



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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Commentary on the Song of Songs, Chapter Eight

by James Durham

BRIDE.

Verse 1. Oh that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother I when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.

2. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.

This chapter carries on the copy of that spiritual communion, which is betwixt Christ and the believer; the Bride speaks most here, and the nearer she comes to a close, her expressions become the more massy. It may be divided into these parts, 1. The Bride continueth, and heightens her one great request, of more intimate familiarity with Christ: which is propounded, amplified and pressed, with the insinuation of her success, and after-carriage in the first four verses. 2. The daughters of Jerusalem being charged by her, verse 4, break out with a commendation of her, verse 5. 3. She forbears to own them, but proceeds, verse 5, to speak to him (as loath to be interrupted or diverted) with two further petitions: the first whereof, is for fixedness in her fellowship with him, that it be not liable to the frequent interruptions of a declining heart, verses 6,7. The second, is for those not yet brought in, verse 8. 4. The Bridegroom replies to this last suit, in good words and comfortable, verse 9. From which, in the fifth place, she gathers a comfortable conclusion to herself, verse 10, which she con firms, verses 11, and 12. 6. The Bridegroom gives his farewell-request unto her, verse 13. Which, seventhly and lastly, she meets with the ardent expression and putting up

of her first, last, and great suit to him, to wit, that he would ‘make haste,’ that is, haste his coming for completing her happiness, beyond which she hath nothing to say, and until which, she is never silent, Rev. 22:17, so then, this chapter doth consist of seven parts, according to the several intercourses of the speakers.

In the first part, the Bride first propounds, and amplifies, or qualifies her suit, verse 1. 2. It is pressed with motives, verses 1,2. 3. Her attainment and success in her suit is mentioned, verses 3,4. And 4. her care of entertaining Christ, is recorded, verse 4.

The suit is in the first words, ‘O that thou wert as my brother:’ this I conceive looks not mainly to Christ’s incarnation, but to something that might have been by believers obtained even then before his incarnation, and may yet be desired by those who now love him: but, that which is chiefly intended in these words, is the following forth of the love strain of a heart longing for Christ’s company, in the terms and expressions that are in use amongst men: it hath been ever thought unseemly for virgins, too familiarly to converse with men that are strangers, even though they were suited for by them, this path been cause of reproach to many: but, for brethren and sisters to be familiar, hath not been subject to mistakes; they who are in that relation may use more freedom, than without offence can be used by others; therefore, Abraham fearing to call Sarah his wife, gave her out to be his sister, that their conversing together might be the less suspected; thus, the scope here is to press, that Christ would condescend to be so homely with her, as she with boldness and without fear might converse with him O! (saith she) that thou wert so familiar with me, that I might confidently converse with thee, as a woman may do with her brother: and because, there is great odds betwixt brethren that are of the same father, yet born of divers mothers (as Joseph, Simeon, and Judah were) and brethren that are also of the same mother (as Joseph and Benjamin were, who therefore more dearly loved one another) she doth therefore add that qualification, ‘that sucked the breasts of my mother,’ that is, such a brother as hath been conceived in the same womb, and nourished by the same breasts (mothers being then both mothers and nurses to their own children) whereby, a brother in the most near and warm relation is signified: in sum, the sense is this, O! if thou wert to me so condescending, as a brother is to one born of the same womb with him, that I might with the more freedom, boldness, and confidence, and sensible out-letting of my affections, converse with thee: such sensible breaking forth of affections, we find to have been betwixt Joseph and Benjamin, Gen. 43:34. She looks upon all the familiarity that she had attained, but as that which might be amongst strangers, in respect of that which she longed for and expected: and that this is the scope of this part of the allegory, the words after

do clear, 'then I would kiss thee, and not be despised,' or reproached for it; whereas now in her present condition, which had much of estrangement in it, any claim she made to Christ, was by temptation cast in her teeth, and she upbraided, as if it were unsuitable for her to carry so to him: but (saith she) if thou wilt condescend to me, and be familiar with me as a brother, I would not be ashamed for any challenge of that kind.

This suit, and its qualification, import, 1. That there should be much loving tenderness betwixt those that are in so near a relation as this, to be born of one mother, &c. 2. That mothers who bear children, and are fitted to give suck, should not decline that duty to their children; the giving of suck being a duty no less natural, than bringing forth, where the Lord hath put no impediment to the contrary in the way. 3. It imports, that there are steps of access to Christ, and degrees of fellowship with him, beyond any thing that the most grown believers have attained: there is somewhat of this, even by the Bride to be wished for, that she hath not yet attained. 4. There ought to be no halting or sitting down in any attainment of nearness with Christ, till it be brought to that measure that no more can be enjoyed, and till it be at the utmost height that is possible to be attained. 5. To have sensible warmth, and condescending familiarity from Christ, and confident freedom with him, is the believer's great design; that is, to have him as a brother: and these two, to wit, confident freedom with Christ, and his warm condescending to them, go together; which the reasons following will clear. They are set down in seven motives, or advantages, which his being as a brother would bring along with it to her; and hereby it will be further cleared, what it is that is here intended. The first is hinted at in these words, 'When I should find thee without:' when, is supplied, and the words read in the original, 'I would find thee without:' now (saith she) I have sought thee often without, and have for a long time not found thee (chap. 3:2,3, and 5:6,7) but if thou wert thus familiar with me, I would have thy company every where, and think no shame of it. This suppons, 1. That Christ may be without, or at a distance, even with his own sister and spouse: the most sensible manifestations have interruptions: 2. When Christ is without, or at a distance, then the believer's work is to seek him till he find him; he loves not to be separated from Christ, and therefore he pants after his manifestations: an absent Christ, and a seeking, painful, diligent believer, should go together. 3. That where Christ is familiar, all interruptions of presence are easily superable, yea, more easily superable than to others, with whom he is not so familiar and intimate: he may be found by them even without, that is, in cases that have in them some obstructions unto intimate fellowship, as without is a place that is not convenient for familiar communion. 4. It is a great benefit to a believer, to have Christ's presence easily recoverable, or recovered; it is no small mercy to find him

