is in a sleep) yet even then there is some inward stirring of life, appearing in conviction of judgment, challenges purposes, protestations of the inward-man, against this dead and lazy frame, as not delighting in it, but displeased with it, &c. wherein the new nature wrestles and yields not, nor gives itself leave to consent to it, although it can act nothing, at least in a lively way, under this condition: thus she is sleeping because she acts nothing; yet, the heart is waking, because it is kept from being involved in that security though it be bound up, and overpowered with corruption, that it cannot win to act according to the light and inclination that it hath within.

Hence observe, 1. That the believer hath two different and opposite natures and principles within him, leading him divers ways; the carnal and sleeping 'I,' and the renewed and waking 'heart.' 2. They may be both at one time acting oppositely, 'the one lusting against the other,' Gal. 5:17. 3. Sometimes corruption may prevail far over believers that have grace, and lay them (though not quite dead, yet) fast asleep for a time, and mar in a great measure the exercise of their grace. 4. Believers at their lowest, have life in them, and (by reason of their new nature) are not totally and fully involved in their security and backsliding conditions. 5. There may be some inward apprehending of our hazard, and dangerous condition, when it is very sad and low; so as believers may know it is not right with them, and yet (as it is here with the Bride) may continue under it and lie still. 6. Spiritual laziness and security are incident to the strongest believers: the wise virgins may slumber and sleep, Matt. 25. 7. Yea, after the greatest manifestations, and often on the back of the fullest intimations of Christ's

love, and the most sweet invitations they have from him, and most joyful feastings with him, they may be thus overtaken, as the words preceding bear out: the disciples fell into this distemper, that same night after the Lord's supper. 8. Believers may fall over and over again into the same condition of sinful security, even after they have been roused and raised out of it; as this being compared with chap. 3 will clear. 9. The more frequently believers (or any other) relapse into the same sin, they will go the greater length readily in it, and by falling more dangerously be more hardly recovered than formerly: now she sleeps, and when put at, will not rise, but shifts, which is a further step than was chap. 3. 10. Lazy fits of indisposition and omissions of duty, do more frequently steal in upon believers than positive out-breakings and commissions, and they are more ready to please themselves in them, and to lie still under them. 11. Believers should be so acquainted with their own condition, as to be able to tell how it is with them, whether as to their unrenewed or renewed part; so here, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh.' 12. Believers in taking up their condition, should advert both to their corruptions and graces; and in their reckoning, should put a distinction betwixt these two, otherwise they will misreckon on the one side or the other: they should not reckon themselves wholly by the actings of nature, lest they disclaim their graces; nor yet by their renewed part, lest they forget their unrenewed nature; but they should attribute every effect in them to its own cause and principle, wherefrom it proceeds. 13. It is good for believers when overcome with corruption, and captivate by it, to disallow and disown it from the heart, as not allowing what they do, and to present this to God, as a protestation entered against their prevailing lusts. In some sense a believer may both condemn himself as sinful, and absolve himself as delighting in the law of God, at one and the same time; and where he allows not his corruption, but positively dissents from it, he may disclaim it as not being his deed.

This being her case, follows the Bridegroom's carriage, which is expressed in the rest of verse 2, and her carriage (implied only in this verse) is more fully expressed, verse 3. His carriage holds out the great design he drives, and that is to have access to her, and to have her roused up for attaining of which, 1. He doth something, and that is, knocks at the door. 2. He endures and suffers 'dew' and 'drops' in the cold night, and yet doth not give over. 3. He speaks, and useth many persuasive arguments for that end; all which she observes, and yet lies still. It is in sum, as if a loving husband, that is shut out by a lazy, yet a beloved wife, would knock, call, and waiting on still, use many arguments to persuade her to open; so doth our spiritual Bridegroom, wait upon believers whom he loves, to have them brought again to the lively exercise of faith in him, and to a frame of spirit meet for communion with him. To take the words as they lie, there is, 1. The

Bride's observation (as it were in her sleep) of the Beloved's calling at the door. 2. There is set down his call. 3. The arguments he useth for prevailing with her. By knocking is understood the inward touches of the word upon the conscience, when the efficacy of the Spirit goes along with it, which raps at the Bride's heart, as knocking Both at a door, and is the means of awaking her from spiritual sleep, as knocking at a door is a means of awaking from bodily sleep: So it is, Rev. 3:20, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock;' in which sense the word is compared to a hammer, Jer. 23:29. It takes in these three, 1. A seriousness in him that so knocks. 2. A power and efficacy in the word, that somehow affects the heart, and moves it. 3. It implies some effect it hath upon the heart, as being somewhat affected with that touch; therefore it is his voice or word, that not only calleth, but knocketh, implying some force it had upon her. By 'voice' is understood the word, as chap. 2:8,10, yet, as backed with the Spirit and power, and as commended thereby to the conscience, 1 Cor. 2:4, and convincingly demonstrated to be the very voice of Christ; yet, so as rods, inward and outward, and other means, may have their own place, being made use of by him, yet still according to the word.

His great end, for which he knocks, is in that word, 'open;' which, as it implies her case, that her heart was in a great measure shut upon him, and that by some carnal indisposition he was kept out of it, and was not made welcome; so it requires the removing of all that stopt his way, and the casting open of the heart by faith to receive his word, and by love to receive himself: and in these two especially, this opening doth consist, 1. In the exercise of faith, Acts 16:14, the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, and that is expounded, she gave heed unto those things which Paul spoke. 2. An enlarging and warming of the affections towards him (which ever comprehends the former) as, Psalm 81:10, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it:' what that is, the refusal following declares, 'my people would not hear,' (that is, believe) 'Israel would none of me,' or loved not me, (as the words in the original import) they cared not for me, they desired me not, and would not quit their idols, as in the foregoing words, verse 9, is mentioned. 3. There resulteth from these two a mutual familiarity, as Rev. 3:20, 'If any man will open, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.' This opening then, imports the removing of every thing that marred fellowship with Christ, and the doing of every thing that might dispose for enjoying of it, as awaking, rising, &c. all which follows in the 4th verse; and while he commands to open, he calls for the entertaining of fellowship with him, which now is by her drowsiness interrupted: which two parts of the verse put together, hold forth, 1. That Christ's own Bride may shut the door on him, and so make a sad separation betwixt him and her. 2. Christ's word is the great and ordinary external means, whereby he knocks at mens' hearts, and which he makes use of for begetting faith in them. 3.

That in a believer's secure condition there will be sometimes more than ordinary convictions, stirrings, and motions by the word. 4. That the word of God, backed with power, will reach the securest heart and affect it. 5. That believers will discern Christ's voice and call, when their condition is very low. 6. It will be refreshful to them to have him knocking; she looks on it as a kindly thing, even to have his knock bearing in convictions, challenges, or somewhat else on her; though it please not her flesh, yet in as far as she is renewed, it will be 'the voice of her Beloved' to her. 7. Christ hath a way of following his own, even when they are become secure; and sometimes then, will make his call, challenges, or convictions pursue more hotly and pressingly than at other times. 8. When Christ knocketh and presseth hardest, it is for our own good, and it is a token of love in him to do so; for there is nothing more deplorable, than when he saith to one under indisposition, and in an evil case, let him alone. 9. When Christ calls by his word, it is then our duty to open to him, and to receive him; and this can no more be slighted without sin, than prayer, mortification; and other commanded duties, can be neglected or slighted without sin, 10. Christ may call very pressingly, and his word may have some work on the conscience and affections of hearers, and they be someway affected with it, and yet the word be rejected, and the heart not made open to Christ; as here she sleeps still notwithstanding; and the following verse confirms it. 11. There are some operations of the Spirit, which though they be more than a common work on the generality of hearers, yet are not saving, and may be, and often are, even by believers frustrated for a time, and by others for ever; for, this knocking gets a refusal, verse 3. So deceiving, beguiling and dangerous are common motions to rest on, when the finger of gracious omnipotency is not applied, as verse 4. 12. Christ's design, when he knocks fastest, is friendly, and yet it sometimes saith, things are not right: this is the end of all his knocking and speaking to a people, and then it is plainest when he speaks most powerfully.

2. The way how Christ presseth this, is, 1. By showing who he is, it is 'me,' 'open to me:' there can be no greater commendation given to Christ, nor weightier argument used for him, than to make it known that it is he, the Husband, Lord, &c, whose the house is, and to whom entry by right from the wife ought to be given. 2. By giving her loving titles, and claiming her as his in many relations, as 'my sister, love, dove;' and (which was not mentioned before) 'undefiled' is added, that is, my perfect one, or upright, sincere one, as it is often rendered. These titles given now, and so many at once, shew, 1. That believers, when secure, have very much need of the Spirit to rouse and stir them up: souls are not easily persuaded to receive Christ. 2. There is wonderful love in Christ, that condescends so to entreat his people, when in such a secure case: even then he

changes not her name, no more than if all things were in a good case; for our relation to him, depends not on our case. 3. Christ will sometimes very lovingly deal, even with secure souls in his way, for obtaining entry, and persuading them to open to him, and sometimes will apply the most refreshful gospel-offers and invitations, and use the most kindly compellations for that end. 4. Christ sometimes will overlook the lazy distempers of his people, and not always chide with them for these, but give them their wonted styles notwithstanding. 5. The kind dealing of Christ to his people will ever prove love to be on his side, but will not always prove that the persons so dealt with are presently in a good condition; for, he may accept their persons, and speak comfortably as to their state, although he approve not their present condition, as here. 6. We may see that Christ's love is not founded on our merit, nor is up and down according to our variable disposition, but he prevents both in his dealing with his people. These titles being made use of as a motive to answer his call, and to open to him, shew, 1. That the persuasion of Christ's love in souls, is a main thing to make way for their entertaining of him. 2. That it is a shame for a believer so beloved of Christ, to hold him without at the door, when he knocketh to be in. Grace would make a heart to blush, and in a manner look it out of countenance, that would refuse his kindness.

The third and great argument, is, 'for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night:' very shame might prevail with the wife, when the husband useth such an argument as this: it is even as if a husband, standing long without doors in a tempestuous night, should use this motive with his wife to persuade her to let him in, it will be very prejudicial and hurtful to my health, if thou open not unto me; for, I have stood long without: this may no doubt be presumed to be a very strong and prevalent argument with a loving wife; yet, it gets but a poor and very unsuitable answer from the Bride. By 'dew, drops' and 'night-time,' are understood, afflictions, external crosses and lowness: so, Dan. 4, that king is said to be 'wet with the dew of heaven' in his low condition, as having no house to shelter himself in, but being obnoxious to all changes and injuries of weather: and Jacob mentions it as a part of the toilsome labour, that he had with Laban, 'I did endure the heat of the sun in the day, and the cold in the night,' that is, he was ever watchful, and spared not himself for the hurt of either day or night: here Christ's spiritual sufferings also may come in, whereby he made himself obnoxious to the Father's wrath and curse, that he might have access to communion with his people; and the account that he hath of being kept out by his people, as a new piece of his sufferings, or as a painful reviving of the, remembrance of his old sufferings. The scope is to shew, that as a kindly husband will so deal with a beloved wife, and expect to prevail, being put to this strait; so

doth Christ with his people, being no less desirous of a room in their hearts, and being as much troubled by their unbelief, as any man is, when put to stand in the cold night, under dew and rain at his own door. This way of arguing saith, 1. That the believer, as such, loves and respects Christ, and would not have him suffering, as a kind wife would be loth to hazard her husband's health. 2. That Christ expounds her so, even when she is lazy and keeps him out, otherwise this argument would be of no force, nor would he have used it: he will see much evil (to speak so) ere he notice it in a believer; and is not suspicious, even when occasions are given. 3. Believers are often exceeding unanswerable to the relation that is betwixt Christ and them, and may suffer Christ to stand long waiting without. 4. It affects Christ much (and is a suffering to him, and a kind of putting him to open shame, and a crucifying again the Son of God) to be kept out of hearts by unbelief, and there can be no pardonable sin that hath more and greater aggravations than this; for, it is cruelty to kind Jesus Christ. 5. Believers, even when Christ is in good terms with them, may fall into this fault. 6. Christ is a most affectionate suitor, and patient Husband, that thus waits on even when he is affronted, and gives not over his kind suit: who would bear with this that he bears with, and passeth by, and continues kindly notwithstanding? Many strange and uncouth things are comported with, and overlooked betwixt him and believers without hearing, that the world could not digest. 7. Our Lord Jesus hath not spared himself, nor shunned sufferings, for doing of his people good: Jacob's care of, and suffering for Laban's flocks, and Nebuchadnezzar his humiliation was nothing to this. 8. The love of Christ is manifested in nothing more for his people than in his sufferings for them, and in his patient on waiting to have the benefits thereof applied to them. 9. Christ's sufferings, and his affectionate way of pleading from them, should melt hearts in love to him, and in desire of union with him, and will make the refusal exceeding sinful and shameful, where it is given; O so strong arguments as Christ hath, to be on the hearts of his people! and how many things are there, to plead for that?

Verse 3. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?

The Bride's answer is here set down, but O! how unsuitable to that which was his carriage? He stands, she lies; he without, she within; he calls friendly; she ungratefully shifts it, at best: as if a wife should answer her husband so calling, I am now in bed, and have put off my clothes, and washen my feet, and so have composed myself to rest, I cannot rise, it would hurt me to rise; so doth the Bride

thus unreasonably, and absurdly put back this fair call, upon a two-fold shift, both which are spiritually to be understood, as the sleep and opening, formerly mentioned, were. In it consider, 1. The answer. 2. The manner of it. 3. The particular grounds which she layeth down to build it on. And, 4. The faults of this reasoning of hers, which at first may be concluded to be unsound. The answer in general is a denial, as the event clears; and it is like that, Luke 11:7, 'I am in bed, and my children with me, trouble me not,' &c. Yea, 'how can I put it on?' these words (being the interrogation, not of one doubting but of one shifting) imply a vehement denial, as as if it were a most unreasonable and impossible thing for her to give obedience to what was called for: which shews, that Christ may get most indiscreet refusals to his fairest calls: which refusal is thus aggravated, 1. It was against most powerful and plain means: the most powerful external ordinances may be frustrated. Even Christ himself in his word, when he preached in the days of his flesh, had not always success. 2. It was against her light, she knew it was Christ's call: even believers may sit challenges against their light, and sin wittingly through the violence of tentations, though not wholly willingly. 3. She had invited him by prayer, chap. 4:16, yet now lies still: which lets us see, 1. That believers, in their carriage, are often unsuitable to their prayers: there may be, and is often a great discrepancy betwixt these. And, 2. Often believers may be more desirous of an opportunity of meeting with Christ, or any other mercy, when they want it; than watchful to make the right use of it, when they have gotten it.

Her way is to give some reasons for her refusal, as if she could do no otherwise, and were not to be blamed so much for her shifting off Christ, as the words, 'how can I;' &c. import. Observe, 1. The flesh will be broody and quick in inventing shifts for maintaining of itself, even against the clearest convictions and duties. 2. It is ill to debate or reason a clear duty, often Satan and the flesh get advantage by it. 3. Folks are oftentimes very partial in examining their own reasons, and are hardly put from their own grounds once laid, although they be not solid; and the most foolish reasons will be convincing to a spiritual sluggard, who, in fostering his ease, seems wiser to himself, than one who can render the most conclusive arguments, and strongest reasons to the contrary, Prov. 26:16. The opening of the particular reasons will clear this; the first is, 'I have put off my coat,' and the conclusion is, 'how can I put it on?' putting off the clothes is an evidence of men's betaking themselves to rest, as keeping them on, is a sign of watching, as in Neh. 4:23. 'None of us put off our clothes, save to washing;' hence keeping on of the clothes is borrowed, to set out spiritual watchfulness, and hiding of spiritual nakedness, as Rev. 16:15. 'Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked:' and on the contrary putting off of clothes, signifieth not only a spiritual drowsiness, but a high degree of it; as

having put off, and fallen from that tenderness and watchfulness in her walk, wherewith she was clothed, chap. 4:11, and is now somewhat settled in her carnal ease and security. From this she argueth, 'how shall I put it on?' the force of the reason may be three ways considered, 1. As it imports a difficulty in the thing, how shall I do it? O it is difficult! 2. As it imports an averseness to it, in herself: it stands against her heart, as a seeming unreasonable thing, as Gen. 39:9, 'How shall I do this great wickedness,' &c. 3. A sort of shame may be in it. I am now out of posture, and I think shame to rise, and to be seen: which shews, 1. That it is hard to raise one that hath fallen into security. 2. To lazy souls every thing looks like an insuperable difficulty, their way to duty is as an 'hedge of thorns,' Prov. 15:19. and 'there is a lion in their streets,' and sometimes, as it were, even in the house-floor, when any duty is pressed upon them that would rob them of their carnal ease, Prov. 26:13, and 22:13. 3. It is much for one in a secure frame to wrestle with his own indisposition, it is a weariness then to take the hand out of the bosom, Prov. 26:15. 4. It is not a commendable shamefacedness, but must needs be a very sinful modesty, that keeps one from duty: it was indeed more shameful to lie still, than to rise.

Her second ground is of the same nature, 'I have washed my feet:' washing the feet, fitted and prepared for rest; men's feet in these countries, being, by walking bare-footed, some way stiffened, beaten and bruised, which by washing were eased and refreshed, as we may see, Gen. 18:19, in Abraham and Lot's carriage to the angels, supposing them to be men: so here, it is, I have fitted and composed myself for rest, as being wearied with the painfulness of holy duties and now she cannot endure to stir herself toward these, as if that would again defile her; in which reasoning, there are these faults, 1. That she doth at all offer to debate a clear duty, this makes way for the snare. 2. That she interprets the study of holiness, and communion with Christ to be a trouble, and carnal security to be an ease: there will be strange misrepresentations sometimes, both of our faults and failings, and of Christ's worth and excellency, which have much influence on our deadness and sinful distempers. 3. She makes one sinful action the cause of her continuance in another, there is often a connexion amongst sins, and one draws on another; the premises, that the flesh lays down as principles, will still bear conclusions like themselves: it is unsound and unsafe reasoning from these. 4. That which should stir and persuade her to rise, to wit, that she was not right, she makes a motive of it to strengthen herself, in her lazy inclination to lie still: carnal sense draws conclusions most unreasonable in every thing, and tends still to foster itself; whereas faith and tenderness would reason the quite contrary. 5. She puts too honest a name upon her security, and calleth it the washing of her feet, which was indeed the polluting of them: fairding and

plaistering over our own evils, is a great fostering of security, yet too common; as to call unbelief humility; presumption, faith; security, peace, &c. We give to sin the name of virtue, and then without a challenge maintain it; which is a degree of putting darkness for light, and bitter for sweet, and a sort of calling evil good, which brings under the hazard of the pronounced woe, Isa. 5:20. 6. She fails here, that she expects more ease in lying still, than in opening to Christ, whereas it is but the flesh that is troubled at Christ's presence; but, solid satisfaction is only to be had in his company: flesh hath ever secret fears of Christ's company, as if it were intolerable, irksome, and troublesome to be a Christian in earnest; and these whisperings, and wicked suggestions of the flesh, may have sometimes too much weight with a believer. 7. She mistakes Christ's word, which pressed that he might be admitted, who was a most loving husband, and had suffered so much in waiting for entry; but, she states the matter otherwise, if she that was at ease should trouble herself, that so the shift might seem reasonable; though Christ be not directly and down-right refused, and the heart dare not under convictions adventure on that, yet by opposing respect to ourselves to him, and by shifting to open to him when he knocks, many are guilty upon the matter of refusing and slighting Christ himself, when they think they slight not him, but would only shun something that is troublesome to themselves; these words are not so to be looked on, as if explicitly believers would so argue but that in their lazy and drowsy spiritual distempers there is such arguing on the matter, and such or such like shifts prevail often to make them keep out Christ, when directly they dare not refuse him; which doth evidence the power and subtilty of corruption, even in a believer, and the greatness of the love of Christ that passeth it by.

If it should be asked, why is this sinful distemper of hers registrated, and put on record? We say, 1. For her own good; it is profitable for believers to mind and record their miscarriages to Christ, as well as his kind dealings with them. 2. It is for the honour of the Bridegroom, whose love appears and shines most brightly, when it is set forth against her miscarriage; believers should acknowledge their infirmities and failings, as well as their mercies and graces, when it may make to the Bridegroom's commendation. 3. It is for the edification of others; often one believer's infirmities, through God's blessing, may prove edifying to others, for making them watchful, and bidding them stand, and sustaining of them when fallen: the infirmities of Job, under his sore trials, have strengthened many, as his patience hath convinced them.

In sum, this reasoning is indirect and frivolous, shewing in the general, 1. That men incline to cover their secret misregard of Christ, as if it were rather tenderness to themselves, than indiscreet disrespect to him, yet he expounds it so: as, Matt. 22:5, when they alleged it as a necessary excuse, that they behoved to

wait on their farm and merchandise, he interprets it, they made light of the invitation to the marriage of the king's son. 2. It shews, that the shifts, whereby men put back Christ, are exceeding frivolous, there can be no strong nor relevant reason alleged for our slighting Christ, and for our ruining ourselves in slighting of him in the offers of his grace in the gospel; although corrupt nature exercise and rack its invention, to find out reasons to plead our excuse, yet when such reasonings are examined, they will not abide the trial. 3. That when men's hearts are in a declining frame, very trivial and weightless arguments will prevail to make them keep out Christ; and, for as trivial as they are, they would prevail even with believers, did not grace refute them, and make way for his entry into the soul.

Verse 4. My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.

There follows in this fourth verse, a second step of Christ's carriage, with the effects of it: he gives not over, but puts in his finger, and powerfully makes application to her, by a saving work of the Spirit upon her heart, which hath the desired and designed effect following upon it she riseth and openeth.

In this we have, 1. The means applied and made use of. 2. The manner of application, (for that the worker is the Beloved himself, is clear; the means is his hand, which in scripture signifieth three things, when attributed to God, 1. His omnipotency, whereby he doth what he pleaseth, Exod. 15:6, 'Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power,' Exod. 8:19, it is said 'This is the finger of God,' that is, his power. 2. It is taken for the Spirit, or the common operations of the Spirit, whereby miracles, beyond the power of man are wrought; as by comparing Matt. 12:28, with Luke 11:20, will be clear. 3. It is taken for the saving work of the Spirit, applied for the working of faith in the elect at the first, or renewing and confirming of it afterward in believers; as, Acts 11:21, 'The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed.' This is it which is pointed at, Isa. 53:1, where, 'who hath believed?' and 'to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' are made of equal extent and so especially it is to be taken here, as the scope clears, to wit, for the immediate powerful work of the Spirit, made use of in the working of faith, as a key is made use of for the opening of a door.

The way of applying this means, is, be 'put in his hand by the hole of the door:' where (following the similitude of a husband's standing at a shut door, and not getting entry) he shews what he did, when knocking prevailed not; to wit, he

took an effectual way of opening it himself, which is ordinary by putting in the key or somewhat else at the hole of the door: so Christ by his Spirit made open the heart, in a kindly native way, not by breaking open, but by opening; he indeed having the key by which hearts are opened, even 'the key of David, that opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens,' Rev. 3:7. Which words do shew, 1. That besides the call of the word, and any common conviction that is thereby wrought in the heart, there is in the conversion of sinners, an immediate, real, powerful, and peculiar work of the Spirit that accompanies the word. 2. That the application of this is necessary, and that men being now asleep, and dead in sin, cannot without that be stirred and quickened by the most powerful external ordinances, or common operations: nay, even to the believer's reviving, from his backslidden and drowsy case, this work of omnipotency is needful. 3. This work of the Spirit is effectual, and when peculiarly applied by Christ, cannot be frustrated; for, he 'puts in his hand,' and the effect follows. 4. Although it be a most powerful work, yet it works kindly, and brings about the effect without wronging of the natural faculties of the soul, but makes use of them formally for bringing forth the effect, as one that openeth the door by the lock, makes use of a key, but doth not hurt nor destroy the lock: there is therefore no inconsistency betwixt Christ's opening and ours; for, he co-acts not, nor forceth the will, but sweetly determines it, so that it cannot but be willing; he takes away unwillingness from it, and makes it willing, Psalm 110:3. Christ hath the keys of hearts, and can open and shut at his pleasure, without wronging of them. 5. Grace being the work of a high hand, it cannot be easy to procure welcome to Jesus Christ even amongst believers, and much less with others, who have no principle of grace within to cooperate with Christ. 6. Christ Jesus as he is a most powerful worker, so is the work of his power most free, sovereign, and wonderful; which clearly appeareth in that it is applied on the back of such a slighting answer, and not before: yea, 7. Oftentimes the work of grace surpriseth his own, when they are in a most unsuitable case, and when in respect of their deserving they might have expected the quite contrary; certainly, we are not obliged to our free-will for our conversion, but to his Spirit; nor to our predispositions for his applying of it, but to his own grace, who in his gracious way of dealing with his people, comes over many obstructions, and packs up (to say so) many affronts and injuries.

If any should ask, why Christ did not apply this work, and put in his hand at first, but suspends it till he had gotten a refusal, and be now at the very withdrawing? *Answer.* 1. He doth this to shew the sovereignty of grace, that works as well when it will, as on whom it will: grace must not be limited by us in the manner or time of its working, more than in its work, or subject-matter upon which it worketh. 2. By this he discovereth, what believers would be without his

grace (and so would teach them to walk humbly) which otherwise had not so well appeared. 3. His wisdom and tenderness appear herein, that he will not withdraw from her, and leave her lifeless too, but ere he awake challenges in her, he will make her lively in the exercise of her graces: otherwise she might have lien still in her deadness: Christ times his operations, his appearings and withdrawals with much tenderness, wisdom, and discretion.

This work of the Spirit puts a stir in the Bride, which vents itself it four steps. 1. Her bowels are moved 2. She ariseth. 3. Her fingers drop with myrrh. 4. She opens. All which may be considered, either, 1. As effects following the work of the Spirit, whereby she is recovered from such a condition: or, 2. As duties lying on a believer: or, 3. As they hold out the order of the effects wrought by the Spirit. In general, it holds forth, 1. That the work of the Spirit, when it is effectually applied, makes a very great, palpable, and universal change upon the persons in whom it works: there is a great difference betwixt the Bride's carriage here, and what it was, verse 3. 2. Although it be not absolutely necessary, nor ordinary for a believer, to know the instant of his conversion: yet when the change is sudden, and from an extremity of a sinful condition, it will be discernible, and the fruits following the change will be the more palpable. 3. A believer should endeavour to be clear in the change of his condition; and when this clearness is attained by the distinct uptaking of the several fruits of the change, it is very useful and profitable for establishing the believer in the confidence of his interest in Christ, and that there is a saving change wrought in him; so here, the Bride both asserts him to be her Beloved, and likewise the reality of the change he had wrought in her.

The first effect is, 'my bowels were moved for him;' Which, in short, holds forth the kindly exercise of serious repentance, affecting and stinging (as it were) the very inward bowels, for slighting Christ so long: which will be cleared by considering, 1. What is meant by bowels. 2. What by moving of the bowels. 3. What that is, 'for him.' By bowels, are understood either sorrow, and that in an intense degree, as, Job 30:27, 'my bowels boiled,' Lam. 1:20. 'My bowels are troubled.' And Jer. 4:19, 'My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at the very heart:' Or, bowels are taken for affection and tender love in the highest degree, such as mothers have to the children of their womb, Philip. 2:1,2, 'If there be any bowels.' And Philemon, 12, 'Receive him that is my own bowels.' Thus they are taken, Isa. 63:15, 'Where are thy bowels?' and frequently else where, both in the Old and New Testament. By 'moving of the bowels' (or sounding or making a noise, as the word is elsewhere translated, Isa. 16:11, and 63:15,) is understood a sensible stirring of the affections, when they begin to stound, and that kindly, and in a most affectionate manner, either severally, or jointly, such as is the 'turning

of the bowels,' Hos. 11, and the 'troubling of the bowels,' Jer. 31:18, 19, 20. It is even such as is kindly sympathy with persons that are dearly beloved, when any sad change befalls them: it is called the yearning of the bowels, spoken of that mother, 1 Kings 3:26, who was so affected towards her child, out of love to him, that she had rather quit him to the other woman, that was not his mother, than see him divided, her bowels were so hot towards him; (another thing than was in any onlooker) it is the same word here, which shews, that this motion of the Bride's bowels proceeded from love to Christ, and from sorrow for wronging of him, which two jumbled her within, and pierced and stounded her to the heart, as a kindly parent useth to be for the death or distress of his only child, which is the character of true repentance, Zech. 12:10, 11. 3. 'For him,' holds out, 1. The procuring cause of this trouble, that it was for wronging of Christ, and the slighting of so kind an husband and friend, that stounded her at the heart above all, as, Zech. 12:10. 'They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him.' 2. It holds forth the final cause wherefore she was so stirred and moved; it it was 'for him,' that is, that she might enjoy him, as the word is, Hos, 7:14, 'They assemble themselves for corn and wine,' that is, to obtain them: so her bowels were moved *for* or *after* him, to obtain and enjoy him and thus, sense of the wrong done to him, in her bye-past unkindly carriage to him, and desire to recover him again, so affects her, as if it were the pangs of a travailing woman, till Christ be again formed in her heart.

Observe. 1. The first work of the Spirit, is, by powerful convictions to beget evangelic repentance in the heart, and to make the soul sensible of bye-past failings, Acts 2:37. This although it be not in time before faith, nor in nature (for, seeing it proceeds from love, it supposeth faith) yet it is the first sensible effect, that sinners (surprised in a sinful condition) are touched with, and it is never separate from, but always joined with, the exercise of faith, Zech. 12:10. 2. This work of repentance is necessary to be renewed, even in believers after their failings, and it is the way by which they recover; Christ's Bride is thus affected, and it becomes them well who have sin, to be deeply moved and afflicted with the sense of it. Where most love to Christ is, and where most sincerity hath been, when awakening comes, it will be the more sensible, and affect the heart the more thoroughly. Particularly, we may gather hence these properties of true repentance or godly sorrow. 1. Godly sorrow is no fruit of nature, but is a work and effect of the Spirit of Christ, and a peculiar saving grace, beyond common conviction, and a believer is not the worker of it in himself. 2. This sorrow consists most in the inward pangs and stings of the heart, wherein love to Christ, and indignation against ourselves for wronging of him, struggle, and put all within in a stir. 3. True repentance is different from, and beyond convictions, and challenges (which

the Bride had before when this was wanting in her) and makes another kind of impression, and a more sensible touch upon the heart and inward bowels I say not that it is always terrible; for, that is accidental to it, but sensible it is. 4. Though this godly sorrow affect the heart deeply, yet doth it work kindly, sweetly and affectionately, as a mother's affection warms to her child, or, as a man is troubled for his first-born: love hath a main influence upon, and goeth along in this godly sorrow; both in the rise of it, love kindles this heart-indignation, and also in the exercise of it, love to Christ keeps it lively; and in the manner how it vents itself, it makes it a kindly and no torturing or terrible exercise. 5. Nothing more affects a kindly repenting heart, truly touched with godly sorrow, than that it should have sinned against Christ; its own hazard is not the predominant cause of this sorrow (she is clear of her interest still (nor is it any sad event that might follow, which so affects her (though she was not senseless as to these) but it is 'for him,' and his cause and not her own, that she is thus moved: the Spirit's conviction, John 16:8, is, 'because they believe not on me.' 6. Considering the words with what follows, 'I rose,' &c. and comparing them with what went before, Observe, that true repentance brings forth always a change in a believer's carriage to the better, in those things by which Christ their Beloved was formerly provoked; and it doth stir up to universal activeness, in the study of holiness: this makes her arise from the laziness in which she formerly was. 7. Consider, that she rests not till first she open to Christ, and thereafter obtain his presence; which sheweth, that where true repentance is, the soul will never sit down on challenges, convictions, or making amends in the conversation, or any thing in itself; but it will be restless until by faith it close with Christ; yea, it will be pressing after the intimation of his favour, on the back of any peace attained in closing with him, as David doth, Psalm 51.

Verse 5. I rose up to open to my Beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.

There are two steps of her carriage, or effects of the Spirit's work, verse 5. The first is, her bowels being thus stirred and moved, she ariseth to open, as being sorry she had lien still and shifted him so long; 'I rose up:' this is opposite to her former lying still, and refusing to give him entry; now she yields, and begins to bestir herself, to draw her clothes to her, &c. Which imports not only more diligence as to the matter of duty, but much seriousness as to the manner: it seems to differ from opening (which is the actual receiving of Christ into the heart when all things are ready and prepared) not as if it were simply contradistinguished

from faith (for, this being a fruit of her repentance, and he acknowledged to be her Beloved, there behoved to be faith in it) but only, as one degree or act of faith is distinguished from another, as, Luke 15 in the prodigal's case, it is said, after he came to himself, before he act, he deliberates and stirs himself; so this holds forth, her rousing and quickening herself, for receiving Christ, which is not separate in time, either from her repentance in the former words, or her faith in those that follow; she 'rose to open,' that shows her design, that she resolved now not to stand at, but to go over her former reasonings; and purposed by this stirring, to have the way rid for Christ's entry, and to make him welcome; which shews, it was no confused exercise that her repentance put her unto, but distinct and digested, like the prodigal's, 'I will arise, and go to my Father, and say,' &c.

Observe. 1. Repentance will put the securest sinners to their feet, when it is real. 2. There is no settling of an exercised mind, but in receiving of Christ, and in making of him welcome. 3. When the heart is affected with the sense of sin, and desire to have Christ, it is not time to delay or dispute what to do, but to rise and open, and by faith to receive Christ. 4. Where a soul hath been plunged in security, or (like the prodigal, Luke 15) in profanity, there will be need of gathering, composing and rousing of itself, for exercising of faith in Christ; this is not from any difficulty that is on grace's side to receive a sinner, but from the difficulty that is on the sinner's side, in acting of grace, who being at a low ebb, must by several steps of grace ascend out of it, with a kind of violence to corruption, discouragement and unbelief, from under the power of which the penitent must arise, when they combine to entangle and detain him, as she loth here. 5. Believers should be distinct in their exercises, especially in reference to their end and design, that in their activity and stirrings it may be discerned by themselves what they would be at: some exercises are confused, neither having a distinct cause, nor a distinct end; kindly exercise hath both, though much confusion may be with it. 6. Faith in Christ, and making way for him into the heart, should be, and is the native end of all inward exercises, diligence in duties, &c. This must be the great scope of all pains whatsoever; those stings of exercise that put not the soul to open to him, though they put the person through other, are not to be fostered, nor laid much weight upon. 7. Though faith and duty differ, and the most active frame is not to be rested on without faith, yet activity in duty, and liveliness in the exercise of faith go together: as her rising and opening do, even as before, her lying still, and the keeping of him out, went together. Yea, 8. This activeness runs especially to perform what he called to: he called to open, and she accordingly riseth to open; which shews, that the penitent's activity doth principally bend itself towards those duties that Christ in a more especial manner calls for.

She proceeds to set down her experience which she found when she had risen, which is the third effect of the work of grace on her by Christ's putting in his hand: when she arose to open, her hands and fingers dropped 'sweet smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock:' she continues the comparison of opening a shut door, he, as it were, put in the key without, and she came to draw the handle or slot within (as is usual in some locks.) The door is the heart, as Psalm 24:7, called 'the everlasting doors:' The lock that closeth, is unbelief and security, indisposition and declining in the exercise of grace; whereby, as by a fast lock, Christ in his access to the heart is kept out: now she puts to her hands and fingers to the lock within, which imports her stirring herself again in the exercise of faith and diligence, being now arisen to open. Therefore by faith we are said to grip and take hold of Christ, and to work righteousness, and by it the heart is opened to him, as follows. This 'sweet smelling myrrh' that drops, is the flowing of habitual grace, which formerly was not vigorous and active, but now it flows and vents, and is to the heart as oil applied to moisten and make easy a rusted lock, to make it open without difficulty: this grace is ordinarily compared to myrrh, and the anointing typical oil was made of it and of other spices, Exod. 30:23. It is said here, to drop, from her 'fingers,' implying the active stirring of her faith; because when faith becomes lively, it puts all other graces to exercise, and thereby (as it were by oil) her former hardness and indisposition was softened and removed, and her heart made meet to act lively. In sum, it is this, that when she, in the exercise of faith and holiness, set herself seriously and effectually to make way for Christ, and to remove what formerly had kept him out, through her indisposition, unexpectedly she found, that by his putting in of his hand, it went much more easily and sweetly than she expected, all had been so anointed and quickened; and thus conduced to the opening of her heart, as dropping of oil doth to the easy opening of a lock: which shews, 1. That the work of grace upon the heart, being applied by Christ from without, doth leave an inward fitness on the heart within for the opening of itself to him: grace infused and quickened by Christ's Spirit, will make the most indisposed and secure heart to open to him heart somely. 2. That though Christ apply grace from without to open the heart, yet will he have the heart formally opening itself to him; and though the heart open itself formally to him, yet it is by the virtue of his application from without; for, this putting to of her hand, and its dropping myrrh, is the effect of his putting in his hand first. 3. Often when the most spiritual and difficult duties (if it were even faith itself) are essayed, they will be found more easy than was expected, and none can tell how they will go with them, till they undertake and set about them. She, while lying in her security, thought it impossible to get this done, yet now it goes easily and sweetly with her. O! but when grace goes along and flows, the exercise of a duty is a sweet and easy work. 4. Although the exercise of grace

make duties easy, and a supply of help be given thereby for doing of spiritual duties, yet the Lord will have the person essaying duty ere he find it so; nor can he find or expect that supply that will facilitate duties to him, till he first set himself about them, as she first rises to open before her fingers drop with myrrh. 5. Those that set themselves to open to Christ, and mind that singly from the sense of their need of him, and being affected for wronging of him, will not find grace wanting and deficient to help them; and by this all the mouths of unbelievers will be stopped, that are ready to say, and usually say, they had not grace to open. 6. Faith in exercise hath a great influence on the keeping of all other graces in a believer fresh and green; because it acts by Christ's strength, and therefore when it is in exercise, it makes all the rest to 'drop' as it were, with sweet smelling myrrh.'