when he is sought. Other things rising from this expression may be gathered from chap. 3:2,3, and 5:6,7. In general, from all these arguments we may observe, that they all include advantages to the believer, yet she makes use of them as motives to press her suit; which says, that whatever may be any real advantage to a believer, doth sway much with Christ.

The second reason why she desires this, is, that she may embrace and kiss him, and it follows on the former (as each of them depends upon another) I would find thee without (saith she) and 'I would kiss thee,' having found him, she would with delight let out her affections on him. Kisses amongst men, are the most kindly evidences of their love, as was cleared, chap. 1 verse 1, upon these words, 'Let him kiss me:' his kisses are kindly intimations of his love to her; and therefore her kissing of him must be a most sensible flowing and abounding out-letting of her affections on him, as affectionate relations do when they kiss one another. It is much to the same purpose, with what she said, chap. 7:12, 'There will I give thee my loves:' in sum, if thou wert familiar with me (saith she) when I find thee, I would sensibly, confidently, and with freedom solace myself in thee, which now I dare scarce do when I find thee, being possessed with fear of thy removal. The difference between this expression, and that in chap. 7:12, seems to be this; there, she desired communion with him, that her heart might be by his presence disposed (to say so) for letting out her love on him, and that she might have the opportunity to do it: here, she desires that he would manifest himself more familiarly, that with the greater holy boldness and confidence, she might satisfy herself in pouring forth her love, by spiritual soul-embracings, and kissings of him whom she loved. This imports, 1. That there are degrees in the way of believers' letting out their love on Christ, as there is in his manifesting of himself to them; there are some times they 'give him their love,' when they have no access to kiss him; and other times they are admitted to kissing of him, as at some times he doth them. 2. The more familiarly his love lets out itself on them, the more doth their love flow out on him. 3. It is a mercy to the believer, and highly prized by him, to have access to kiss Christ, and to let out his heart and love on him. 4. It says, that at all times believers will not get themselves solaced in Christ; this is an exercise to which their hearts doth not frame, till he familiarly manifest himself; they cannot kiss and embrace him, until his embracements come first. More particularly, if we consider the scope of these words, 'I would kiss thee,' and that, 'without:' they imply, 1. A more present sensible object, such as may be kissed: whence, observe Christ's familiar out-letting of himself, that makes him exceedingly obvious unto the believer; it makes him so sensibly present as he may be in a spiritual way embraced and kissed. 2. It holds out the out-letting of the believer's love on him: from which, *Observe* 1. The great duty of one that finds

Christ, is to love him, and to let the heart flow out on him. 2. This should be done whenever, or wherever, Christ is found; and so soon as opportunity is offered, the heart should close with it without delay. 3. Familiarity with Christ will not be displeasing to him, but exceedingly acceptable; otherwise, this could be no motive to press her suit.

3. Kissing him, imports, both a holy confidence, and satisfaction or delight, in her letting out her heart upon him: which shews, that it is sweet not only to have Christ loving us, but to get him loved; and so this is both satisfying to her, and acceptable to him.

The third motive or reason (which depends on the former two) is, 'Yet, I should not be despised,' or, they should not despise me: that is, although I found thee without, and were seen kissing thee, and by confident boldness delighting in thee; yet, if thou wert familiar with me as 'my brother,' and according to the nearness of that relation would familiarly own me, neither men, devils, temptations, nor any thing else, would have access to despise, upbraid, or reproach me for it, I would be confident against all; as a virgin that is shewing her respect to her own born brother, needs fear no reproach from that. *Observe.* 1. Believers are subject to be despised, even the beloved Bride of Jesus Christ is not freed from this trial, to be little esteemed of, even as the off scourings of all things, to be reproached and shamed by men (as she was, chap. 5:7.) to be baffled (to say so) as an hypocrite, by the devil and temptation, as Job was, Job, chap. 1 and 2:2. Believers are not senseless or stupid; when reproached or despised, they may be affected with it, and may endeavour rightly to have it prevented or removed. 3. Often the more tenderly that believers let out their affection on Christ, or their zeal for him, they are the more subject to be despised; for, when she kisses Christ, she looks upon despising then as waiting on her, if he prevent it not. 4. Christ's familiar presence, or, his being as a brother owning his Bride, is the great thing that guards off, and prevents despising, and procures freedom from reproach, or at least is a bulwark to the soul against reproaches: it is no little advantage that familiarity with Christ brings along with it; for, by his owning of believers, either their carriage is made so convincing, that malicious mouths are stopped, as having nothing to say against them; or they are so sustained, under all these outward or inward despisings, that they trouble them not, and so they are to them as if they were not. 5. Christ's keeping up of himself, is the dispensation under which the believer is most obnoxious to be despised: the devil, temptations, and men, usually cast up to them then, 'Where is their God?' Psalm 42:9,10, and that pierces them: so our Lord was dealt with on the cross; Job calls this the

Lord's renewing of his witnesses against him, whereby (as it were) temptation is confirmed in what is asserted.