Verse 6. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

This 6th verse contains five particulars of the Bride's experience in this case: the first of them, 'I opened,' &c. is the last effect following upon his putting in his hand, verse 4. This work of grace left her not in an indifferency, whether to open or not, but having given her to will in the former verse, now he gives also to do, and actually determines the will, or makes it determine itself to receive him: but now Christ is found to be absent, whereupon follows the other steps of her carriage, and the disappointments that she met with in seeking of him. This opening is the very thing called for by him, verse 2, which (considering the words following) is especially to be understood of her exercising of faith in him, whereby the heart is dilated to receive him, hence believing is called a 'receiving of Christ,' John 1:12. And it being a heart-receiving, it must be the very thing understood here by opening. Now although faith, according to its several acts, may be several ways considered; yet that act of faith whereby the heart consents to receive Christ, and to rest on him, is that which is mainly here aimed at, 1. Because this opening, is opposed to refusing, Psalm 81:10,11. It must therefore be consenting. 2. It is not giving of consent, that mainly keeps Christ at a distance from souls, or keeps them without interest in him, as opening to him, or receiving of him, entitles them to him, John 1:11,12, and Acts 16:14. 3. This opening is both different from conviction, resolutions, repentance, and what may be supposed to precede; these were in the words going before: and is also distinguished from sense and the fruits of believing, which follow after: it must therefore be the heart's yielding to Christ's call, and submitting thereunto, Rom.

10:3, as actually consenting to be his: yet all these acts should not be looked on as distinct in respect of time, as they proceed from grace (which puts all together) but in nature, and in respect of the distinct uptaking of the same grace, in its effects: in a word, saith the Bride, the Lord having applied the work of his Spirit to me, it effectuated one step after another, and left me not until I yielded myself to him to be his, as a mansion for him to dwell in. Which shews, 1. That grace doth not only work upon the understanding to enlighten it, but that it doth also immediately work on the will, and determines it; for, this opening of the heart is an effect of that work of grace, verse 4, as the former steps were. 2. The act of believing and opening to Christ is both the effect of grace, and also the work formally of the believer: therefore the Lord is said to 'open the heart,' Acts 16:14, because the effect flows from his putting to his hand; and the Bride is said to open her own heart, because she formally brought forth, or elicited the act of faith, by the strength of grace. 3. This (being compared with his call, verse 3.) shews, that it is by faith that way is made for Christ into the heart, and it is that which especially entitles one to Christ, closes with his call, receives him, and enters covenant with him; for, if opening or believing be that which he calls for, as giving him access to the hearts of his people, then believing being the performance of that called for condition, must unite the soul to him, and enter him into the heart. 4. There is some peculiar efficacy in faith, in the uniting of one to Christ, in accepting of Christ's call, and making way for him to come into the heart, which is not in any other grace: or, it hath a peculiar way of concurring, in effectuating the person's union with Christ and (and so in justification) which no other grace hath: hence this opening is peculiarly to be attributed to it, and is distinct from repentance spoken of before, verse 4, and from other duties mentioned in the words following. 5. Whoever honestly, from the sense of sin and need of Christ, and desire to have him to supply their need, essays believing, and opening their heart to him, shall certainly come good speed, and without fail attain their design; 'I rose to open' (saith she) 'and I opened.' 6. Although the distinct exercise of faith be not attained instantly, (but there must be first a rising, and an offering of violence to our corruptions in the pursuing thereof, before we win to the distinct opening of the heart) yet it should be prosecuted till it be perfected. 7. Sometimes the exercise of faith will be distinct and discernible, so that a believer can tell he hath believed; and it is no less comfortable to be clear from serious reflection on ourselves, that we have indeed by faith yielded to Christ, than to be clear of it by the fruits following thereupon: for she is clear and confident in this, that she had opened to him.

Having opened, now the beloved is gone: like as a husband, being offended at his wife's disrespect to him, should withdraw, when she at length with

much ado were brought to rise; so our Lord Jesus takes that way of rebuking kindly the former unkindness of believers, by after-desertions and withdrawals. The word is doubled, 'but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone,' or 'he was gone, he was gone;' which doth not only import in his carriage a sad withdrawing, and in hers an observation of it; but also a sorrowful regret and weightiness, as having met with a sad disappointment (as the following words clear) as if she had said, at last I opened, but alas he was gone and away! What this withdrawing of Christ is, we may know by considering what his being present is, which is not to be understood of the omnipresence of the Godhead, there being no coming or going that can be attributed to that infinite essence, which is every where, at all times present; but it is in respect of the out-letting of his especial love, and that in the peculiar way of manifesting it to his people, and not in regard of his love itself, or of their interest in him; for, here her interest stands in him, and faith in him is exercised, and the lifelessness that she was under is removed, so that now she is acting faith, and there is a presence of grace making her active and lively, even under this withdrawing: the thing then which is wanting, is a sensible manifestation of Christ's love to her, which now upon her yielding to open, she expected to have been filled with, as a wife opening to her husband should expect his embracements, and yet in place thereof, find that he were gone: this withdrawing is no real alteration on Christ's side, nor are we to look upon it as if now she had less than before she believed and bestirred herself; for, her union with him, and the influence of his grace on her remained: but, 1. She missed that comfortable and sweet sense of love that she expected from him; that was kept up. 2. She was then more sensible that he was provoked, and found that her peace was not so well grounded, which formerly she pleased herself with, as she conceived. 3. Upon this also followed some kindly exercise, whereby Christ might make his dissatisfaction known, as a husband doth his, by his withdrawing; so that although interest be not disputed, and the heart be kept in the exercise of duties yet disquietness may grow above what it was: and Christ wisely times this sense of his absence now, with the presence of his grace, because she might both better endure it, and it would also be more profitable thus to chasten her now, than if he had done it in her dead condition.

Hence, *Observe*, 1. That believers, in the lively exercise of faith and duty, may have many more exerciss, and sharper spiritual dispensations, than they had formerly in their security. 2. Christ hath a peculiar way both of presence with, and absence from his own. 3. Often believers when they are in the exercise, of faith and duty, expect satisfying manifestations of Christ to their sense; for, it is supposed here, that she looked for him this way, when she opened. 4. Sometimes Christ will keep up the sense of his love, and withdraw himself from his own,

even when in the exercise of faith and duty. 5. Christ's withdrawing is not always an evidence of the worst frame, even as his presence doth not speak out his satisfaction every way with his people's condition, but these are often acts of sovereignty, timed according to his good pleasure; for, she is now in better case than formerly, and yet he is withdrawn and gone. 6. Christ by his withdrawing may be chastening for some former sin or disrespect, done to him before the believer became lively, who yet for good ends did suspend the taking notice of that sin, till he was in a frame to bear it, and profit by it. 7, Christ's withdrawings ought to be observed by his people, as well as other pieces of their own experience: it is profitable to know what he doth, as well as what they do themselves. 8. There is a great difference betwixt faith and sense; yea, betwixt clearness of interest, and sensible presence: the one may be in a great measure, where the other is not, as in this case here. 9. It is the exercise of faith in Christ, that makes his absence to be discerned: (for that is not known here, till the door be opened) and the more lively a person be in the exercise of grace, the more will Christ's absence be marked and regretted; whereas in a believer's secure frame, or in a person still unacquainted with Christ, his absence is not discerned nor laid to heart. 10. Although sense be not satisfied, yet believers should not disclaim their faith when it is real, but acknowledge that they do believe, and open to Christ when they do it: so it is here, 'I opened,' or yielded by faith to him; even when he was gone, and I could not find him.

What effect this disappointment had upon her part, follows, 'my soul failed when he spake: 'This effect is sad and heavy, the sense of her sin, and the apprehension of her grieving of him, kindled by love to him, pierceth and stoundeth her so to the heart, that it becomes almost lifeless: so the word is used, Gen. 42:28, of Jacob's sons, when they found the money in their sacks' mouths, they were sore afraid, and 'their hearts failed them,' or went out of them; it is a surprising unexpected heaviness, and that in a high degree, holding forth, how deeply believers will be affected when disappointed of the expected presence of Christ, and that by their own guilt: the cause or occasion of this failing of heart, is in these words, 'when he spake,' which look to the time past, though the effect was present; and they may be two ways understood. 1. As being a remembering how it was with her while he spake (for now he speaks not) she now observes, and calls to mind, that when he called and she shifted, yet even then her heart was affected with his word; and this smites her now, that she should have so long smothered so much kindness, and have brought all this upon herself; it is like that of the disciples, Luke 24:32, who after Christ was gone, say one to another, 'Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and opened up to us the scriptures; though before they little heeded it, yet afterward they observe;

and when they recollect themselves, it becomes more distinct than it was in the time. 2. It may be looked on as being the present effect of the words formerly spoken, which although they did not so sensibly affect her when he spoke them, yet now being brought to her remembrance (as, John 14:16,) they pierce her, that she should have slighted and neglected them, as, Matt. 26, when Peter is admonished, the word for the time affects not, but afterward, verse 75, when he remembers it (as challenges bring back words formerly spoken) 'he went out and wept bitterly;' so her resentment of what she formerly slighted is now bitter.

Observe. 1. The time of Christ's absence is a time when by-gone challenges, or challenges for by-past offences, use to recur. 2. Often believers, when brought through a secure fit, will find some stirrings and effects of the grace of Christ to have been in them, even then, which were not so discernible to them while they were under their distemper. 3. Christ's word may have effects long after it is spoken and heard; yea, a word long since heard, may be an after-remembrance (being brought again to mind by the Spirit) John 14:26, and have operation more than at first: or, although for a time it have had none at all, but may be as seed under the ground, till the Spirit blow on it to bring it above, yet afterward by the Spirit's influence, it may have many blessed effects. 4. There is nothing that will affect a gracious soul more, than to miss Christ's presence, when the disappointment hath been procured by its own sin; if it be but a withdrawing for a time, that will make the hearts of his own even to fail; but O! if it be eternal, by reason of sinners' constant slighting of him now in the offers of his grace, what desperate anguish will it produce! And there are none that slight Christ's call now and put him away, but one time or other it will be heavy to them and cost them dear. 5. It is a kindly thing, when a believer misses Christ, and wants presence, to be affected with it; and it is unkindly to discern absence, and not to be affected. 6. Repentance, where it is kindly, or right heart-sorrow will have its continuance and growth from one degree to another: this failing of heart is a continued, but a further step of the moving of her bowels, verse 4. 7. Although interest in Christ be clear, and matters otherwise not in an evil case, yet want of Christ's presence for the time, and the remembrance of by-gone guilt, will be a very sad exercise to the believer, and affect his heart very much.

This is a sad posture; yet she gives not over, notwithstanding of this or any following disappointments, till she obtain the holy design she drives: where faith and love are exercised together, for attaining Christ, nothing will scare nor discourage the soul in its pursuit of him. Her carriage follows in four steps (whereby she endeavours to recover him) with the success that she found in each of them. 1. She gives private diligence. 2. She applies herself to public ordinances, verse 7. When that also fails, she, 3. Betakes herself to the exercise of

mutual fellowship with the daughters of Jerusalem, and seeks their help, verse 8, and at last, rests on the exercise of faith in him, chap. 6:3, Her secret painfulness, with the fruit thereof, is set down in two steps, in the rest of this verse. 1. 'I sought him,' that is, painfully used all means to meet with him, as one searcheth earnestly for what he wants; so the word is taken, Prov. 15:14. It shews her seriousness as to the end, and also her holy solicitude in the manner of pursuing it: 'But' (saith she) 'I found him not;' he was now obtained, but she continueth still under the want of the sensible manifestations of his presence. Again, the second is, 'I called him,' that is, prayed to him; 'but' (saith she) 'he gave me no answer:' that is, I had no sensible ease, and return of prayer; though the prayer was not altogether unheard for, her continuing to seek after him, shews, that she was answered with strength in her soul, Psalm 138:3. There was sustaining grace even then, though there were not the soul-satisfying and comforting enlargements, or sensible embracements of Christ, and his warm speaking of peace to her heart, which she aimed at; and the greatness of her ardour after these makes her think that she had received no answer at all. It is in sum, as if a wife, by searching and running to and fro, did seek her husband; and when that succeeds not, she calls him by his name; so did she leave no means unessayed, but did not obtain what she sought. Which shews, 1. That God often blesseth want of sense to a believer, to be a spur to much diligence. 2. When desertions are most sensible, then ought the believer to be most diligent in the use of all means, especially of prayer, for an outgate. 3. There may be much life in duty, even then when there is little sense and satisfaction as to the event; there is here seeking and calling on him, though she found him not, and he gave her no answer. 4. It is a blessed heart-sorrow, that vents in diligence and prayer to God for his presence. 5. The remembrance and resentment of our by-gone wrongs to Christ should not so affect as to scare us from him, but should press us to seek to be again in his company; otherwise, if we scare at him, or bide away from him, because of the sense of guilt, it will be the mending of one fault with another: it is ever best reckoning our own guilt, when he is present. 6. Christ's presence is the only cordial that can satisfy a soul, fainting under a sense of the wrongs it hath done to Christ: therefore when her heart fails, she sits not down under it for ease, but seeks and calls for himself and his own presence. 7. There may be much seeking and prayer, which may be so indeed, and accepted of by God, and yet his comfortable presence be kept up, and the particular sought for suspended. 8. Often the having our eye in prayer upon one particular (suppose upon one comfort) may make us construct our prayers to have less of an answer than they have, while as indeed they are not fruitless, but may be answered in other things, which we do not observe. 9. The Lord may deny comfort when it is sought, and yet shew his grace in sustaining his people, and quickening them to follow him in their duty, when they in the mean time may take

it for a sort of refusal, 2 Cor. 12:9,10. It is ever good for believers to reflect on their duty, and on the success of it, whatever it be; and that not in one step only, but in the whole tract of their way. 10. If we compare this with her former carnally easy and secure condition, verse 2,3, we see, that sensible desertion, when a believer is holily active under it, is no ill condition; comparatively it's better with her now when she is swooning and fainting without Christ, than when she did lie still carelessly without him; grace is working more actively now (as from verse 4, is clear) and she is nearer unto him, and hath much more solid ground of peace than she had at that time.

Verse 7. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my vail from me.

When private means do not the business, the Bride betakes her to public ordinances, and frequents them; and this 7th verse shews that she found, in the use of that means, a sad disappointment also, which is several ways aggravated; Christ's presence is easily lost, but it is not easily recovered; this will cost much pains, and the enduring of many perplexing disappointments: it is much more difficult to win to enjoy Christ, than it is to lose him lying on the bed in ease may bring on that, which much labour and watching will not remove.