There follows in the second verse, four more arguments, she makes use of to press her suit: we heard of three in the first verse; the fourth is in these words, 'I would lead thee:' the word in the original signifies such a leading as useth to be in triumph, a leading that is joined with respect and honour to the person who is led. Christ leads his people as a shepherd doth his flock, or a nurse her child; and this signifies tenderness in him, and weakness in them: the believer again, leads Christ, as a servant or usher doth the master, or as men do kings and victorious conquerors whom they honour; and this supposes stateliness in him, and respect and attendance in the Bride, she looks upon him as a glorious, magnificent person, in whom, and with whom, she desires only to triumph. In sum, the meaning is this, If (saith she) thou wert as my brother, when I found thee myself, I would not soon quit thee, but wait with all honourable attendance upon thee. *Observe*. 1. Honourable attendance on Christ, and respectful service, is a duty that well becomes believers. 2. To give him this honour, is a thing which they mainly aim at. 3. It is a great mercy to them (and they will so look upon it) when they are helped, in a way suitable to his majesty and stateliness, to wait upon him, and do him service. 4. Christ's familiar presence, both gives believers the occasion, and also the fitness and disposition, for giving him this honourable attendance; she speaks here, as if one would say to another whom they respected, if thou wert in our quarters, I would wait on thee, and think it a favour to have the opportunity to do so: this, or the like, is alluded unto here.

The fifth argument follows on this, and it is, 'I would bring thee into my mother's house:' this is a resolution, to perform what she had practised, chap. 3:4, and was spoken to there: the sense is, if thou wert familiar with me (saith she) I would usher thee into the church, whereof I am a member, for the good of all the family; as if a virgin, living in her mother's house, should press one whom she loved, and with whom she might be familiar as with a brother, when she had found him without, to go in and abide with her in her mother's house, as the greatest evidence of her respect, and that they of the family might have the benefit of his company, as well as she: so it is here. And it shews, 1. That she would leave no respect, that was possible to her, unexercised towards Christ; she would not only honour him herself, but she would endeavour to have him made known to others, that they might have a high esteem of him also; believers whom Christ is familiar with, they will not be satisfied with any respect they can put upon him, but are careful to have him known and honoured by all others that live in the church with them. 2. That in her seeking for him, she minded the public good of

the church, as well as her own which teacheth us, to purpose to ourselves the public good, as well as our own particular advantage, whenever we haunt the means, wherein we are called to seek him. 3. That she thought it a great mercy, to be any ways useful for the good of her mother's house: and so believers will look upon it, not only as their duty, but also as their mercy, to be useful to others. 4. That Christ's presence familiarly manifested to particular believers, doth exceedingly capacitate them, for being usefully instrumental in the church wherein they live.

The sixth argument amplifies this, from the benefit that she would have by his being brought into her mother's house, in these words, 'who would instruct me;' that is, then she would instruct me, if thou wert there: the ordinances in the church, whereby believers are edified and instructed, would then be lively and profitable, in a greater measure than formerly: whereby it appears, that by 'mother,' is understood the visible church; for, there only are the ordinances which do instruct; and by the Bride, is understood particular believers, because it is to them that these ordinances become 'the power of God unto salvation:' or, the words may be read, thou wouldst instruct me; that is, if thou wert brought to the church, thou by thy ordinances wouldst teach me. The scope in both these readings is one, to shew, that by Christ's presence in the church, she expected to be taught, which she looked for no otherwise, nor by any immediate way, therefore, she would have him there. *Observe.* 1. The most grown believer needs instruction, and is still a scholar while he is in the church upon earth. 2. The ordinances in the visible church, are the means, whereby Christ ordinarily teacheth his people; otherwise, there were no force in this reasoning, to desire him to her mother's house, that she might be instructed. 3. The most eminent believer, even the Bride of Jesus Christ, is not above the reach of ordinances, but is to be instructed by them in the visible church. 4. Believers should endeavour the enjoyment of Christ's company in the same church that was their mother, and seek to be instructed there, and should not endeavour to carry Christ away from their mother-church. 5. Christ hath a more full way of manifesting his presence in his church at one time than at another; even as also at different times, there are different measures of his manifestations to particular believers. 6. Christ's presence in his church and with his people, singularly furthers their edification and instruction, and gives a blessing to the ordinances. 7. Believers, when in a right frame, will account it no little mercy to be instructed by Christ in his ordinances, and to have the word blessed unto them. 8. The most sensible and full manifestations of Christ, should not, yea will not, lessen the esteem of the ordinances; but both should, and will put the Lord's people in a capacity to be edified by them, and will incline and fit them to profit under them.

The last motive is taken from the entertainment she would give him; if (saith she) thou wouldst familiarly manifest thyself, and if once I had found thee, and gotten thee brought to my mother's house, then 'I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate:' in a word, I would entertain thee as well as I might, and thou shouldst be very welcome, and kindly taken with, as guests who are respected, use to be. By 'spiced wine,' and 'the juice of the pomegranate,' is understood the most excellent entertainment; as in these countries, it is like (as we may see from Prov. 9:2, and Song, chap. 5:1.) they used to mix the wine they gave their friends, that it might be the more savoury. Now through this Song, by such similitudes are understood the graces that are in believers; as, chap. 4:10, 13, &c. chap. 5:1, and in sum, the sense comes to this, if thou wert familiar with me, and by thy presence in my mother's house, were making the ordinances lively, then I would feast thee on my graces, and my love, faith, hope, &c. (which are to thee, more savoury than wine, with which men use to entertain their most special friends) should flow out abundantly on thee. Hence, *Observe*. 1. That believers' design and aim at the feasting and entertaining of Christ, when they have his company, as well as to be entertained there by themselves. 2. It is no little mercy to get respect to Christ discharged; and a believing soul will think it no small privilege to get him to entertain, if he have where with to entertain him. 3. Christ's coming to a soul brings sufficient provision for his own entertainment: the Bride makes no question, but there shall be a feast, if he will come; and if he come not, there will be nothing but emptiness there: she doubts not, but if once he would come to her mother's house, his presence would make enough of good provision. 4. The Lord respects, even the offer of welcome from his people, when he is not actually entertained as they would: or though they be not in case for the time to entertain him, yet their serious desire to do it, is very acceptable to him; otherwise, this would be no argument for our Lord Jesus, to grant her suit.

Verse 3. His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.

The third verse is the same, and to the same scope with verse 6 of chap. 2, and the words being the same in the original, we conceive they will read better here as they are there, 'his left hand is under my head;' here it is, 'should be under my head,' but 'should' is supplied and so the words hold out here (as in chap. 2:6,) a return, which the Bride had to her suit; our Lord Jesus

coming, and putting in his left hand under her head, and as a kind brother taking her in his arms, answereth her suit, and satisfieth her desire: this agrees best with the words, as they were formerly used, chap. 2:6, and with the scope here. The verse following confirms it also, where she chargeth the daughters not to stir him up, which supposes him to be present: so we find the same charge following the same words, chap. 2:7, as also, her finding him, and bringing him to her mother's house, is followed with the same charge, chap. 3:5, and she is said to be leaning on him here, verse 5, and yet is by the daughters commended, and not despised, which is a proof that he was present; for, this is it that made her not to be despised. The meaning then is, now (saith she) I have obtained what I desired, and he is become very friendly and familiar with me, like a brother, which was my desire. And this shews, 1. That Christ easily condescends to his longing Bride, to give her such a degree of his presence as she called for; and that he doth this so suddenly, is great kindness and confidence: Christ will in this sometimes condescend very quickly to the desires of his longing people. 2. That she observes and acknowledgeth it; it is no less duty to observe and acknowledge a return, than to put up a prayer. 3. Christ hath a singularly tender way of communicating his love, and of embracing his people, he can take them in his arms, and make much of them, when he sees it fit. 4. There is a sweet satisfaction, and unspeakable heart-quieting refreshment to be found in Christ's arms; she thinks it so good to be here, that she speaks of it with much complacency, and carefully sets herself not to have it interrupted in the verse following.

Verse 4. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.

Having now access to much familiarity with Christ, as she desired, and being in his arms, she expresseth her care in this verse, to prevent any new interruption of his blessed presence; as if a woman having her friend or husband sleeping in her arms, should command all in the house to be quiet lest he should be awaked: so the Bride sets herself to watch so tenderly over every thing that is in her, that nothing give him just ground to withdraw: and though she speak to the daughters of Jerusalem, yet the scope shews, she looks to herself; but it is thus expressed, partly, to keep the form used in this Song, and so having spoken of bringing him to her mother's house, she makes use of the similitude of keeping the house quiet; partly, to shew her seriousness and reality in this her care, and the great need that there is of being watchful, even as David provokes all

the creatures to praise, and lays that charge on them, thereby to show his own seriousness in the thing, and the greatness of the work of praise which he was taken up with: so to the same purpose is this resemblance here. The same words were found, chap. 2:7, and chap. 3:5, where they were opened there are two little differences in the original, which yet alter not the scope. 1. That expression, 'by the roes and hinds' (which was formerly used) is here left out, not because this charge is less weighty, but it shews a haste and abruptness in her speaking, which makes her omit that, the more speedily to express her charge. 2. It was before, 'If ye stir or awake:' here it is (as the margin reads from the original) 'why will ye stir or awake?' which doth more plainly import, 1. A readiness, or bentsil in them to stir him up. 2. A certainty of the effect of his withdrawing, if they should stir him up, or awake him. 3. An unreasonableness and absurdity in the doing of it, Why will ye do it? saith she. 4. A pressing seriousness, in her proposing of this question, and urging it so vehemently, From this, and the frequent repetition of this charge, *Observe*, 1. That it is a difficult piece of work, to keep the heart tender and watchful for entertaining of Christ, even when he is present. 2. The strongest believer will take one charge after another, and all will have enough to do, to make him watchfully tender in keeping Christ: there is so much laziness in the hearts of the best, and there is so great need to stir them up to renew their watchfulness. 3. When the heart hath had frequent proofs of its own declining, there is the more need to be very serious in the preventing of it again. 4. There is nothing that a kindly loving believer will have more indignation at, whether in himself or others, than at this, that Christ should be provoked, and thereby put to withdraw; this he cannot abide, 'Why' (saith she) 'will ye stir him up?' 5. They who have Christ's presence, will not be peremptory with him, for the constant continuing of the sense thereof, although they love it; but will be peremptory with themselves, that by their sin they provoke him not to withdraw before he please. 6. Communion with Christ is an uptaking exercise to the believer, it takes him so up that he is never idle: if he be waiting for Christ, he is breathing, 'O that thou wert,' &c. and seeking to find him; if he enjoy him, he is endeavouring to keep and entertain him, and these two take him up: believers are either seeking while they obtain, or watching that they may entertain what they have attained.

DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM.

Verse 5a. Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?--

The daughters of Jerusalem come in speaking to the Bride's commendation, in the first part of the fifth verse, 'Who is this' they say, (or who is she?) 'that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?' This part of the verse stops the Bride from following the purpose she was upon, with a kind of an abrupt exclamation to her commendation. The daughters now beholding her resting in her Beloved's arms, as it is, verse 3, to shew the commendableness of that posture of leaning on him, they are brought in admiring it: and therefore, both the Bride and the Bridegroom are spoken of in the third person, and that by way of question, which supposeth no doubt in the thing, who it was of whom they speak, but implieth an exceeding high estimation of the party spoken of, as being (especially in that posture) exceedingly lovely. The words hold out a believer's walk, 1. In the nature of it: it is a coming up, or ascending. 2. In the term from which, it is from the wilderness; by which too (as was cleared, chap. 3:6) is understood the believer's spiritual progress heaven-ward, with their backs to the contentments of the world, as being unsuitable for them to rest in: these two are spoken of chap. 3:3. There is added here a more express description of her posture, in this ascending, she is 'leaning on her Beloved:' that is, as they who are weak, make use of a staff, in climbing of a straight and steep ground, or ease themselves by leaning on one that is strong, and especially one whom they love, for helping them on their way; so the believer is said to come up from the wilderness, 'leaning on her Beloved,' because she being weak in herself, and unfit for such a difficult voyage, by faith rests on Christ, for helping her in the way, whereby she is sustained, and carried through in the duties of a holy walk, and the difficulties in her way, till she come through the wilderness unto the land of rest. So then this leaning imports, 1. Felt weakness in herself, for encountering with the difficulties of this walk or journey. 2. Strength in Christ, sufficient for enabling her. 3. Her use-making of this strength by faith; for, that is to lean or rest on him, or to be joined or associated to him, as the word is rendered by some; and it is ordinary for faith to be expressed by leaning, resting, taking hold; and so leaning

to Christ, is opposed to 'leaning to our own understanding,' Prov. 3:5. 4. Her quieting of herself delightfully in her leaning or resting on Christ, which gave her security against all fears and difficulties in her way, as John when he leaned on Christ's bosom, John 13:23, so the believer thinks himself sure and safe, when admitted to lean his soul there. 5. A progress that she made. by this in her way and journey, and that this leaning had much influence on her advancement therein, and upon this account is her leaning mainly commended.

Observe. 1. That even believers are insufficient of themselves, as of themselves, for the duties of a holy walk. 2. That believers should walk under the sense of this their insufficiency and weakness, and when they come the greatest length in a holy walk, they should not lean unto themselves, or any inherent stock of gifts or grace; which two supposes, that a believer's conversation, when right, is a heavenly and tender walk. 3. Christ Jesus hath a sufficiency and efficacy in him, not only for the justification of believers that rest on him, but for the furthering of their sanctification also, and helping of them to a victory over the world; 1. Cor. 1:30, 'He is our sanctification,' as well as our justification. 4. Believers in their way, should not only by faith rest on Christ, for attaining pardon of sin by his righteousness; but, should also depend on him, for furthering of their mortification and sanctification: and thus in the exercise of faith and holy dependance, we are to 'acknowledge him in all our ways,' which is opposed to 'leaning to our own understanding,' Prov. 3:5. This was practised in an exemplary way, by the worthies, recorded, Heb. 11:5. The exercising of faith on Christ for sanctification and life, and for performing of the duties of holiness, hath much influence on the believer's success in all these; for, 'this is our victory,' whereby the world is overcome, 'even our faith,' 1 John 5:4,5. And therefore, those that are most in the use-making of Christ, for the helping them forward in their way, cannot but come best speed; for, 'leaning on him,' and 'going up,' are here joined together: and so they can never make progress in holiness, that make not use of Christ in their endeavours after it; God hath so coupled use-making with Christ, and progress in holiness together, that Christ may bear all the glory of the believer's success in the way of holiness, and that he that glories may glory in him. 6. The believer's walk toward heaven is both a stately, and also an easy and successful walk; for, he is to go about all duties in the strength of Christ, and so Christ bears the burden, and his yoke becomes easy: it is the neglecting of him, that makes all duties wearisome. 7. It is no little piece of the dexterity of a holy walk, and is the great commendation of it, to do all we do by faith, to walk and go on in the faith of his strength, as leaning on him; this makes the Bride's posture wonderful, for its rarity and commendableness. 8. Although doing of duties will not prove an interest to Christ, and although believers come not to perfection, or

any exact suitableness in them, yet the doing of them in the strength of Christ, and walking, as leaning on him, will make out an interest in him: none can actually employ him, for bearing them through in duty, who have not first closed with him, as their beloved, for obtaining of pardon; this is the Bride's property, Christ is first her beloved, and then she leans upon him to be helped in her walk. 9. That this solid faith, which doth empty the believer of himself in the performance of all duties, as well as of righteousness in the point of his justification: the native work of faith, is to make the soul rest on Christ, yea, and actually it makes the soul rest on Christ alone; for, all true faith lays the burden of all duties and difficulties upon him, and so it is compared to leaning.

BRIDE.