That this verse points at her going about the public ordinances, the scope makes clear, that being the next ordinary means used for enquiring after an absent Christ, when private diligence hath had little success. The matter of the words as was cleared in chap. 3:3, doth also evidence this; the church is the 'city' which hath 'walls' (that is, the ordinances) for preventing her hurt, and promoting of her edification: the 'watchmen' are her ministers, appointed and designed to keep the walls, and to go about the city; they are said to go about the city, in respect of their care and solicitude to prevent inward difficulties and hazards, and are called 'keepers of the walls,' as they stand to repel what from without may disturb the church's edification, and ecclesiastic peace; in a word, they are the same by office, that these were, chap. 3:3, but their carriage to her is more unlike the relation they stood in: which is set forth in four steps, all which are to be looked on as a special piece of untenderness in them, and of suffering in her; which now the Lord in his wisdom permits her to meet with, that so she may find how unwisely she had done to neglect Christ's kind call, verse 2, when as now other hands deal more roughly with her: the reasons hinted, chap. 3:3, do confirm this;

besides, there being so much spoken of their wounding of her, either she or they must be wrong; now she is (for the main) in her duty, and under a fainting condition, seeking after Christ, and there is no warrant to wound a poor seeker of Christ in such a condition, even where there have been former failings, (2 Cor. 2:7, the apostle will have the incestuous person in such a case tenderly dealt with, lest he 'should be swallowed up') but it is duty rather to bind up their wounds, and to pour oil into them, by speaking a word in season to such weary souls. This was, no doubt, their duty, and the Lord himself doth so. Isa. 50:4. Neither could her former security be a round to reach her such blows now, especially her offence eing betwixt Christ and her alone, and so no object of public reproof; and she being a burden to herself, ought not to have been made more heavy by them: besides, chap. 3:4, the watchmen dealt more tenderly with her, when yet she had been in security also. This dealing of theirs cannot be to speak a word in season to the weary soul of a tender person, whose carriage is so convincing even to others, that verse 9, they give her a high commendation, which is a clear testimony against the malignity of these watchmen; they must therefore be looked on as untender, or unskilful, or both, who do thus misapply the word contrary to the end for which it is appointed, and as miserable comforters talk to the grief of such as he hath wounded. 1. The first step, is, 'they found me:' it is not the finding of a friend, as chap. 3:3, but (as the effects clear) the finding of an enemy, and is, as if a minister should digress of purpose, to take in the case of some poor tender soul, that he might reach it a blow, though beside his text: thus, Ezek. 34:21. The idle shepherds (who it may be, had a true external call) are said to thrust with the side and shoulder, and push at the diseased with the horns: and, verse 4, to rule with force and cruelty: and in Ezek. 13:20, they are said to hunt the souls of God's people: a part of which cruelty and oppression, is verse 22, in making the righteous sad this is their finding, a seeking occasion to load them with bitter invectives and reproaches. It is observable also, that here at the very first finding they hurt her, without so much as suffering her to tell her own case, as she did to the watchmen, chap. 3:3, so that, without taking notice of her condition, they presently fall upon her; which saith, that in their smiting her, they did not respect her case. 2. They smote her; that is, more gently at first; however, they suffer no occasion to slip, whereby they have any access to give a wipe to such heart-exercised souls, but it is laid hold upon; and what infirmity is in any of them, or inconsiderateness in their zeal, that is casten up, and often somewhat of less moment is much magnified. The word takes in also wronging with the tongue, Jer. 18:18, 'Come let us smite Jeremiah with the tongue:' and it is like, by the words following in that verse, the profane priests had no little accession to it. 3. They wound her: this is a further step, and imports such a smiting as continues till the person be wounded, denoting a higher degree of cruelty, such as is the persecuting

of those whom God hath smitten, and talking to their grief, Psalm 69:26, which will exceedingly wound a tender exercised soul who is soon affected; and the Psalm especially points at Judas, who, John 12:4,5,6, was ready to condemn the holy zeal of an honest soul, which our Lord vindicates and leaves on record to her eternal commendation. 4. The last step is, 'they took away my vail from me;' the word that is rendered 'vail,' comes from a root that signifieth to subdue, it is that same word which we have, Psalm 144:2, 'who subdues the people,' &c. It hath a threefold use, 1. For decoration, as Isa.3:23. 2. For a sign of modesty, pleaded for by the apostle, 1 Cor. 11:6. 3. And mainly, for a sign of women's subjection to their own husbands; for which cause Rebekah puts on her vail, when she meets Isaac, Gen. 24:65. And therefore it is called power, as being the sign of the wife's being under the power of her husband, 1 Cor. 11:10. Here her vail is the tenderness of her profession, whereby, in a decent, modest and humble way, she professed herself to be a believer, seeking after Christ Jesus, as one bearing the badge of subjection to him as her Husband. The taking away of the vail, is their wronging of that honest profession she had, and the giving of her out, not to be that which she professed herself to be, and so not worthy of a vail; but that her profession was hypocrisy, her painfulness and tenderness, conceitedness, even as Judas, John 12:5, nicknames that good work wrought upon Christ by the honest woman, calling it wastry: and by these, and such other means, often tender souls are affronted, and proposed as a reproach to the multitude; even as if a wife that is chaste, were denuded of her vail, and reputed as a gadding harlot, while she is seeking her own husband: so when the Lord threatens his people, that their lewdness should be made to appear, he useth this expression, Ezek. 23:26,27, They shall 'strip thee out of thy clothes;' &c. that being a manifest shame to a woman, that should be covered, 1 Cor. 11:6. This is added, to shew that they pretend they have reason for their smiting: they disgrace her, and take away her vail, that they may not be thought to smite holiness or tenderness, but a hypocrite under such a vail, or a whore more decently adorned than became her to be.

This is the sum; when I prevailed not in the private diligence, I frequented the public ordinances; but those who were watchmen and healers by office, being untender (as if they had intended it) did by malice, or want of affection, or through unskilfulness and want of experience, so apply the word, that they sewed pillows under the arm-holes of the profane, and made the righteous sad: whereby I was not only nothing profited, but returned, more weighted and ashamed, and had no encouragement to seek any more of their help, as I had done, chap. 3:3, but was necessitated to turn to others: which shews, that she accounts them untender, and therefore, sets it down here as a piece of her sad trial; whereas, had it been the wounding of a friend, it had been a 'kindness to her,' Psalm 141:5, and would

have engaged her to follow on for healing from that same hand, so far it would have been from being the matter of her complaint, neither would it have been complained of by her.

These words afford many such doctrines, as, chap. 3:3. As 1. That the visible church is a distinct incorporation by itself, and all its members have right to its privileges, to wit, such whereof they are capable: it is the city, and they are the citizens, Eph. 2:19. 2. It is a city that is not without fear and hazard, though it have walls; but it had need to be watched both within and without: or, the visible church hath many enemies, she is in constant war hence therefore, she is called the militant church; and for this cause, she hath walls and watchmen. 3. The Lord hath provided her with sufficient means against all assaults. 4. A lawfully called ministry, or watchmen peculiarly designed for that end, are the great means Christ hath appointed for preventing the hurt, and promoting the good and edification of his church, Eph. 2:12,13. They are as the sentinels, which he hath set on the walls, for giving advertisement and warning; and this well becomes their office, Isa. 62:6. Ezek. 3 and 33 chapters, and elsewhere. 5. Tender believers will put a great price upon public ordinances, even when they seem to themselves to come little speed in their private duties; private diligence furthers public, and public furthers private: these two ought not to be, neither will they be separated in a tender person, but go together. 6. Tender believers may have weights added to their exercise, and a load put above a burden, even by those whose stations and relations call for much more sympathy and healing. 7. Public ordinances may be sometimes unfruitful to believers, even when they have great need, and are under great sense of need. 8. When one that is tender gets no good nor ease by public ordinances, often there is an addition made to his burden thereby. 9. Untender, unskilful, and unfaithful men may creep in, and be admitted to the ministry, and to watching over the church, as Judas was. 10. When such are gifted and (as to order) lawfully called, they are truly ministers, though not true ministers, and have authority for discharging of all duties; and duties discharged, or ordinances dispensed by them, according to Christ's warrant, are valid, and the word from their mouth, is to be received as from him: therefore they are called watchmen, which imports them to be really in office, which could not be, if the former assertions were not true.

11. Very often, tender believers, in their exercises, suffer much from such ministers or, an untender minister is often a great affliction to tender exercised believers, yea, of all men, these prove most sadly afflicting to them; no man wounds godliness more, or wounds and affronts the profession thereof more in them that are the most real and tender professors, than a gifted untender minister may do, and often doth; though sometimes the Lord will make use of him for their

good, to humble them and yet more to provoke them to the study of more seriousness in secret duties, and to more close and constant waiting on the Lord himself. 12. Where enmity against godliness once ariseth, and vents itself against the godly, it often grows from one degree to another as here, men, especially ministers once engaged in it, are not easily recovered and brought out of that evil, but are carried, yea, often hurried from one step to another: yet, she accounts them watchmen, as holding out the respect she bare to their office, even then. Whence observe, 13. That it is a piece of spiritual wisdom and tenderness, to distinguish carefully betwixt the office of the ministry, or the ordinance itself, and the faults and untenderness of persons, who may miscarry in the exercise of that office and not to fall from the esteem of the ordinances because of them, or of what faults may be in them, but even then to respect the ordinance out of respect to Christ, and his institution and appointment. 14. Believers should observe the fruit of public ordinances, as well as of secret diligence, as the Bride here doth.

Verse 8. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

When this means fails her, she gives not over, but betakes herself to the use of mutual fellowship with the saints (which is the third step of her carriage) verse 8., that she may have their help for recovering of Christ's presence: she propounds her case to them, and presseth for their bearing burden with her; her case is in the last words, 'I am sick of love:' a strange disease, yet kindly to a believer: this sickness implies pain as of a woman in travail, whose showers are sharp, and pangs vehement till she bring forth: the same word is used to this purpose, Isa. 26:17. 'Like as a woman that draweth near her delivery, is in pain,' &c. And it imports in this place, these two, 1. Vehement desire after Christ, from ardent love to him, so that she could not endure to want him. 2. Much heart-affectedness following upon that ardent desire, which (under her former disappointments) did beget such pain and fainting, that it was as a sore sickness, tho' not dangerous: this sickness differs from that spoken of, chap. 2:5, as the scope shews; that is like the pain procured by an overset of the stomach; so the sense of his love being let out in a very great measure, was like to master her; not, that sense of his love is simply or in itself burdensome, but she is weak like an old bottle, or a queasy and weak stomach that cannot bear much: but this is like the pain that proceeds from hunger, and a strong appetite, when that which is longed for is not obtained, which augments the desire, and at last breeds fainting and sickness. This shews, 1. That love to Christ, where it is sincere, is a most sensitive

thing. 2. That the more disappointments it meets with, in seeking after sensible manifestations of Christ, it grows the more vehement. 3. That continued absence to a tender soul, will be exceeding heavy and painful; hope deferred maketh the heart sick, especially when the sweetness of Christ's presence hath been felt, and his absence distinctly discerned. 4. That Christ's presence is the soul's health, and his absence its sickness, have else what it will. 5. That love to Christ will sometimes, especially after challenges and disappointments, so overpower the soul, that it cannot to its own sense (at least) act under it, or sustain it (it seems so heavy a burden) as sickness will do to the body, if it get not an outgate.

The way she takes to obtain Christ, after all other means fail her, is by making her application to the daughters of Jerusalem: indeed it is Christ, and not they that can cure her, he is the only medicine for a sick soul; therefore, her design is not to rest in their company, but to make use of it for obtaining his company: for, the company, although it were even of angels, will not be satisfying to a soul that seeks Christ; the best fellowship is empty without him, John 20:12,13, 'Why weepest thou?' (say the angels) 'Why?' (saith she) 'they have taken away my Lord.' In this consider, 1. The parties she betakes herself to, 'the daughters of Jerusalem,' spoken of, chap. 1:5, professors not of the worst stamp; yet (as after appears) under much ignorance of Christ, and of spiritual exercise: this is the means she goes now unto. Where observe, 1. Spiritual communion, amongst professors or believers, is not only a duty, but a special means, being rightly made use of, to further our fellowship with Christ. 2. Believers, in their sad cases, may, and ought freely to make use of this means, by desiring other's help; and for their own ease and furtherance in meeting with Christ, by communicating their case to them, as she loth here. 3. Even the strongest believers (whom the Bride represents) may be helped by those that are much weaker than themselves in gifts, grace, and experience; as the daughters of Jerusalem are here: and so Paul often requires of others, inferior to, and much short of him, the help of their prayers. Consider, 2. Her desire to them, 'Tell him' (saith she) 'that I am sick of love;' make my ease known to him, and hold it up by prayer: she had been doing so herself, and had not come speed, and therefore she puts them upon it, that they might help her to obtain an answer. *Observe.* 1. That prayer for one another, is a duty of mutual fellowship, especially for those that are exercised others should be in that exercise with them, James 5:17. 2. Believers sometimes will not trust themselves with the opening of their own case to Christ, and will not be satisfied with their own way, but will think others can do it much better. 3. Praying for ourselves, and desiring of help from others, should go together; or, it will give most clearness and peace to believers, to desire the help of others, when they have been serious in the use of all means by themselves, as she had been. 4. It says,

That believers holding up the case of another, will be very acceptable to Christ. And, 5. That there is nothing, we can tell Christ, of our own or other folk's case, that will be more pleasant to, and taking with him, than this, that we are they who are 'sick of love' to him: this is propounded, as that which may and will be most acceptable to him: what shall ye tell him? (so the words run) these are the best and most acceptable news to him. 6. Such a case as love-sickness is a good motive, upon which to press for the help of others' prayers, and that which may also give confidence to any, to bear such a message to Christ. 7. Believers, in their communion with others, should more insist upon their own cases, than on the faults of ministers, or miscarriages of others: although she was formerly smitten by the watchmen, yet this is the great thing she propounds to them. Consider, 3. A qualification, put in her suit to the daughters of Jerusalem, 'If ye find him:' that is, if ye get access, which now she thinks herself excluded from. And it imports, 1. That there is a peculiar finding of, and access unto Christ at one time beyond another. 2. That a weak believer may sometimes have much more access to Christ, and sensible communion with him, than others of greater parts and experience: she supposes that they might find, while she did not. 3. That when any get access for themselves, then especially they should remember others, and improve their court with Christ, for their good who may be in bonds, and under sad exercise then (saith she) when ye get access, remember my case she would share of the fruit of their most warm enjoyments. 4. She doth not resent nor envy this, or become jealous of it, but humbly submits to be helped by them Christ will have every one useful to another, and the strongest should not disdain to be in the common of the weakest.

The last thing is the manner of her proposing of it 'I charge, or adjure you' (saith she) which hath the force of an oath proposed to others as if she had sworn them that they should do it; the same charge or adjuration is set down, chap. 2:7, and 3:4. She puts them to it, as they will be answerable. Which shews 1. Great seriousness in her; the matter of Christian fellowship, and our desiring of the help of others' prayers, is no matter of compliment, but should in earnest besought for. 2. She desires seriousness in them, in their discharge of this duty: in our praying for others, conscience should be made of it, as seriously as for ourselves, and we should beware of superficialness and overliness in it. 3. Our expressions in our fellowship, especially concerning the most serious purposes, should be suitably serious. A light manner of speaking in serious things often spills the beauty of them, mars edification, and diminisheth from the weight of the matters themselves.

DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

Verse 9. What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

In this 9th verse, is the third part of the chapter, where the daughters of Jerusalem are brought in speaking; where we may see what effect the Bride's serious charge had upon them: it someway surpriseth and astonisheth them, to see a person convincingly approvable in her carriage, so taken up with that which the most part of the world slights; this makes them think that he whom she asketh for, must be a person beyond ordinary, and in this they conclude right: there is much infirmity in this question (as often many professors are upon the matter really ignorant of Christ's worth) yet some honest-like things (at least) are in it. There is, 1. Respect to her as a beautiful and goodly person, even when she was thought little of by the watchmen. 2. Docileness, and a desire to know. 3. Some suspicion of their own knowledge of Christ: and, 4. Ingenuity in seeking help. All which, are good symptoms in beginners; and we will see that the question ended well with them, chap. 6:1, and it is like was awakened in them by her serious carriage. The return they make to her charge hath in it, 1. The title they gave her. 2. The question they propose to her. 3. The rise of it, or that which gives them occasion to ask, and which puts them to it. The title is excellent, 'O thou fairest among women:' it was given to the Bride by Christ himself, chap. 1:8. It implies, 1. A spiritual beauty in her who now was thought little of by the watchmen, and had her own crosses in the world, yet even in this case lovely in herself, and lovely to those daughters, *Observe*. 1. That believers should be eminently convincing, and commendable in their carriage even before others; they should be fairest among them, and for spiritual beauty conspicuous, as lights shining in a dark place. 2. Grace, when seriously in exercise, is that which makes any person (though outwardly mean and contemptible) truly beautiful and lovely: it makes them so really, and also in the eyes of all spiritual beholders. 3. Sometimes God will make honest seekers of him the more lovely to others, when corrupt ministers seek most to defame them: the watchmen's wounding her, mars not the daughters' estimation of her; and this shews that they did smite her without reason. Again, 2. It implies respectfulness on their part, and also honesty; for there is now no external thing to commend her to them: which saith, 1. That to the spiritual eye of honest souls, none will be so beautiful as the person that is holy; yea, sometimes

holiness will have a commendation in the consciences even of them that are strangers to it. 2. Often holiness may be more esteemed of, and holy persons more respectfully dealt with, by men of little either knowledge or profession, than by those who may be much more knowing, and whose station and place calls them to be much more tender; the Bride here is like the wounded person, Luke 10:31, &c. whom the Samaritan succoured, when both the Priest and the Levite had passed by him. 3. Where grace shines, it should be highly esteemed of and respected; and such as are but babes in Christ, ought much to reverence those that are of older standing. 4. Tender souls when under exercise, if we can do no more to ease them, should be respectfully spoken unto at least: these daughters do not wound the Bride, as the watchmen did, but speak discreetly and respectfully unto her, although they can further her little. 5. The right use of freedom, and seriousness with humility in mutual fellowship, is a great help to entertain mutual respect among professors; when the weak see the strong ones not puffed up, but condescending to take their help, it will conciliate love and respect: thus the daughters meet the Bride here with respectful carriage. 6. Respectful expressions of one professor to another, with gravity and seriousness, becomes Christian fellowship well; and is a great furtherance of edification and mutual confidence; so we see here, and chap. 6:1, as also in the Bride's expressions preceding.

2. The question propounded by them is, 'What is thy Beloved?' as scarce knowing him, or acquainted with him themselves: it is not spoken out of disdain, but out of desire to know, being convinced that there behoved to be some excellency in him, beyond others, as the following effects clear. The question is proposed by way of comparison, and doubled, 'What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?' or 'the beloved of another?' By beloved, all along is understood that which the soul loves and cleaves unto; therefore Christ is sometimes designed by the one name, the soul's love; and sometimes by the other, the Beloved, as we may see by comparing chap. 3:1,2,3, with chap. 2:16,17, because he eminently and above competition had the Bride's heart. By other beloveds are understood these things that men of the world set their love and affections upon, and which bear most sway with them, as that which in a singular manner their souls love; the same that ordinarily are called idols, because they are put in God's room; there is the same reason here, why they are called other beloveds, and strange lovers elsewhere: such are the belly, Phil. 3:19, the world, 1 John 2:15,16, 'Love not the world, nor the things of it,' &c. 'the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life:' so it is as they had said, there are many things which the men of the world seek after, it is none of all these that this Bride is enquiring for, she rests not satisfied with these, nor valueth them; he must then be some excellent person, a singular and non-such Beloved, that she is so serious

in the enquiry after, and therefore they desire to know from herself what he is. The question is doubled as being the result of a serious desire to know, and of high admiration, what he might be, who was thus enquired for.

3. The words added, shew what is the rise of their question and wondering, to wit, these, 1. 'That thou doest so charge us:' every word hath weight, it is 'thou,' the 'fairest among women,' who certainly can make the best choice. 2. Thou art not only in earnest thyself, but chargest *us* also. And, 3. Not only thou chargest us, but so vehemently, pressing, and weightily; this sure must be some excellent Beloved. This question carrieth in it not so much an enquiry who is the believer's choice, as their desire to know what Christ was indeed, in respect of his real worth, whose name only (or little more) they knew before; therefore they say not, *who* is, but *what* is thy Beloved? As knowing his name, but being much ignorant of his worth. Again, it supposeth such a question to be moved by these professors, upon occasion of her exemplary carriage; and indeed it cannot be told, what thoughts, serious challenges, and exercising questions the convincing carriage of believers will have amongst those with whom they christianly converse; and so it shews, that this seriousness in one may put others to it, to question what the matter may be, and through God's blessing may commend Christ to them in the end, which is the scope.