Verse 5b. --I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

The second part of this verse, in these words, 'I raised thee up,' &c. are not without obscurity: we take the words to be a new argument of the Bride's, whereby (after this exclamation of the daughters of Jerusalem) she comes in to press her former suit upon the Bridegroom, and proceeds in it, as being loath to be interrupted or diverted from her direct application to him; wherefore she seems to take no notice of what the daughters spoke, and makes no reply, but instantly goes on in her wrestling with him, as if nothing had been spoken by them. That they are words spoken to him, the affixes in the original make it clear; for, although there be no such difference in our language, whereby we may discern whether the word 'thee,' be masculine or feminine, as spoken to man or woman, yet in the Hebrew there is a clear difference and so, the word 'thee, I raised thee,' being in the original of the masculine gender, it is 'thee' man, or 'thee' my beloved, or husband: and therefore; they cannot be understood as his words to her, but as hers to him, seeing it may be clearly discerned in the original that they belong to a man and it is a different word from that which is ordinarily spoken of a woman; and there being no convincing example to the contrary, we must so understand the words here, and to understand them otherwise, would bring in needless confusion in that language. Next, that her scope is to press for

nearness with him, both what went before, and what follows, do demonstrate: which also the opening of the words will confirm. In them there are two experiences asserted, which tend both to this scope: the first is her own experience, 'I raised thee up under the apple-tree.' The second is, the experience of all other believers, 'there thy mother brought thee forth, there she brought forth' (for 'thee' in this repeated expression, is not in the original) 'that bare thee.'

By the 'apple-tree,' we understand Christ himself, who is so called, chap. 2:3, because of his fruit and shadow, under which she sat down. To be 'under the apple-tree,' supposes her to be near him, and actually delighting herself on him, as being abundantly refreshed under his shadow, as was cleared, chap. 2:3. Her raising up of Christ, imports these three things. 1. A duty on her part (to say so) patting him to shew himself someway for her, more than formerly he had done; so to raise, or awake, when it is applied to God, signifies, as, Psalm 7:6; Psalm 44:23, 'Awake, why sleepest thou? Arise, cast us not off?' So then, the meaning of this expression, 'I raised thee,' is, I dealt with, and importuned thee in this. 2. It implies importunity in dealing with Christ, incessantly she stirred him, and with petitions pressed him; so, when it is said, Isa. 64:7, 'No man stirs up himself,' &c. The word, 'stirs up,' is the same word, and imports more than to pray: it signifies liveliness and wrestling in it, as fowls use to stir their young ones when they would have them flying, from which the word is borrowed. 2. It implies success, I not only made application to thee, and was helped to be serious; but I prevailed, and thou wast awaked and raised, and did make thyself in more than an ordinary way manifest to me, and for me, when I being admitted under thy shadow, took that opportunity to deal with thee. This then is the scope and strength of this first assertion, it is no marvel (saith she) that I long for thy company; for, by former experience I have found the good of it, not only for present ease under sad difficulties, but also I have been thereby helped to more liberty in prayer, and have had success for attaining new experience of thy love; therefore, I desire thy company still, and cannot but desire it.

The second assertion is more broad and extensive, not only I (saith she) have found it so; but all thy people have found access to thee, or thy blessed company and presence singularly useful, to make them fruitful, as having much influence thereon, so, by Christ's mother, here we conceive is understood the believer, in whom he is formed and brought forth, as we cleared on chap, 3:11, and they bring forth Christ. 1. By giving him a being in their hearts, where he had it not before; his image is in some respect herself, and when his image is brought forth in the soul, Christ is said to formed and brought forth there. 2. By bringing forth of the fruits of Christ's Spirit before others, when being, as it were, in travail

in the pursuit of holiness, they are helped to manifest his image (after which they are created) in their conversations. 3. By attaining to the knowledge of this, that Christ is in them; believers being, as it were, in travail, till they know their delivery; but when that is clearly made out, and intimated to them, then (as the woman that brings forth a man-child, John 16:21,) they are at quietness, as being delivered. The force of the argument lies in the word 'there,' which relates to the 'apple-tree;' under the apple-tree (saith she) where I raised thee up, being admitted to thy fellowship; there also they were made fruitful, and delivered from their former pangs and travail, even as I was; and when it is found in the experience of all thy people, as well as by me (saith she) that thy presence and company is so useful, it can therefore be no delusion, nor is it any wonder that I so press after it and by this it seems, that bringing forth of Christ in this second part, is the same in substance with raising him up in the former, to wit, the obtaining of some sensible manifestation of Christ's respect, by which, those who were formerly in pain to have Christ formed in them, are now delivered and eased from the flames of jealous love, that are as pangs to such as travail in birth (as it were) to have their interest in Christ made clear, as the words in the following verse express.

Observe. 1. That which in a believer's experience hath proven useful, is in a special manner lovely and commendable to him: experience is a most convincing demonstration of the worth of any thing, and leaves the deepest impression thereof behind it. 2. The more any by experience have learned Christ's worth, and the more they have 'tasted that he is gracious,' their affections do the more vehemently stir after him. 3. Christ's presence hath many great and excellent advantages waiting on it; it brings ease and quietness to the soul, and gives refreshment under his shadow, it gives access to pray with freedom, and duties then have usually a sensible success. 4. The believer looks upon it as a great mercy to have freedom in prayer, and to be heard when he prays; that by prayer she raised Christ up is remembered as a mercy not to be forgotten, and this yet commends unto her the good of sitting under his shadow. 5. Access to Christ is no time for security, but for prayer; and when the believer is admitted to solace himself in Christ's presence, then should he be diligent in wrestling with him, and improving that opportunity for pressing after a farther manifestation of him. 6. There are some experiences that are unquestionable to all believers, though they be mysteries to all others in the world. 7. It is not a little strengthening, yea, exceedingly confirming to believers, when their experience and the experiences of other believers co-incide, and jump in the proof of the same thing. 8. Although believers may in some things differ, yet there are some things commonly found good in experience by them all: this is the advantage of Christ's company, there

was never a believer that attained it, but he found much good of it; and those who still travail for it, apprehend groundedly that there is an unspeakable good in it.