Observe. 1. There may be some respect to godly persons, where there is much ignorance of Christ himself. 2. Where there is esteem of godliness and of those who study it, there is some begun enquiry for Christ himself, and it leads on to further, although the beginnings be weak. 3. True tenderness in beginners, appears in nothing sooner than in respect to those who were in Christ before them; they are now but beginning, yet this shews itself in the respect they carry to the Bride. 4. It is no shame for those that are unacquainted with Christ, to enquire for him at such as know him. 5. What Christ is, and the necessity of praying for others, is a suitable subject of discourse in Christian fellowship. What is Christ say they to her; and pray for me, saith she to them. 6. Christ's name may be known to many to whom his worth is unknown, or but little known, and who are not acquainted with what he is. 7. All men naturally have some lust, idol, or beloved, that their affection is set upon besides Christ; it is some other thing, from which he is distinguished, and to which he is opposed. 8. Men lay out their affections liberally upon their idols, and upon those things their hearts cleave unto besides Christ; they are beloveds, and opposed to Christ, as being that to the men of the world, that Christ is to his own; they are as Gods and Christs to them, they run so mad upon their idols and are so joined to them, Hos. 4:17, men naturally have an high esteem of their idols, as placing some worth in them which is not, and they have a low esteem of Christ, and prefer their idols to him. 9. This

mistake is a great cause of Christ's being slighted in the world, that they think other beloveds as good as he, and other lives as good as the life of holiness; therefore they go to the farm, plough, market, and make light of Christ, Matt. 22:4. 10. The questioning of this grand principle of corrupt nature, that Christ is no better than other beloveds, or the enquiring whether he be indeed better than these, is one of the first rises of a soul's making forward to enquire for him. 11. The growing of the esteem of Christ in a soul, and the decay of the esteem of all idols (formerly beloveds) go together; as the one stands, the other falls, as the one grows, the other decays. 12. The right up-taking of Christ's worth, is the great thing that commends Christ to a soul (therefore the Bride describes him afterward) and the thorough conviction of the vanity of all other things looseth the grips of our affections from them, and makes way for setting Christ more high. 13. The convincing carriage of a believer may stir and raise an exercise in those that formerly were secure: and God can make the words of a private humble Christian, the rise of a serious enquiry after Christ in another; thus her serious charging of them doth so stick to them, as if that word, 'I charge you,' had pierced them. 14. Nothing more adorns the gospel, and commends Christ, and makes him lovely to others, than the convincing, serious carriage of believers. 15. Those who are not acquaint with Christ's worth, or the exercises of believers, are ready to wonder what moves them and puts them to make such a stir about Christ, more than others, that five satisfied and contented without him.

BRIDE.

Verse 10. My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

From verse 10, to the end (which contains the fourth part of the chapter) the Bride speaks: and in answer to the daughters of Jerusalem their question) in a sweet, pithy, taking manner, commends her Beloved. She is not long in returning answer to their question, as being fully clear and ready to demonstrate Christ, her Beloved, his worth above all: and as impatient that any other should be put in competition with him, (especially by the daughters of Jerusalem, whose edification she studies by this to promote) instantly she steps in with a large commendation of Christ, (tho' in few words) whereby she doth so demonstrate him to be an object infinitely worthy to be her soul's Beloved beyond all others, that chap. 6:1, they as convinced yield, acknowledging that her Beloved was

preferable to all other beloveds, and that therefore they are engaged to love and seek him with her.

In this commendation, she, 1. Asserts Christ's preferableness in the general, verse 10. 2. She confirms and illustrates it in particulars, to verse 16. And then, 3. verse 16, sums it up in an universal expression, as being in its particulars inexpressible. Lastly, Having fully proved her assertion, she resumes the conclusion as unanswerable: 'This' (saith she) 'is my Beloved,' a singular beloved indeed, and therefore it is no wonder that I am so serious in pursuing after him, and so sick of love to him, and so much pained at the very heart for the want of him.

The first general in this 10th verse sets out Christ positively, and comparatively: do you ask (saith she) what my Beloved is? He is a non-such, an incomparable Beloved, 'he is white and ruddy,' O so lovely as he is in himself! and being 'compared with all others, he hath the preeminence by far, as being 'the chiefest among ten thousand.' By 'white and ruddy' we are to conceive Christ's qualifications, according to the strain of the allegory, there being no bodily qualification set out here, Christ at that time not being incarnate, yet even then was he white and ruddy; the due and just mixture of these colours maketh a man lovely, and evidenceth a good complexion of body: so by them in Christ is understood a concurrence of all fit qualifications and excellencies, that may make him lovely to the soul, when by faith looked upon, and taken up, there is sweet beauty and comeliness, or a comely beautiful sweetness that lustres and shines in him, through the excellent qualifications wherewith he is furnished, as the husband of his church, that ravisheth spiritual affections far beyond the greatest beauty that can be in the fairest face; for, indeed he is fairer than the sons of men: there is nothing that may make a Mediator lovely but it is here. Again, as if that did not fully set out his amiableness, she adds, 'He is the chiefest among ten thousand:' this is a definite great number for an indefinite; in sum it is this, there are many beloveds indeed in the world, but compare them all with Christ, they are nothing to him: without all controversy he is the chiefest, 1 Cor. 8:5,6, For 'though there be gods many, and lords many' (to the world) 'yet to us there is but one God, and one Lord Jesus;' in all the world there is but one Christ. The word used here is, he is the standard-bearer, or it may be rendered passively, he is standarded (so to speak) above ten thousand; all tending to the same scope; love declares its rhetoric in seeking words to prefer Christ, as having indignation that his precedency and pre-eminence (who is 'above all things,' Col. 1:17,) should so much as once be questioned: it is like, that in these times the most comely persons were chosen to carry the standard, a piece of dignity being thereby put upon them; so then, if all the most choice, comely, and excellent persons in the world were

mustered together, Christ would be preferred eminently and deservedly above them all.

Whence, *Observe*, 1. That Christ is the most lovely and excellent object that men can set their eyes on, that they can cast their love and affection upon: there is not such an one as Christ, either for the spiritual soul-ravishing beauty that is in him, or the excellent desirable effects that flow from him. O what a singular description is it which follows, if it were understood! 2. Christ is the most singularly excellent Husband that ever was closed with: under that relation he is commended here, as singularly lovely, and loving; it is a most honourable, comfortable, happy, and every way satisfying match to have him for a Husband. 3. Christ's worth in itself is not expressible, and whatever he can be compared with, he doth exceedingly surpass it. 4. Where right thoughts of Christ are, there is nothing admitted to compete with him, other excellencies and beloveds are in their greatest beauty darkened beside him; he is set up as chief, and they are not to be taken notice of beside him, but to be accounted loss and dung. 5. Christ's absence, when believers are right, will never lessen their esteem of him, but even then believers will be warm and fresh in their love to him, and high in their esteem of him. 6. Neither will the great mistakes of others shake believers that have a thorough esteem of Christ's worth, but will rather with holy zeal awake them to commend him the more. 7. As where there is true love to Christ, there Christ will be lovely; so when he is looked on as lovely, that makes the heart to flow and abound with holy rhetoric in commendations of him. 8. True love to Christ, and to others for his sake, will not suffer one to despise the weakness of another, but make them rather take occasion from it, to honour him and edify them so much the more, as the Bride doth here in answering the question proposed. 9. The more nearly and fully any thing be compared with Christ, though it be otherwise lovely, yet then it will be seen to be nothing, he so infinitely excels all things he can be compared with; and it is ignorance of him that makes other things get such a place in men's affections: but, when once they are set for against him, he is found preferable, as incomparably chief, for dignity, riches, and satisfaction, or whatsoever is delightsome, desirable, and truly excellent, verse 11,12,13, &c.

She passeth from the general, to demonstrate it in particulars, and therein she insists in the following verses. If it should be asked, why she descends into particulars, especially now, considering her deserted case? I answer, for these good reasons, 1. That she might the more fully demonstrate, and the more satisfyingly unfold Christ's worth; for, his worth cannot be soon nor easily told, nor conceived, nor soon believed by others, it needs to be demonstrated, amplified, and insisted upon; yet, his worth can bide the trial: there is no truth

may more fully and demonstratively be made out than this, that Christ is a most excellent object of love, and infinitely preferable to all others. 2. This is for the edifying of the daughters of Jerusalem, and in reference to their question, that they might be the more convinced and satisfied anent the incomparable worth and matchless excellency of her Beloved, she brancheth it forth and insists upon it, that so a deeper impression of it might be left upon their hearts, *Observe*. 1. There is nothing more useful for the gaining and edifying of others, than to help them to the right uptaking of Christ's worth. 2. That is a great part of the work that should take up Christians in their fellowship together, to be spending their mutual conferences on that subject for one another's instruction. 3. To edify another, is no diversion from pursuing after him, to souls that love Christ, and would be helped by others to meet with him; this is well consistent with her pursuing after sensible presence for herself, to stay a while instructing them. A third reason of her insisting is, that it is suitable unto, and agrees well with her own sad condition, when he is away, she loves to think and speak of him, and of his loveliness, and that gives her some ease.

Observe. 1. Where love to Christ is, there will be a delight in speaking of him, and setting out his commendation, even when he is absent; it is a kind of ease to tell over his qualifications when he is absent. 2. It is a good diversion under a deserted condition, and a suitable way to an outgate, to be dwelling rather upon the excellency of Christ, than on the comfortless aggravations of our own sad condition; this is more honourable to Christ, more edifying to others, and more pleasant to ourselves: O, it is sweet to think of him! It is more useful also for confirming of our faith in him, for warming our affections to him, and for keeping the mind stayed in dependance on him for the outgate; every attribute or property of his is a cordial to the soul fainting under a deserted case. 4. Her insisting on this subject, shews the nature of true love to Christ, that a soul affected with it, being once entered to speak of this theme or subject (namely the excellency of Christ) it expatiates on it, and is not soon withdrawn from it; this (to say so) is the very native element of it: and it doth the heart good to enumerate, and tell over distinctly the commendable qualifications and excellencies of Christ: all which (being his own) are unspeakably delightful and refreshing to reckon: if there were any good measure of love to Christ in men's hearts, they would not be easily withdrawn from meditating on him, nor from speaking of him; and the great haunt that other things have in our hearts, and the rarity of any expression that tends to Christ's commendation, shews plainly that there are (alas!) other beloveds abounding with us besides him.

In the opening of the following particulars, we would consider, 1. The scope, which is to demonstrate, that Christ Jesus is altogether lovely and desirable

beyond all other things that the hearts of men are set upon; the question proposed, ver. 9, and the closing answer to it, ver. 16 makes this clear. This then being the scope, these particulars must be so taken up, as they best contribute to clear this scope, and so must necessarily imply the excellencies that are in Jesus Christ; the Mediator himself being as the body, and the several qualifications, properties, and excellencies wherewith he is furnished, being as the several members, and parts of that body. Now, seeing Jesus Christ is so excellent himself, and these being instanced as the choice excellencies that are in him, they must needs be exceeding and passing excellent, as the aggreging and heightning of every commendation doth shew: there will be need therefore of much sobriety, holy admiration and reverence, in the opening of them, lest we mishandle so excellent a subject as is the transcendent excellency of our Lord Jesus. 2. That the Spirit intends by these parts, distinct considerations of Christ's loveliness in so many distinct particulars, seems also to be without all question; for the particular enumeration is brought in to demonstrate this general, that he is the chiefest among ten thousand, which is done (as it were) by an induction of so many commendable things that are in him; besides in other scriptures, and especially, Rev. 1:13,14, where our Lord is thus considered, and also in the second and third chapters of that book of the Revelation, particular respect is had to the foresaid description; and these parts are there (being equivalent to them that are here mentioned) expounded of divers attributes and properties of his, and not unlike in many things to the description following, as the particulars will clear. Consider, 3. That it is both difficult and dangerous to be peremptory in the application of these particulars to the object described, it being so exceeding glorious, and the Spirit's expressions so very comprehensive, we dare not so limit the words to one thing, as if they were exclusive of another, nor say this is meant and no other thing; although such and such things as have a necessary connexion with the scope to confirm it, may warrantably be included, and for instances pitched upon, especially when from the analogy that is in the expressions which are borrowed, and from other scriptures, we have some ground to fix upon: but to be sure, the words should be so taken up as they best afford the most solid general doctrines, which are sometimes (because of our darkness, and to prevent our curiosity) to be rested in; for, whatever be meant, it is Christ, and he by these commendations is set forth as most excellent: that all these are to describe a divine person, and no human body, we conceive so clear that it needs no advertisement. 4. All these parts hold him forth, not only as excellent in himself, but as lovely to his people, and as making up their privilege and happiness in having an interest in him to be theirs; and therefore as this is the scope, so it is to be applied as setting out his excellency, and the blessedness of all that have him for theirs; as on the contrary to cry down

all other beloveds of the world, of whom these things cannot be said, for they are singularly peculiar to him.

Verse 11. His head is as the most fine gold; his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.

There are ten parts mentioned, that are brought in as proofs of Christ's singular excellency, each of them almost having a double commendation; two of them are in the 11th verse. The first is, 'his head,' the most eminent part of the body; that furnisheth influence and direction to all the rest: it may signify (if we dare adventure) these three in Christ, 1. His Godhead, which is the most eminent nature of Christ's person, sustaining the other, and furnishing it for its office; thus, 1 Cor. 11:3, as 'the head of the woman is the man,' in respect of his dignity; so 'the head of Christ is God,' as the Godhead 'dwells in him bodily,' Col. 2:9, by a wonderful and unspeakable personal union, the like whereof is not to be found in any other. 2. It may hold out Christ's headship, or sovereignty which he hath as Mediator, being made head of 'the body, the church,' and 'over all things for the church,' Eph. 1:12, and his instalment into this office is the rise of all the other commendations that follow, which areas parts thereof: thus Nebuchadnezzar's sovereignty, as being a king of kings, is set out by a head of gold, Dan. 2:32,38. 3. It may signify the qualifications, wherewith he, as head to the body, is furnished for its behoof and good: so he is an excellent head, for contriving of what is good for the body, and for furnishing life and motion to all his members; thus Eph. 4:16, he is the head, from whom the whole body, being fitly compacted together, doth make increase of itself in love: and to this purpose, a man of a great reach and profound wit, useth to be called a great head. All these agree with the scope, being instances of Christ's excellencies, and also with the commendation following; yet, the first seems most agreeable to the analogy of head and members, and it is not unlike that Christ's Godhead is begun at in his commendation: surely it cannot be excluded, seeing, in Rev. 1:14, by his head (as there described) is set forth his eternity, the same nature may well be here understood, though Christ be otherways represented in the colour of his locks, because here he is described as a lovely Bridegroom, there as coming to judge, as also in Dan. 7, But it must be some excellent thing that is meant, as the commendation annexed clears. 'His head is as the most fine gold:' in the original, there are two words indifferently made use of, to signify gold, the first because of its shining brightness and beauty; the second is applied to it, because of its solidity and firmness; so it runs, his head is gold of gold, or gold and gold, or fine

shining and solid gold, as if gold were not enough to set out the excellency of this head: gold is rich in the quality, solid and strong as to the efficacy, (as in chap. 3:10,) sovereign as to usefulness and profitableness; it is above other metals, and so in the heavenly Jerusalem, the streets are said to be of pure gold, Rev. 21:21. Therefore that dominion of Nebuchadnezzar's, spoken of Dan. 2:32, is compared to a head of gold, for its excellency above the rest that followed, and especially for the shelter that the church of God had under it: and this being gold of gold, must hold forth such sovereignty, riches of grace, solidity and happiness, as is unsearchable; gold cannot reach it, no not gold raised to the highest worth conceivable.

This first particular may put us to a stand, when (as it were) the Bride is at a stand in the commendation, and must double the word, as gold, gold; and it's hard to draw observations from it, yet warrantably this may be said, 1. Christ hath a head (however we take it) that is exceedingly excellent, he is God, and in that respect is unsearchable, 'being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person,' Heb 1:3. He, as Mediator, is furnished with sovereignty and eminent graces for the good of the body; and these, as they are for their nature most solid and excellent, so as to their virtue they are most efficacious and quickening. 2. If we take it in general, *Observe*: That the excellencies wherewith Christ is furnished, are in the highest degree of excellency; therefore it is gold of gold, whatever it be, and this general will necessarily infer the former, that he is God and Mediator, and in such and such offices furnished for the good of his people, and the former doctrine is the proof of this: all Christ's properties, wisdom, love, counsel, &c. are of more than an ordinary depth, being in him to the very 'uttermost,' Heb. 7:25, and 'without measure,' John 3:34. 3. Christ's excellency is not only lovely in itself, but useful to others; he is not only rich in himself, but enriching those that possess him, as gold doth enrich the owners of it: Christ is a golden possession where there is a well grounded claim to him. 4. Gold and all external riches, are empty things to a spiritual discernor of Christ's worth; as it were, a new sort of gold must be invented, or imagined, to shadow forth the excellencies of Christ, gold itself is but an insufficient and dark shadow to represent him; whoever loves gold, may have (and that freely) the most fine and choice gold in him. Yea, 5. This is peculiar to him, in opposition to all other beloveds: men's idols and other beloveds may be gilded, like the whore's cup, spoken of, Rev. 17:4, but Christ only is the golden Beloved; for, this is so attributed to him, as it is denied to them, which are but clay, or 'thick clay' beloveds, Hab. 2:6.

The second thing commended is 'his locks,' which are no essential part of the body, yet are (when lovely) a special decorement, and ever have been so

esteemed: the signification of locks (being joined to the head) will be so much the more clear, if we consider the commendation given them, which is threefold, 1. 'They are bushy,' or curled: not such as old men have, hairs here and there, but his are bushy, thick, and handsome, such as young men in the flower and vigour of their youth use to have. 2. They are black; and that, 3. As a raven: black hair in those times and places was comely in men, and betokens strength of youth, and vigour of age. Therefore the same word, which is here blackness, signifieth youth also in the Hebrew, as Eccles. 11:10, 'childhood and youth,' &c. So black hair here, is opposed to white hairs, whereby decay is signified (as Hos. 7:9, by 'gray hairs' on Ephraim, is understood) and thus all other idols get a dash, as if they were gray haired, decaying beloveds; but Christ is always in youth and vigour, he continues always vigorous, as his love is always green. They are compared to the blackness of a raven, because that is native black, and lovely beyond other things that are black. As by Christ's head then was signified that which is in Christ (to speak so) most intrinsically excellent; so here, by locks we understand the most extrinsic thing that is in him (if we may say any thing of Christ is so) that is, if any thing seem less necessary than another, yet is it in itself excellent, and serves to commend Christ to others. And again, by bushiness and blackness, we understand the vigour and perfection of Christ's lovely and desirable excellencies, that as loveliness and desirableness are in a man, when in his youth, at their height and perfection, so are they in Christ, with all commendable aggravations, as in their prime and vigour. Gold did set forth the intrinsic worth of Christ's qualifications, this aggravates it so, that it lifts up that worth to the highest pitch that is conceivable: as a lovely man is yet loveliest in the flower of his age and youth, so it is with Christ, his perfections are ever in their flower, and never decay, nor does he ever fail in the exercising of them for his people's good, Isa. 42:4, 'He shall not fail nor be discouraged;' and, as Rev. 1:12, Christ's eternity is holden forth by white hairs, so by black hairs is signified his continuing young, vigorous and flourishing (to say so) through all eternity; which serves much to the scope of commending Christ; for, whatever is attributed to him, is in an implied way denied to all other beloveds: otherwise he were not the chiefest among them, and preferable to them all, which is the scope.