Verse 6. Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

7. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

In the sixth verse, she proceeds to her second petition, wherein she is strengthened from her former experience the suit is in two expressions, to one purpose; and it is pressed with several reasons, in the end of the sixth and seventh verses; whereby she shews, that less could not be satisfying to her, and this much she behoved to have granted her. The first expression, holding forth her suit, is, ‘Set me as a seal upon thine heart.’ the second is to the same purpose, in the words that follow, and ‘as a seal upon thine arm.’ By Christ’s ‘heart’ is signified his most inward affections; for, it is frequent in scripture by the ‘heart’ to signify the most inward affections; so, Matt. 6:12, where the treasure is, there the heart will be.’ And chap. 4:9, ‘Thou hast ravished my heart,’ &c. A ‘seal’ is used for confirming evidences, or closing of letters; they have some peculiar engraving on them, serving to distinguish the deed of one man from the deed of another; wherefore men use to have a special care of their signet or seal (for both are one upon the matter and in the original) thus Ahasuerus kept his seal upon his own finger, Esth. 3:10,12. So then from this we may see, that a seal, or signet, signifieth, 1. What one hath a precious esteem of; and therefore, Jer, 22:24. the Lord said of ‘Coniah, though thou wert the signet on my right hand,’ &c. Hag. 2:23, the Lord expresseth his love to Jerusalem in this, that he would take Zerubabel and make him as a signet. 2. By a ‘seal’ is signified something that makes an impression, and leaves a stamp thereof behind it, that doth not wear out again, as a seal doth on the wax. Next, by Christ’s ‘arm,’ may be understood, his care of his people, outwardly expressed in the effects, wrought by his power for their good: so, Isa. 40:11, it is said, he ‘will gather the lambs with his arms,’ &c. thus then, to be set as a seal on his heart, doth imply, 1. Exceeding great nearness

to Christ, even to have a special room and seat in his heart. 2. It imports, a settledness in that condition, that she may be set there, as the Lord saith of Jerusalem, 2 Kings 21:4, there I have put or set my name, and as it is, Psalm 132:14, there will I dwell. 3. To be set as a seal on his arm, takes in further, that, as she would be always minded by Christ, and have him loving her; so would she have him in all his dispensations making that manifest, and that (as it were) they may bear it engraven upon them, that he minds her; like that expression, Isa. 49:14, 'I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands,' whereby he expresseth his mindfulness of her, that he could look to nothing in all his works, but he saw (as it were) her name engraven thereupon; for, all his works express love to her. In sum, we conceive the words look to one, or both of these similitudes, or allusions: 1. In general, to men who have such respect to their seals or rings, that they wore them on their fingers, and carried them still about with them; now, she would be carried about on his heart, and have him sympathizing with her in every thing that she meets with. 2. And more especially, it may allude to Aaron's breastplate, whereby he did carry the names of the children of Israel on his heart, Exod. 28:12,29, which engraving is said to be like the engraving of a signet, in which the high-priest was certainly a type of Christ: however, this is certain, that she would be established in her union with Christ, so that neither desertions on his part, nor backslidings on hers, might mar that; but that she might be fixed as to her union with him, and made to abide in him, as the impression of a seal is fixed upon the wax, and made to abide in it.

Observe. 1. True love to Christ, will be bold, pressing and importunate, in its suits to him; it will not stand to seek any thing that may endear him to the soul, to have him as a brother, and to be worn upon his heart, &c. 2. Christ's heart and inside, are most heartsome to the believer, who hath had any discovery thereof made unto his soul; and true love can settle no where, till it get a lodging in his very heart, that is the proper resting place of a believer, and that is the refreshing, which can make the weary to rest. 3. Love to Christ would not only be near him, but would be fixed and established in nearness with him. 4. A stayed, immoveable condition, or frame of heart, in the enjoying of communion with Christ, is most desirable and profitable; and therefore, it is no marvel it be longed for. There is no staying or settling of a believer, till he be admitted to dwell (as it were in Christ's heart) that is, to dwell near him in the believing and enjoying of his love; all other grounds are wavering, but this is stable; and dwelling here, if it were pressed after, would bring more establishment.

This seems to be a peremptory suit, she doth therefore give two reasons to press it, both which shew that it will not be unpleasant to Christ, nor can it be