Observe. 1. There is nothing for completing Christ's beauty but it is in him; yea, even these things in him, that are least taken notice of by us (though nothing in him be little in itself) they are in themselves, and in their use when discerned, exceeding lovely; his locks, yea, all his garments are so, Psalm 45:8. There is nothing superfluous, and useless in our blessed Bridegroom. 2. What perfections are in Christ (as there are none wanting) they are in him in their perfection; what unspeakable commendation inhere? 1. He hath infinite numbers

of perfections. 2. All these are rich, like the 'most fine gold:' 3. If there be a season (to speak so) wherein these perfections may be conceived more lovely and shining than another (for in themselves they are ever the same) they are so in our Lord Jesus Christ; it is ever harvest, summer and youth with him; he is that tree spoken of, Rev. 22:2, which bears fruit always: this Sun is ever at the height, and never goes down. Christ's perfections are continuing perfections; he is a Beloved that never decays, that never waxeth sick, weak, nor old; but is ever in youth, with his hair black, although he be eternal, and the Ancient of days, for all his properties are unchangeably in him, and ever agree to him, even now as well as in Solomon's time, and will do so for ever: this is good and very comfortable to his people; Christ sets not up nor fails; his Spouse weeps not for the death, decay, or waxing old of her Beloved and Husband, which can be said of no other. 3. All other beloveds, besides Christ, are decaying beloveds, they evanish and are growing gray-headed; even all this clay world shall wax 'old as doth a garment,' and the beauty of it shall be stained, and it will become weak, like an old dying harlot, with whom many hath gone a whoring: for, if this, to be black and bushy, be peculiar to Christ, it cannot agree to them; for, 'they shall wax old,' but he is the same, Psalm 102:27, which words are peculiarly applied to Christ, Heb. 1:10. 4. This continued flourishing of Christ's excellency in its perfection, doth put Christ supereminently above all compare, as having no match amongst all beloveds; they decay, but he is the same; they are broken cisterns, and can hold no water of comfort, and appear with no beauty at death and judgment, and through eternity they will be as clothes worn out and failed; but Christ is fresh and vigorous at death to the believer, and will be so for ever: how blessed are they, when they come to eat of the tree of life, that never wants fruit, to possess him, who is 'yesterday, today, and for ever' the same, 'God over all, blessed for evermore!' O the happiness! The eternal happiness, that there is in being espoused to Christ, when the breath of all clay idols and beloveds will be out, and Christ still fresh in the communicating of his fulness to his people! O what a sad heart will many have, who have forsaken this fountain of living waters, and chosen such broken cisterns to themselves as the creatures are, that have set their heart on 'that which is not,' Prov. 23:5, and 'laboured for the wind,' Eccles. 5:16, loading themselves 'with thick clay,' Hab. 2:6, and have neglected him who gave, and who continues the being of all things, and who then will be, when they will not be found, or have a being! In sum (saith she) my Beloved is the golden Beloved, others are but of clay and earth; my Beloved is in his flower and youth, other beloveds are decaying, waxing old, and drawing to their grave, therefore is he incomparable beyond them all.

Verse 12. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk, and fitly set.

The third thing commended in him, is in verse 12, and it is ‘his eyes,’ which are several ways described. Eyes in the natural body are the organs, whereby we discern external objects: the Lord, as he is a Spirit, hath no body, nor bodily members; but eyes are attributed to him, to hold forth his omniscience, who, having formed the eye, cannot but see, Psalm 94:9, and therefore eminently is said to see, in opposition to the idols, ‘who have eyes and see not,’ Psalm 115:5. This, then, sets out our Lord’s omniscience, before whom ‘all things are naked and open,’ Heb. 4:3, even the most secret things are open to his view, as if by the most sharp-sighted bodily eye he did behold them, and much more; so, Prov. 15:3, ‘The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good:’ and, Prov. 5:21, ‘The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord,’ he knows them, as if he were looking on them with his eyes, all things are so naked and discernible to him: this agrees also with that, Rev. 2:18, where Christ is said to have ‘eyes as a flame of fire:’ which title, verse 23, is expounded, (as all the titles throughout those epistles are) and said to be given him, that men may know that he ‘searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins;’ even the most inward things are fully reached by his all-seeing eye.

The excellency of his eyes (or omniscieny thereby pointed out) is held forth under several similitudes, 1. They are ‘as doves’ eyes,’ such as were attributed to the Bride, chap. 4:1, that is, eyes that are quick, lovely and loving, having much affection in them to his own. 2. They are as doves’ eyes ‘by the rivers of water,’ where doves are most lovely after washing, or bathing and beeking themselves at riversides. 3. They are washen ‘with milk,’ that is, most clean, white and pure. 4. They are ‘fitly set,’ or (as the word is) set in fulness, like the stones in Aaron’s breastplate, Exod. 39:10, (where the same word is) signifying that there is no deformity in them, but like curious jewels, they are most equally and beautifully set, being neither too hollow, nor sticking too far out, which are the two extreme deformities in eyes. In sum, it saith, 1. That Christ’s knowledge is sharp and piercing. 2. Pure and clean. 3. Pleasant to his people to look on. And, 4. That it is kindly vented, and well qualified for the good of his people, whereby he is made exceeding lovely to them. These notes are sure here, 1. That our Lord Jesus is omniscient, knowing all the designs of enemies, knowing all the straits and necessities of his people, he actually takes notice of all these. 2. Christ’s omniscience is one of his chiefest excellencies, that qualifies him for the good and comfort of his people, and doth exceedingly commend him

to them above all others: it is a very pleasant comfort to his people, especially in the time of trouble, that their Beloved knows all, what we are, what we have need of, and what is good for us, and what is designed to our prejudice by any of our adversaries, and cannot mistake. 3. Christ's omniscience, though it be terrible to his enemies (so his eyes are as a flame of fire) yet it is very amiable to his people, his eyes to them are as 'doves' eyes,' his all-seeing knowledge is kindly and comfortable, and exercised for their good (as all his other attributes are) and is still at work for their good and advantage, 2 Chron. 16:9, 'His eyes run to and fro throughout the earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them, whose heart is perfect towards him:' He takes notice of the case of his own, that he may succour them in their wants, as he takes notice of his enemies, that he may disappoint and bring them down. 4. When the tie of the covenant with Christ is once fastened, those attributes in him which are most terrible to flesh and to men in nature, are exceedingly lovely, and make Christ beautiful to his people, as his omniscience, justice, faithfulness, &c. 5. As it is our duty, so it is our advantage to walk under the conviction of Christ's omniscience, and to converse before him with the faith of his beholding what we are doing. 6. It is a good evidence of sincerity, when his omniscience becomes delightful to us, and when the heart is made glad with this, that Christ knows the secrets thereof, as Peter speaks, John 21:17, 'Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee:' it is much to abide Christ's search, as omniscient, contentedly. 7. All other idols and beloveds are blind, they have no eyes, or though they seem to have, 'they see not,' Psalm 115:5, that is, they can take no notice of, nor give any succour to, their worshippers. Our Lord's eyes, that are upon his people, make him singularly preferable to all that come in competition with him, 8. It is a singular commendation of Christ's knowledge, that it is pure and holy, that it cannot approve of sin, nor take any complacency in it; for, his eyes are as "doves' eyes, by the rivers of water, washen with milk:" 'He is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity,' O how doth he delight in purity; and what a strong motive may and ought this to be with his people, to make a covenant with their eyes, that they get not leave to wander and gad on sinful objects!

Verse 13. His cheeks areas a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.

The fourth and fifth instances of Christ's loveliness are in this verse. The fourth is, that 'his cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers:' the cheeks, being comely, are a special part of the loveliness of the face: his cheeks are here

commended from two things, first, they are ‘as a bed of spices,’ that is, like garden-beds furnished with excellent smelling and refreshful spices: it sets out, 1. A proportionable height of them, as cheeks are in the face, and as beds are higher than the rest of the ground. 2. A preciousness and sweetness of spirit-refreshing savour, as such beds use to yield to those who walk in a garden. The second commendation is, ‘as sweet flowers,’ or as the words may be read, as flowers of perfume: it tends to the same purpose, but holds forth an abundance of delight, to the spiritual sense of smelling in the believer, when Christ is made the object of it; O the sweet savour he finds in him! It is fit to be sober here, these excellencies being mysteries: it is not unlike that lesser glimpses of Christ’s manifestations, whereby he makes himself known, may be understood here; as if she said, he is so lovely, that the least glimpse or waffe of him, when it is seen, if it were but of his cheek, is very delightsome: and this sense may be gathered, 1. From this, that the cheek is a part of the face and countenance, yet not the full countenance; now by seeing his face and beholding his countenance, often in scripture (and it is like also, verse 15,) is understood his most sensible manifestations of himself to his people; by proportion then the cheeks would hold forth the same, though in a lesser measure and lower degree. 2. It makes well for the scope of commending Christ above all, whose incomparable worth by his manifestations, is much evidenced and confirmed to his people, and when a little glimpse of him doth this, how much more would a full view of him demonstrate it? and indeed such a view doth effectually demonstrate it to those who have experimentally known the excellency that is in him, although others who are unacquaint with his face, do therefore undervalue him, which may be hinted at as a cause of their so doing. 3. This agrees with the commendation, which sets him forth in this as pleasant to the spiritual sense of smelling, and so would imply, that it must be somewhat whereby Christ becomes sensibly sweet and refreshful, as his sensible manifestations make him more delightsome and refreshing to the soul’s senses, than flowers of perfume are to the bodily senses; therefore is his love compared to ‘ointment,’ chap. 1:3, and elsewhere; however, these things are certain, 1. That the least glimpse of Christ’s countenance is exceeding refreshful and savoury to the spiritual senses. 2. That Christ’s excellencies are delightsome to all the spiritual senses, to the smell as well as to the eye, ear, &c. The whole soul, and all its faculties have abundant matter in him, for delighting and refreshing them all. 3. The more senses be exercised on Christ, and the more sensible (to speak so) he become unto us, he will be the more lovely and pleasant: beds of spices, and flowers of perfume in a garden, to them that lie amongst them, are not so savoury as Christ is, when the senses of the soul are exercised to discern him.

The fifth thing instanced is 'his lips;' the bride's lips were spoken of, chap. 4:3,11. and cleared to signify her speech: by proportion they hold forth in him the loveliness of his word, wherein he is especially lovely, in that he magnifies it above all his name, Psalm 138:2, and makes it often sweet as the honey and the honey comb to his people. This may be looked on, 1. As it respects the matter spoken by him, out of whose mouth many gracious words proceeded (while in the flesh) even to the admiration of his hearers, Luke 4:22, so that upon conviction they say, 'Never man spoke as this man speaks,' John 7:46. Or, 2. It may look to Christ's manner of speaking, and his fitness to communicate his mind to his people (as lips are the organs of speaking) so he hath 'grace poured into his lips' Psalm 45:2, that makes all his words gracious, as being formed or anointed by it. Thus it takes in that holy art, skill, and dexterity, wherewith Christ is furnished, to speak for the consolation of a believer, especially under sad exercises; as it is, Isa. 50:4. 'He hath the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary:' both these in the result come to one; and this being a special piece of Christ's loveliness to his people, conducing exceedingly to the bride's scope here, and the analogy being clear, and lips being frequently made use of in scripture to signify speech or words, we conceive that they may well be taken so here, especially considering, that all the parts of the commendation will agree well to his words. 1. They are 'like lilies,' that is, pleasant and savoury; so words spoken in season are often called pleasant and sweet like honey, Prov. 16:24, yea, they are said to be 'like apples of gold in pictures of silver,' Prov. 25:11. His words then may well be compared to lilies. 2. They are not common words, therefore it must not be ordinary lilies that will set them forth; but they are like 'lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh:' such lilies we are not acquaint with; and nature though excellent in its effects, yet comes short in furnishing fit resemblances to represent Christ, and what is in him, to the full. These 'lilies dropping myrrh' signify, 1. A savouriness and cordial efficacy in the matter, like myrrh proving comfortable to those it falls or drops upon. 2. 'Dropping' shows abundance, seasonableness, and continuedness therein, so as he still furnisheth such strengthening efficacy and influence, as if it were ever dropping, and never dried up; as the phrase was, chap. 4:11. All these agree well, either to Christ the speaker, who never wants a seasonable word; or to the word spoken, which, in respect of its effects, endures for ever.

This must be an excellent Beloved (saith she) who speaks much, and never a word falls from his lips, but it is precious and savoury, like any cordial to the souls of his people, especially in their fainting fits; and there is ever some good word to be gotten from him, far from the rough speeches that many use, but O, so pleasant and kindly as all his words are! *Observe*. 1. There is a special loveliness

in our Lord Jesus' words to to his people; how much of this appears throughout the 4th chapter of this Song? and what love appears in all his promises! Yea, in the titles that he gives to his people, every one is (as it were) big with child of strong consolation to them. 2. Christ's words have a special refreshing efficacy in them, and can comfort, refresh and sustain drooping sick souls; he sends out his word and it healeth them. 3. Those who love Christ himself truly, have also an high esteem of his word, and are much delighted with that; and where there is little esteem of his word, there is but little esteem of himself: they who have tasted the sweetness of the word, do highly esteem of Christ himself. 4. The word of Christ is as Christ's own lips, and doth sweetly set out his thoughts of love to sinners; it is good reading of Christ's loveliness out of his own word, and from his own mouth. 5. Where there hath been a sweetness felt in the word, it should be turned over to the commendation of Christ that spoke it, as a proof of the reality of his excellent worth. 6. The word is never rightly made use of, though it should fill the head with knowledge, till it be savoury to the inward man and spiritual senses; and it is that which makes it lovely, when the virtue and consolation that flows from it is felt. 7. All the consolations of the word, they come not out at once, neither can we so receive them, but it drops by little and little in continuance; and therefore daily should men draw from these wells of salvation. 8. Observe from the scope, that Christ's word, known by experience, will lift and set Christ up in the heart beyond all beloveds; and that the unacquaintedness of many with Christ's lips, and the consolations that abound in his word, makes them so ready to slight him, and set up their idols above him. The scope saith further, that she was acquaint with his words, and the refreshfulness of them, and in this she is differenced from others. Whence, Observe, 9. That believers are acquainted with the sweetness of Christ's words, otherwise than any in the world are; Christ is another thing to them, and his word is so also, than to all the world beside: it is a good sign, where Christ's lips are so lovely.

Verse 14: His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl; his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

The sixth and seventh particulars instanced to commend Christ, are in verse 14. The sixth is, 'his hands:' the hands are the instruments of action, as the lips are of speaking: they are commended that they are as 'gold rings,' that is, as men or women's hands are adorned with gold rings, so his hands have a native loveliness beyond these: yet, this commendation (as all the former) answers not fully, therefore it is added, they are 'set with beryl:' this was a precious stone put

in Aaron's breast-plate, Exod. 39:13. To be 'set' with it, signifies, as preciousness, so rare artifice; and such is seen in the right setting of precious stones.

By our Lord's hands, may be understood that powerful activity whereby he is fitted to bring about what he pleaseth, and that power which he exerciseth especially in the works of grace, as on verse 4, was cleared: or, we may understand the effects produced by that his power, or his works which are exceeding glorious; as, Psalm 109:27, 'That they may know, O Lord, that this is thy hand,' that is, 'that thou, Lord, hast done it.' So his hands signify such works especially, wherein his divine power, art and skill do manifest themselves for the good of his people: both agree well together; for, excellent power and skill produce excellent effects, and excellent effects demonstrate the excellent qualifications of the worker. This being a main piece of Christ's commendation, and which doth hold him forth to be exceeding lovely above all to the believer, (which is the scope) may well be taken here as the meaning, especially being subjoined to the commendation of his words: for, our Lord Jesus doth not only say well, but also doth well; he is a 'prophet, mighty both in word and deed,' Luke 24:19.

The commendation suits with his works, as if there were none of them but what are adorned (as it were) with excellent gold rings, there being much glory, grace, wisdom, and skill shining in them all; they are 'honourable and glorious,' Psalm 111:3, yea, 'great and marvellous are the works of the Lord God almighty,' Rev. 15:4. These are the deserved epithets of his actions: in sum, it is, as if she had said, Ask ye what my Beloved is, more than others? If ye saw but a glimpse of the white and red that is in his cheeks, and if ye heard the sweet words that proceed from his mouth, and if ye knew the excellent works which he hath performed, even to admiration, for the good of his people, and how much loveliness appears in all these, ye would (no doubt) say with me, He is the chiefest among ten thousand.

Observe. 1. Christ is an active husband, having hands, and working with them for the good of his Bride: a piece of his work we heard of chap. 3:9, in that noble chariot he is no idle spectator; he 'worketh hitherto,' John 5:17. 2. All our Lord Jesus his works, are exceeding excellent and beautiful, and when rightly discerned, they will appear wonderful, honourable, and glorious, as proceeding from him 'who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,' Isa. 28:29. What a curious and excellent piece of work is that chariot, or the covenant of redemption signified thereby, chap. 3:9. There are many shining well set jewels, and rings upon every finger of his hands: there is nothing that can be done better than what he hath done. The works of Christ, in our redemption, do hold forth

infinite skill, and gloriousness to be in the worker, all of them are so wisely contrived and exquisitely executed. 3. Christ's works do exceedingly endear him, and that deservedly to his people, and do infallibly demonstrate his worth above all beloveds in the world; who is like unto him? and who can do great works, such as he hath done? This makes heaven to resound with the praises of what this beloved hath done for his people. 4. Believers should be acquaint both with Christ's words and works, and should be well versed in the knowledge of the excellencies that are in them both, that so they may be the more affected with him them selves, and be more able to commend him to others. 5. Where Christ is lovely, all his works will be delightsome and it is by acquaintance with, and observation of, his excellent works, that the hearts of his people come to take him up, and to be rightly affected with him. 6. As ignorance of the excellency of Christ's works (especially of the work of redemption) makes many slight Christ, and prefer others to him (for, she would discover the daughters of Jerusalem their mistake of him, by instancing this among other things) so it is a kindly-like thing to have an honourable esteem of Christ's works in the heart. 7. Although the devil and mens' idols seem to promise much to their lovers, when they suit and entice them yet never one indeed can equal Christ, or compare with him in respect of what he hath done for his Bride; and this sets him up incomparably above them all: his hands, in respect of his magnificent works, are adorned, as it were, with gold rings; whereas they have hands, but work not for the help and relief of their lovers. Psalm 115:7.

The seventh part of this demonstration of Christ's worth is from his 'belly:' the word in the original is the same word, which verse 4, is rendered bowels, and we rather use it so here as it signifieth bowels, in the native signification of it, as not knowing why it should be altered in this verse; especially considering, that whatever it is attributed to God, it is translated 'bowels,' as, Isa 63:15, 'where is the sounding of thy bowels?' and, Jer. 31:20, 'my bowels are moved for him:' reading it then thus, 'his bowels are as bright ivory,' &c. The words at the very first, would seem to signify the intense love and tender affection, wherewith our Lord Jesus (who is full of grace) is filled and stuffed (to say so) for the behoof and good of his people; so that no mother is so compassionately affected towards the fruit of her womb, as he is towards his own. This exposition is confirmed, 1. From the ordinary signification of the word bowels, when it is applied to God, as, Isa. 63:15, and Jer. 31:20, and it is borrowed from the affection that mothers have to their children, whose bowels yearn on them, as, 1 Kings 3:26. and so Joseph was affected toward his brethren, Gen. 43:30. Hence the word, both in the Hebrew and Greek, in the Old and New Testament, which is made use of to set forth the Lord's tender compassion, flows

from a root that signifieth bowels. 2. The scope will confirm this, for, is there any thing that makes Christ more lovely and admirable than his love? which makes the prophet cry out, Mic. 7:18, 'who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?' &c. 'because thou delightest in mercy;' or, is there any other thing that more commends him as a Beloved preferable to all, than his love? Love in a husband is a special property. Now 'Christ loved his church and gave himself for it,' Eph. 5:25, it is not like therefore, that this is omitted: and, 3. It follows well on the commendation of his works for, and about his people, as shewing the fountain from whence they proceed: the commendation of this is excellent.

1. It is as 'bright ivory:' ivory is rarely and singularly pure, and pleasant, being made of elephants' teeth: 'bright,' is added, to shew, that it is of the best sort, as all that is in Christ is. 2. It is 'overlaid with sapphires;' that was a stone in Aaron's breast-plate, and also is reckoned one of the foundation stones of the 'New Jerusalem,' Rev. 21:19, which shews, that it is very precious, though we know not the particular properties of it: the word 'overlaid,' may be from the original rendered curiously set, or, enameled: in sum, here, his love is described as most lovely, clean and pleasant, like ivory; rich and precious like sapphires; and well ordered and wisely vented for the good of his people, as bright ivory curiously enameled with sapphires: his love is a most excellent, curious, and pleasant object, the like whereof is not to be found amongst all the beloveds in the world. This verse commends Christ's heart and inside, which is unsearchable as to its height, depth, breadth, and length: it may therefore be hard, and someway hazardous to offer doctrines on, or to form expressions concerning, that 'which passeth knowledge,' Eph 3:18,19, the comprehending experimental knowledge of it will be the best commentary on it; yet these things are clear and safe.

1. There is singular love, affection, and bowels in our Lord Jesus to his people; so singular, that there is none can compare with him in this, no husband, nay nor wife, it passeth the love of women; no tender hearted mother, and much less any idol can compete with him in this; it's inconceivable in itself, and it is wonderful in its effects. 2. There is nothing that will contribute to make believers see Jesus Christ as admirable in himself, and lovely to them, than right apprehension of his love: this is the constraining, ravishing, engaging, and soul-inebriating consideration of Christ, the conceiving of him rightly in his admirable love; and they will never esteem of Christ rightly, who discern not that; it is (as it were) his crown: and the believing of it, is in a sort the putting the crown on his head. Amongst all his excellencies, none takes the believer more up than his love: and nothing is more remarkable in him than that; and right thoughts of Christ's love is no ill token. 3. Our Lord Jesus his love and bowels are a rich jewel when seen, a precious stately sight; 'bright ivory overlaid with sapphires' is but a small

and dark shadow of it; Christ's love is a possession beyond jewels, a very beautiful object to look on, beyond the most excellent creature: it is both a wonder and a heartbreak that it is so little thought of, and that men are not more delighted in it. 4. Altho' there be much in many mouths of Christ's love, yet there are few that really know and believe the love that he hath to his people, 1 John 3:1. As this is the cause that so few love him, and why so many set up other beloveds beside him; so the solid faith of this, and the expectation of good from him, hath a great engaging virtue to draw sinners to him, Heb. 11:6, and for that end it is made use of here. 5. Whatever seeming smiles idols may give to their lovers, yet will they not prove lovers in the end to them; for, that is proper to Christ, he only hath strong love and bowels of affection to his own to the end, but other lovers in the end will fail men, only our Lord Jesus continueth a loving husband to the end: for, whom he loves he loves to the end. 6. It is, beyond all peradventure, good and desirable to be matched with Jesus Christ, where so much honour, riches, power, wisdom, loveliness, and love, meet all together; for, the scope of this, and of all the rest of the commendations, is to engage sinners to match with him. 7. There is no cause to be jealous of Christ's love, his people have a most loving husband, and never a spot or ground of jealousy hath defiled his bowels since the world began, but they to this day are, and will be for ever 'as bright ivory.' 8. Christ's love is excellent in itself, and is also excellent in the way of communicating itself to his people; therefore it is not as sapphires that are confusedly casten together, but that are artificially set; or, our Lord Jesus vents not his love fondly (to speak with reverence) or imprudently, but most wisely, skilfully, and seasonably, so as it may be for the good of his people; not as a fond and too indulgent mother, that gives that which is even hurtful because the child desires it, but as a wise father who gives that which is useful, though it be unpleasant: he guides his love by discretion, and according to expediency, as John 16:7, 'It is expedient for you that I go,' and therefore he will go, though they were even made sad with it. 9. Although some pieces of Christ's love, being considered in themselves, seem not so pleasant and lovely, like precious stones not rightly set, yet when all are seen together, and every thing taken up as in its own place, and proportionably corresponding with one another, and especially in respect of the fountain of love from which they come, they will then (being all looked on together) be seen to be very beautiful and pleasant and well ordered, like 'bright ivory,' that is regularly and curiously enameled, or indented with sapphires: the time comes, when Christ's love will be thought to be exquisitely and wisely let out and conveyed, even in these things wherein it is most suspected now by his own.

Verse 15. His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

The eighth and ninth particulars of Christ's commendation are in verse 15. The first of them here commended is 'his legs:' the word 'legs,' comes from a root in the original, that signifieth to walk; and so takes in thighs and feet, which are also useful in motion. In scripture, and by analogy, they are made use of to signify these two, 1. A man's way in the series of his carriage and deportment, as ordinarily his life is called a walk: so, Eccl. 5:1. 'Take heed unto thy feet,' that is, to thy carriage; hence the 'iniquities of the heels' are spoken of, Psalm. 49:5, to set out men's defects, that cleave to them in their conversation, as their feet leave prints and footsteps behind them in their walking. 2. This metaphor signifieth strength and activity, Psalm 147:10, 'The Lord delights not in the strength of an horse, nor in the legs of a man;' wherefore (very probably) Eccl. 12:3, they are called 'the strong men,' because they sustain or bear up the body: here being applied to Christ, we conceive they signify his way, or administration of providence, which he useth with his people, it being by his dispensations that he walks amongst them. Hence the series of common providence is so often in scripture called the way of the Lord, as Ezek. 18:26, 'The Lord's way is equal,' his carriage in his dispensations is still just, opposite to their way or walk, which is there called unequal: and the dispensation of grace is called a way, Rom. 11:33, 'How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out?' which take in the contrivance, and administration of his grace, as the scope there doth clear. His way is more general and comprehensive than his works, and takes in these three (for which it is called, a way.) 1. His design and end, that he proposeth to himself. 2. His wise and powerful plot in contriving and applying means suitable thereunto, for bringing it about, especially the principle (to say so) by which he walks and works, to wit, his wisdom, power and love. 3. His convoy of, and the progress which he makes in these by which he is ever proceeding towards his end, as a man doth in his way by walking with his legs in all these respects, the Lord's way of carrying on his design is said to be unsearchable: this we take as intended here, to set forth and commend the gracious and glorious steps of the Lord, in the administration of his grace, both in its contrivance and application amongst his people, whereby his wisdom, power, and goodness are in these paths of his (that are all mercy and truth to his own, Psalm 25:10,) made exceeding lovely and stately, as the commendation following imports. This is confirmed, 1. By the analogy that is betwixt the legs and walking, and the frequent use that the scripture makes of this similitude for that end, and no other thing can suit so well. 2. In Rev. 2:18, where Christ's legs and feet are spoken of, with a commendation

not unlike what follows here, namely, that they are 'like fine brass,' as his eyes are expounded, verse 23, by this, that 'he searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins;' so his feet are set out by this, 'that he renders to every one according to his works,' that is, he keeps an equal and just way in his administration towards every one. 3. The scope likewise confirms this, Christ being by his way to his people commendable above all, and this being a special commendation of his, that 'all his works are perfect, and all his ways are judgment,' Deut. 32.

4. As also the property attributed to his legs, and from which they are commended, will clear this, which is, that they 'are like pillars of marble:' marble is a stone that is firm, good and pleasant, therefore was it prepared by David, for the temple, I Chron. 29:2; 'pillars' signify strength, orderliness and beauty, as was cleared on chap. 3:10, which may be applied here: so pillars of marble say, that his ways are curiously, skilfully, and securely contrived; and wisely, dexterously and infallibly executed, and firmly settled like pillars, and that of marble, for unmoveableness: the amplification of the commendation confirms this also; they are not only like pillars of marble, but also like pillars 'set on sockets of fine gold.' Pillars are durable, according to the basis or foundation upon which they are set and founded, now gold (as often hath been said) signifieth preciousness and solidity, so all of them are settled and fixed on a good and precious ground, which cannot fail, therefore they cannot shake, slide, nor slip, but prosper he must in his ways, and nothing can mar his design, 'for he is of one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, that he doth,' Job 23:13. Yet not only are his feet or legs of brass, (which shews severity against enemies, in his treading on them, Dan. 10:6) but the sockets are of gold, as his head was, verse 11. All is of gold that is in him, he is a golden Mediator and Beloved from head to foot, whereas others are clay beloveds: the sockets are of gold, to shew his graciousness to his people, as Psalm 25:10, all his ways are settled on mercy and truth, all his decrees anent them are made lovely and sure by grace, and so cannot be but precious and excellent as to them.

Observe. 1. Our Lord Jesus hath a design, a gracious design, that he is carrying on amongst his people, and he is ever promoting therein for the end which he hath proposed; he is not like the idols of the Gentiles, Psalm 115:7, 'which have feet and walk not,' but as he sees with his eyes, and works with his hands, so doth he walk and make progress with his legs. 2. Christ's way with his people is a most excellent and stately way; or, in all his convoy of grace towards his people, there is a special excellency shining; 'All his ways and works are holy and righteous,' Psalm 145:17; 'just and true,' Rev. 15:3. Gracious and loving, even 'all mercy and truth,' Psalm 25:10. This King of saints is marvellous in his way of grace, as he is in all his works. 3. Christ's purpose cannot fail, neither can

his design be altered, the contrivance thereof is so wise, and the execution so powerful, he can not but attain his point. 4. However men may quarrel with Christ's way, and say it is 'not equal,' as Ezek. 18:25. And although his way may be sometimes 'in the deep waters,' and not discernible, Psalm 77:19, yet it is ever ordered in deep wisdom, that there can be nothing more just, holy and glorious, so that there is no reason to complain thereof; and this holds, not only in one step or two, but in the whole series of his way. 5. A right sight of Christ's wise, glorious, and omnipotent way of grace, will make him singular in the estimation of his people, and put him above all other beloveds, whose ways are neither for wisdom, nor stability, any way comparable to his; for, all the counsels and designs of the world beside his, will come to nought, and be made, nill they will they, subservient to his; clay idols have their breath in their nostrils, and in that same very day 'when it goeth out, their thoughts perish,' Psalm 146:4, but it is not so with his, they are more solidly founded, and these strong legs, that are of marble, can neither be bowed nor broken: it must then be most sure and safe for the Lord's people to drive this as their design, to side and share with Christ in his designs; and it must be a most desperate thing to drive contrary designs to him, whose 'legs are as pillars of marble,' and before whom none can stand. 6. Where there is respect to Christ, there will be an high estimation of his way; and it is a good sign of an especial esteem of Christ, when his ways are admired and loved.

The ninth particular instance, brought to prove that he is the chiefest among ten thousand, is, that 'his countenance is like Lebanon:' the word 'countenance,' as it is in the original, comes from a root that signifieth to see, therefore countenance is used in scripture, not only to signify the face, but the whole stature and presentation of a person, or that which gives a full sight of one in all his parts together; and so it is here, and differs from the cheeks mentioned, verse 13, as being more extensive and comprehensive: therefore that phrase, which, 2 Sam. 22:12, is rendered a goodly man, or man of countenance (as it is in the original) is, 1 Chron. 11:23, (where that same story is recorded) expressed by this, that the Egyptian was a man of stature, as if it were said, a brave personage of a man, and so it takes in face, legs, body and altogether, when all these are so proportioned, as they make one a person goodly to be seen and looked on: now this being applied to Christ, as subjoined to the particulars formerly mentioned, we conceive it takes in his matchless stateliness, as it results from all his properties together: so that not only this or that part of Christ is lovely, but whole Christ, when seen, is exceedingly stately and lovely to the view and faith of a discerning believer, whatever, others think of him; so then, the meaning is, 'Ask ye what my Beloved is?' (saith she) as all his parts are beautiful, severally considered, so all being put together, he is a most stately and lovely object to

behold, when he gives a full view of his countenance. It sets out then, a more full view of Christ, or Christ in a more full view, as if not only a man's head or legs were seen, but his whole stature, whereby he is more fully discernible: thus Christ's countenance in scripture, is put to signify his manifestations to his people; and here, being subjoined to the cheeks, as more extensive, it signifieth more full manifestations, whereby a view (as, it were) of whole Christ is attained at once, by the believer's faith; as, 'by faith,' Heb. 11:27, Moses is said to have seen him that is invisible: and this will agree well with the scope, and the commendation following, which is in two things, 1. It is 'as Lebanon,' a most pleasant, stately hill; and therefore, that which is excellent, is often compared to it, as was said on chap. 4:8,11,15. 2. It's amplified, that it is 'excellent as the cedars:' they were useful, stately, and tall trees, especially those that grew in Lebanon; the word is, elect, or choice as the cedars, which agrees well with a goodly presentation, to be tall, straight and stately, as they were: therefore the Bride's stature, is compared to a palm-tree, chap. 7:7. In a word, my Beloved (when seen) looks excellently and passing well (saith she) so as there is no other beloved in the world, that hath such an aspect as he; who can look on him and not love him?

Observe. 1. Although there is no fully comprehensive view of Christ to be gotten here, even by the faith of a believer (while we are upon the earth we cannot see him as he is, that being reserved for heaven) yet there are more full uptakings of him attainable, even here-away, than ordinarily believers meet with; yea, such full views of him are to be had, which in respect of our other ordinary attainments, may be called, a beholding of his countenance, whereas these are but a beholding of his cheeks; for, he hath a countenance which is discernible: neither doth the Bride speak of that she never saw, but of what she hath seen; and it imports a more full, near, thorough and distinct sight of him than is usual. 2. There is no such lovely, delightsome, spiritually gallant, stately and glorious object, as our Lord Jesus, complexly considered as in himself; and there will be no sight more satisfying to a believer than this, when admitted to behold it. 3. All other beloveds, whatever they be in themselves, are yet exceedingly, nay, infinitely short of him, when he is seen; this differenceth him from them all, the more and the better other beloveds be seen, they are found to be the more feckless, insignificant and little worth; but the more full view be gotten of Christ, he is found to be the more excellent. 4. Slight and passing views of Christ, make men think the less of him, whereas more full, distinct and near beholding of him doth heighten the esteem of him, and lessen the esteem of all others beside him. 5. Faith in Christ will make a real impression of him, and of his excellency upon the heart of a believer, even as if he had been seen by sense: therefore she speaks so

of his countenance; and it is a good sign, to be distinct and confident in our apprehensions of Christ's excellencies.

Verse 16. His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

The tenth and last particular, commended in him, is in the beginning of the 16th verse, and it is 'his mouth,' which is compared to 'sweetness' or sweetnesses in the plural number. By 'mouth' sometimes is understood the words of the mouth, but it is not so used in this Song. The Bride's words, and his also' are set out by their lips, and it is not like, that that being spoken of, verse 13, is repeated here. Again, the 'mouth,' and its 'sweetness' especially, may be mentioned to signify friendliness and love, or rather the sensible manifestations of these, as the husband doth by kissing his wife; and in this sense is taken, chap. 1:2, and we take that to be aimed at here, to wit, the sweetness of Christ's more immediate manifestations of himself unto the spiritual sense of his people, by 'shedding the love of God abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost,' Rom. 5:5. For, this sensible manifestation of his love is a thing that much commends him to his people, and is their satisfaction, in opposition to all the creature satisfactions that others have, Psalm 4:6,7, therefore it agrees well with the scope. Again, it is a different commendation from any that is mentioned, 1. It differs from his 'lips,' or the comfort that one hath from the word, as from the word (though it is not to be separated from that, but to carry that along with it) yet this is more immediate and sensible, and that is mediate, though real and sure unto faith. 2. It differs from seeing 'his cheeks,' in that this is more full, near and immediate also, she being, as it were, admitted to enjoy Christ's sweet embracements. 3. It differs from 'beholding his countenance,' because that may be, and only can be taken up by faith, beholding him in his excellent qualifications and offices; but this is discernible to the believer's spiritual sense, when Christ applieth his love, as chap. 1:2. In which (to say so) we are more passive, as being fed by him, and having it infused and shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit. If we may in a holy way follow the similitude in a spiritual sense (which is necessary for understanding of the thing) 'kisses of his mouth' are his applying and venting of his love, as one doth by kissing another; this also will agree with the commendation, it's 'most sweet,' it's but one word in the original, in the abstract, and that in the plural number, 'sweetnesses,' to shew the exceeding sweetness and loveliness, the soul-ravishing delight that is in that, to which no similitude or comparison can come up, clearly and perfectly to resemble it, it is very sweetness itself. If we might

allude to what Philosophers say of fire in its element, or water in its element, that being there, they are more properly and eminently fire and water; so sweetness is in its element here; or, Christ's mouth is the very element thereof, in respect of its sensible refreshfulness to the spiritual senses of his people, to whom he manifests it. Ask ye then what my Beloved is? (saith she) he is indeed stately to look on; but his mouth, when it is felt in his kissing of his own Bride, by manifesting his love to her sense, there, there, O there, exceeding, unexpressible and unconceivable, delight and satisfaction is to be found!

Observe. 1. Christ hath more near and sensible ways of manifesting himself to the spiritual sense of his people, as if he had a mouth to kiss them. 2. There is nothing comparable to the refreshing sweetness, that these manifestations have with them; it is 'a peace that passeth understanding,' Phil. 4:7, and a 'joy that is unspeakable and full of glory,' 1 Pet. 1:8. 3. This sensible feeling of the sweetness of Christ's mouth, should be aimed at, and sought after by believers; although the manner, measure, time, and other circumstances thereof, should be submitted to him; yet this is not only commendable in itself, but also, as such, is proposed and commended to the daughters of Jerusalem, to be sought after by them. 4. The experimental feeling of this, doth notably demonstrate Christ's worth to the soul that enjoys it, and makes him incomparably sweet and lovely above all things whatsoever, Psalm 4:7. 5. There is no other thing can have any such sweetness or relish to a believer as Christ hath; and to a spiritual taste, the excellency of all created beloveds will be as the white of an egg in comparison of this. Only Christ's mouth is sweetness; and so he differs from all others: and it is a good sign, when our affections, or spiritual senses, can relish nothing but Christ.

Next, it is added, 'yea, he is altogether lovely.' Although she hath spent many sweet words (and indeed there hath been no straitening in her) in commending Christ, and although all her words be sweet, and especially when she draws near the close, her expressions be the more massy and significant, yet as being necessitated to succumb under the great task of describing the excellency of her Beloved, she must give over particulars, and conclude with a general, as if she would say, Would ye know him? O, I, even I cannot tell you all his excellent properties for, he is most justly called 'Wonderful,' Isa. 9:6, but in sum, I may say, 'He is altogether lovely:' the word is, 'he is all desires,' or, 'all he desires:' the word that is rendered 'lovely,' comes from a root that signifieth to covet, as in Josh. 7:21. It is said of Achan, when he saw the 'wedge of gold,' that he coveted it, so it is such a desire as ardently covets the thing desired: and thus Christ is not simply lovely, but of such an attractive excellency, as makes him the proper object of the most ardent and holy-coveting desires, or after which all desires should go forth, as towards the best and most desirable object; the words are

meant to express somewhat that is not expressible, or rather the unexpressibleness of that Beloved she had been commending, lest they should think she were satisfied, as if she had fully described him.

We may consider the words several ways, 1. Negatively, as they shew there is nothing in him, but what is desirable: as if she said, 'all he is desires,' there is nothing of any other nature in him, but such as I have mentioned, he is a 'God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.' 2. Take them positively, and so they shew whatever is in him is exceedingly desirable; go through all his parts, qualifications, attributes and works, whereof I have given you but a hint (saith she) and ye will see them all exceedingly desirable. 3. Take them conclusively or comprehensively, and so while she saith, 'He is all desires,' the meaning is, there is nothing truly desirable, but it is to be found in him, the soul cannot rationally imagine that satisfaction that is not to be found in Christ, otherwise all desires were not in him: this is sweet, even very sweet; what idol is perfect? There are many defects in all other beloveds, but (saith she) my Beloved is perfect: all the beauties and perfections that are scattered among all creatures, are in an eminent and transcendent way gathered together, contracted and to be found in him at once, so that whatever can be desired, whether it be for this life, or that which is to come, whether for sanctification, justification, or consolation, it is eminently to be found in our Lord Jesus, 'in whom all fulness dwells,' Col. 1:19, and who alone is all and in all' to his own, as being 'full of grace and truth,' John 1:14. 4. We may take them exclusively, or privately, as they deny any thing desirable to to be in any beloved, but in Christ; he is all, and so consequently they must be nothing, he is altogether lovely, and so they must be altogether loathsome: Christ is never rightly conceived of, nor commended, but where other things come down, evanish and disappear, when compared with him; 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and I desire none on earth beside thee,' saith the Psalmist, Psalm 70:25, as having full satisfaction, and all that can be wished for in him. It is hard to observe what may be suitable to Christ's loveliness, when the Bride gives it over: but we may say, 1. The more that believers insist on Christ's loveliness, their hearts will warm the more with it, and it will be found to be the greater depth; for, now her expressions grow, till at last they be swallowed up. 2. Where there is true respect to Christ, no commendation of Christ that believers can invent (whatever it be) will be satisfying to them: for, there have been, 1. Many excellent commendations given of Christ, as being like gold, myrrh, spices, &c. Yea, 2. Like such gold, lilies and ivory, as are not in the world; and finally she hath left and given over comparisons, and betaken herself to the abstract, sweetness itself; yet all comes short, and she must quit the thing as unexpressible: it is the very height of soul's love-rhetoric, to close with a kind of holy

amazement and admiration, which ends in silence, because they cannot say enough, when they have said all they can say.

O what a lovely object then must Christ Jesus be! They never knew him rightly, who were satisfied with their own apprehensions of him, or expressions concerning him. 3. There is an universal loveliness in Christ, whole Christ is lovely, neither is he to be divided in our apprehension and esteem, but as every thing in him is wonderful and lovely, so is it to be admired and loved; even his lowest sufferings, and seeming infirmities, his frowns and seeming greater austerity, are lovely and profitable; he is altogether lovely. 4. There is a wonderful desirableness in our Lord Jesus, and incomparable satisfaction to be gotten in him; there can be nothing more to draw a soul to love it, than what is here; whatever may be attractive, is here; and there is nothing wanting to satisfy the soul that enjoys him, and hath yielded to his call; to such he is all desires. 5. Christ is never rightly taken up, so long as any thing desirable is supposed to be gotten elsewhere, he must be all desires: and therefore, where any thing hath the least share of the affections beside him, he hath not his own place. 6. Empty and undesirable are all beloveds in the world beside Christ, and broken cisterns will they all prove; and it is no marvel; for, all desires are in him, and therefore, not one desirable thing is or can be found in them. 7. They have a good bargain who have Christ. It's the short cut (to say so) and compendious way to happiness, and to the inheriting of all things, to unite with Christ by faith, and to possess him; for, all desires are in him; and miserable will the persons be who shall miss Christ, altho' they were gainers of the whole world.

Having somewhat answered the daughters of Jerusalem their question, by insisting in this excellent description of Christ, now by way of application and holy boasting, in the close of the verse, she reasons thus: ye asked what my Beloved was more than other beloveds? And for your satisfaction, I have described him as I can, many several ways, though all fall very short of full expressing of his matchless worth: now (saith she) this excellent person is 'my Beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem;' bring all other beloveds, and compare them with him, and see if he be not the chiefest and standard-bearer amongst them all; and in this confident boasting of the excellency of her Beloved, she closes: which sweet discourse wants not its fruit on them, as we will see in the chapter following.

Consider the words four ways, 1. In the matter, they hold forth two sweet relations betwixt Christ and the believer, and this sweetens all, not only that this Beloved is an excellent person, but that he was hers, she with, he 'is my Beloved,' and also 'my friend;' he is her friend (as she is his friend, verse 1,) that is, one that is friendly to her, and will do for her, beyond what a brother, or mother, or the

nearest of all relations will or can do; he is one that is born for the day of her adversity, and one whom she trusts as her own soul, he is so dear to her, and she to him; for, this tie of friendship is mutual betwixt them. In a word (saith she) he is much in himself, and much to me, unspeakably excellent in himself, and very dear and precious to me, my husband, and my friend in sum, my friendly husband, and my loving friend.

Observe. 1. There are many sweet relations that Christ stands in to the believer, as husband, friend, brother, &c., even as there are many relations that she stands in to him, as spouse, sister, dove, &c. 2. Christ fills all the relations that he stands in to his people, and that exceedingly well; he is a singularly loving, faithful, kind and tender husband; and a singularly kind, faithful and unchangeable friend, the best friend that ever a believer had; for, the expression, 'this is;' &c. saith, that what Christ is, he is indeed, and singularly so, as having no equal, he is a matchless husband and friend: this is the scope. 3. Christ and the believer are upon one side, they are friends, there is a league of friendship betwixt them, and they have common friends, and oommon adversaries. 4. Those who are Christ's friends, (as verse 1. 'eat, O friends') Christ may be claimed by them as their friend, and what that can infer, they may expect from him; for, he hath no bare title, neither sustains he any empty relation. 5. Believers should lean much to Christ, trust him, and expect good from him, as their friend. 6. It is a notable and singular consolation for folks to have Christ their friend, it is comfortable in life, death, and judgment, in prosperity and adversity, it implies these things in which he is forthcoming to his friends, 1. Constant kindness and faithfulness at all times, 'he loves at all times,' Prov. 17:17, and, chap. 18 last: he never fails, nor can he at any time be charged with that which Absalom casts up to Hushai, 2 Sam. 16:17, 'Is this thy kindness to thy friend?' 2. Sympathy, and condescending to supply their wants, he cleaves 'closer than a brother,' Prov. 18:24; it is such a love, as one hath who aimeth at his friend's good, as well as his own. 3. Familiarity in mutual communion, as useth to be betwixt friends, and freedom in conversing, as, Exod. 3:11, 'The Lord spoke with Moses as a man doth with his friend.' 4. It takes in a mutual confidence that one may have in another, as in his very own self, and more than in any other; all which are eminently in Christ, as 'ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend,' and eminently of this friend, 'by hearty counsel,' Prov. 27:9. No other friends are comparable to this friend: happy, happy for evermore are they, whose friend Christ Jesus is. 7. Where Christ is a friend, there is he also the soul's Beloved, or, believers' choosing of Christ for their Beloved, and his being kindly to them as a friend, go together; these two relations, 'my Beloved;' and 'my friend' are never separate. Now to be the soul's Beloved, implies these things, 1. That comparatively, Christ

is eminently and only loved by his people, and nothing is admitted to share in their affection with him,' Phil. 3:8. 2. That there is in the soul an high esteem of him, which begets this love. 3. That there is such an ardent affection to him, as makes them long for union with him, as love naturally desires union with that which it loves, it desires to be with Christ here, and hereafter, as that which is far the best of all, Phil. 1:23. 4. It supposes a delight and satisfaction, that their souls take in Christ, and expect from union with him; their happiness lies in it, and they are. disquieted, and someway holily discontented and weighted, when they miss it, and under desertion and absence, easily fear, lest their heart beguile and delude them in that concerning matter, as the scope of this place, and her present exercise shew. 5. It supposes a kindness in their love, and well groundedness, such as a wife hath to her husband, and not such as is betwixt the adulteress and the adulterer, which is all the love that the men of the world have to their idols, but the love that the Bride hath to Christ, is a native and avowed love, of which she hath no reason to be ashamed (as men will one day be of all their idols) but to boast and glory in him; and Christ is to the believer, not what idols are to the men of the world, but what a most loving husband is to his wife, being the object of her heart-contenting and satisfying love; wherever these properties of true love to Christ are, there may the soul lay claim to him as its friend, and be confident to find him its true and kindly friend; for, where he is the soul's Beloved, he is the soul's friend. 8. This is implied, that whatever other beloveds men set their love upon besides Christ, they will prove unsound, and unfaithful friends in the time of need; or, confidence in any thing but Christ will fail a man at last; for, he is their friend, and no other beloved deserves that name. All other things will be like 'a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint,' Prov. 25:19, or like pools in the wilderness, that run dry in the heart, and make the wayfaring men ashamed, such as Job's friends did prove to him, Job 6:15, miserable comforters will they be to men, in the day of their greatest need; but then especially will Christ Jesus be found to be a friend indeed; for, there is an excellency in Christ in every relation which he stands under to his people, and an infinite disproportion betwixt him and all creatures, in respect of this.

A second way that we may consider the words is, as they relate to the daughters of Jerusalem their question, verse 9. 'Ye ask what he is more than other beloveds?' Now (saith she) this is he, who is singular and matchless in all his properties; and so, it looks not only to her choice of him, to be her Beloved and her friend, but saith also, that he is singularly and matchlessly such, even a non-such Beloved and friend, and one who will be found, after trial, only worthy to be chosen and closed with as such. *Observe.* 1. Believers in their answers to others, should, as particularly as may be, bring home what they say to some edifying use

(for, this best clears any question proposed) and should not insist on generals, much less evanish in empty speculations, but should level at edification, and frame what they say, so, as it may best reach that end, and therefore she applies her answer to their question. 2. When Christ in his excellency and worth is a little insisted and dwelt on, he will be found to be incomparable; and the more souls search into him, the more confidently may they assert his incomparable excellency; this she here doth, and saith, as it were, is he not, and see ye him not now to be the chiefest among ten thousand, and more excellent than all others? As having made her assertion demonstrative, and undeniable. 3. Christ's worth can bide the trial, and there are, and may be gotten, good grounds to prove that he is well worthy of all the respect, that can be put upon him; and in reason, his worth and excellency may be made convincing unto others, and it may be demonstrated to consciences, that Christ is of more worth than all the world; and her resuming of it thus, supposeth it now to be so clear, that they could say nothing against it, as appears more fully from the words following. 4. No other beloved, nor friend that men choose beside Christ, can abide the trial; the more they are inquired into, and searched out, they will be found to be of the less worth: therefore she appeals (as it were) to all men to bring their beloveds before Christ, if they durst compare with him, as being confident none durst enter the lists, purposely and professedly to compete with him.

3. We may consider these words, as her application made to the daughters of Jerusalem, holding forth her scope, to edify them by this description of Christ, and pressingly (for their good) to bear it in upon them, that they might be made to fall in love with this Christ, that had so high a room in her heart; for, so the very strain of the words seem to run. Hence, *Observe*. 1. Those who love Christ themselves, will be desirous to have others knowing and loving him also: and this may be a mark of love to Christ, an earnest desire to have him esteemed of, and loved by others. 2. Those who love Christ and others truly, will endeavour nothing more, than to have Christ made known to them, and to have them divorced from their idols, and engaged to him; thus love to them, as well as to him, manifests itself. 3. It is a piece of the duty of mutual communion, to which the Lord's people are obliged, to instruct others in the knowledge of the excellencies of Christ, that they may be brought in love with him; and where that end is proposed, according to mens' several places and stations, no opportunity should be missed, nor pains spared, which may attain it. 4. That this duty of commending Christ to others, so as it may be profitable, should be exceeding warily and circumspectly gone about, as all the Bride's strain clears; for, she goes about it, 1. Tenderly, not upbraiding their ignorance. 2. Lovingly, speaking still to them as friends. 3. Wisely and seasonably, taking the fit opportunity of their

question. 4. Fully, solidly, and judiciously, bearing forth the main things of Christ to them. 5. Affectionately and gravely, as being affected with the thing, and in love with Christ herself. 6. Exemplarily and convincingly, as going before them in the practice of that herself, which she endeavours to press upon them; that is, by loving and seeking Christ above all herself, she studies to commend that to others the more effectually. 5. *Observe*. That the right uptaking of Christ in his excellency, and the pressing of him upon the heart, is the most solid way of wearing all other beloveds out of request with the soul: if he once get room, the esteem of other things will quickly blow up; and there is no way to have the heart weaned from them, but to have Christ great in the affections of his people; therefore, when they ask, what he is more than other beloveds? She answers, not by crying them down, or by discovering their worthlessness, but by the describing of his worth, and thereby giving them a solid proof of his excellency to be a ground of their faith, which doth necessarily infer the other; for, 'Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:5.

4. We may consider this close, as it holds forth the holy exulting, and boasting of her soul in Christ, who is so far in excellency beyond all others: this is clear from her claiming of interest in him, and her repeating of the phrase, 'this,' this, singular 'this, is my Beloved;' and again, 'this is my friend,' especially compared with the scope, whereby now she holds him out, not only as a matchless beloved and friend, but to be hers, and she thinks no shame of him; her heart with holy gladness and joy doth exult in this excellent choice of hers above all others: as if she said, ask ye what he is? This, now so described, is he that is mine; he is not like the worthless, empty, and stinking beloveds, which others have, I avow him, and count myself happy, and well come to in him; the contentment I have in him is incomparably beyond the counterfeit contentment, that all other beloveds can give. This the manner of expression, and the frame of her heart in the uttering of it, and the scope (which is to shew her confidence in this his commendation, as most worthy to be commended) do imply. *Observe*. 1. That there is matter of boasting and holy bragging in Christ Jesus, whether we consider the excellency that is in himself, or the confidence that his people may have in him, as one who will make all that is in him forthcoming to the utmost, for the good of his own. 2. That there is nothing besides him, that one can confidently boast of; for, this her boasting is so appropriate to him, as it is implied, to be utterly unsuitable that men should boast of any other thing. 'Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord,' that is, in him, and in no other thing beside. 3. That believers who have interest in him, and have taken him to be their Beloved and their friend, may make their boast in him, Psalm 34:2; may glory in him, Isa. 45:25; and may bless themselves, as

happy eternally in him, Isa. 65:16. This holy boasting implieth, 1. An high estimation of him. 2. Confidence in him, without fear. 3. Satisfaction with him, and having full contentment in him. 4. An eminent joy resulting from these, which cannot be shaken, all the former being in an eminent degree. 4. *Observe*. That it is incumbent on the believer who hath chosen Christ, sometimes to boast in him, and in a lovely and holy way to vaunt and boast (if we may so speak) of him above all, so are we commanded, to ‘glory in his holy name,’ Psal 105:3, and this is one of the ways we are to commend him, and Christ will take it as a piece of notable respect put upon him, when it is seriously done. 5. When a believer is in a right frame, and clear anent his interest, he will boast himself in Christ, as having ‘the lines fallen to him in pleasant places,’ Psalm 16:6, whatever else be his lot in the world: Christ is a bargain, that one day will be found worth the boasting of.

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