condemned in her, for (saith she) the love that presseth me to it is of such a vehement nature, I cannot resist it, more than death, the grave, or fire can be resisted. This reason is contained in the rest of the sixth verse. The second reason in the following, wherein she shews, that the love that pressed her, was of such a peremptory nature, and so untractable (if we may so speak) as to this, that there was no dealing with it, if it did not obtain its desire, no other thing could quench or satisfy it. The strength of her love is amplified in the sixth verse, by three steps, in several similitudes. By 'love' here is understood that vehement, ardent desire, after Christ's presence, which is kindled in the heart of the believer. And first, it is called strong, in respect of its constraining power, whereby the person that loves, is led captive, and brought down as weak under it, so that he cannot withstand it: saith she, love masters, and will undo me, if it be not satisfied; love-sickness so weakens the soul, when it once seizeth on the heart, till it be cured with Christ's presence. Next, it is called 'strong as death,' which is so strong, that it prevails over the most powerful, wise, mighty and learned in the world. Eccles. 8:8, 'there is no discharge in that war;' neither can the most mighty monarch encounter death, and stand before it: so (saith she) I can no more stand against the strength of this love, it overpowers me, and is like to kill me, if it be not satisfied. The second step or degree of this love, and the similitude illustrating it is in these words, 'jealousy is cruel as the grave:' it is the prosecution of the same purpose, only, what she called love before, is here termed jealousy: jealousy may be taken in a good sense, or an evil: in a good sense, jealousy is the highest degree of love, or love at its height, and is the same with zeal: thus the Lord is said to be 'jealous for his glory:;' and it imports, 1. Ardent affection. 2. Desire of enjoying. 3. Impatience of delay. 4. A deep measure of grief, mixed with love, for any seeming appearance of a disappointment in the enjoying the person they love, or, when they do not meet with love again from the person whom they dearly love; so jealousy in this sense is applied to both God and men, but properly it agreeth only to men; for, there are no such passions in God, though he, condescending to our capacity, speaks thus of himself, after the manner of men. Now this jealousy is said to be cruel, or hard: it is called, Prov. 6:34, the 'rage of a man;,' and this was the jealousy, or zeal that did eat up David, Psalm 69, and so it is compared to the grave, which Prov. 30, is the first of those four things that are never satisfied, but wastes all the bodies that are laid in it: so (saith she) this love of mine, being at a height, torments me restlessly, as if it were cruelly persecuting me, till it be satisfied, with a good answer from thee, O, my Beloved! In an evil sense jealousy signifies not a simple fear of missing the thing men desire, or a suspicion of their own short-coming in attaining of it, but a groundless suspicion of them whom they love, as if they did not entertain their love as they ought; and thus, jealousy is

called 'the rage of a man,' Prov. 6:34, and so here this cannot be altogether excluded; jealousy thus taken, having in it some unbelief, which torments believers horribly, when the suspicion of Christ's not taking notice of them grows; and this is frequently to be found in the saints' cases, in times of desertion; they are then very apt to suspect God's love, and this exceedingly disquiets them, the want of the faith and sense of his love being a death unto them, Psalm 77:8,9,10. And so the reason runs thus, let me be admitted to thy heart, for my love will be satisfied with no less; and if this be not obtained, jealousy and suspicion of thy love may steal in, and that will be torturing and tormenting: and therefore, she puts up this suit, that she may be set as a seal upon his heart, to have that prevented; for she cannot abide to think of it. 3. She compares this jealousy to coals of fire (the coals thereof are coals of fire) for their vehement heat, tormenting nature; and consuming power; all which are to be found in this strong and jealous love; it is vehement for heat, and painful and destructive as fire is: yea further, it is compared to coals that have 'a most vehement flame,' or as it is in the original, the 'flame of God;' for so the Hebrews do name any thing that is superlative in its kind, and this is added, to shew the horrible torture that Christ's absence, and love-sickness hath with it, to a tender loving soul, especially when carnal unbelieving jealousy enters and prevails, they cannot abide it, but would choose any rod before that, if it were at their election. *Observe.* 1. Love to Christ, where it is strong and vigorous, will make strange and mighty impressions on the heart, which others are not acquainted with, and will break out in such expressions, as men of the world may wonder what they mean, none of them having any such feeling or sensibleness of Christ's absence or presence. 2. Where true love to Christ is, it is a most constraining thing, the soul, that hath it, cannot but pursue for Christ, and go about all means which may any way further its communion with him. 3. Where love begins to pursue after Christ, the longer it be in meeting with him, it increaseth the more, where it is real; and the more disappointments it meet with, it grows the more vehement, till it break out in jealousy and zeal. 4. Believers that have true love, are ready to fall in jealousies of Christ, and to be suspicious of his love, especially in his absence; this is supposed here, that where true love to Christ is, there may be jealousy of him. 5. Where jealousy enters, is cherished and prevails, it is not only dishonourable to Christ, but exceedingly torturing to the believer: there is not a more vexing guest can be entertained, than jealousy of Christ. 6. Jealousy of Christ's love may be where there is little cause, and often where there is least cause, it is most ready to enter: the reason whereof may joined be taken from the ardency of the soul's love to him, with the mistakes they have of his way; so, Isa. 49:13,14, for considering what is gone before, it might be thought, that, whatever any other might seem to

have, the Bride had no cause of jealousy. 7. Believers should endeavour to prevent all jealousy of Christ and his love, and by all means seek to be established and confirmed in the faith of his love to them, as that which can only keep and guard the heart against these sinful suspicions and jealousies. 8. Though this jealousy be vexing, yet sometimes the believer cannot rid himself of it, it will so prevail, and is so cruel against him. In the similitude of death and the grave, that is here made use of, it is implied that no man shall escape death and the grave, they are as strong and mighty conquerors, that prevail over all that come in their way: it is clearly hinted here, that the believer carrieth this conviction in his heart, that some time he will be prevailed over by death and the grave, this is no ill impression, 'the graves are ready for me,' and, 'I have said to corruption, thou art my father: and to the worm thou art my mother, and my sister,' Job 17:1,14.

Her second reason is contained, verse 7, and it's taken from the peremptoriness of her love; for, her love is such as it will have love from Christ again, or no other thing will satisfy it. This is two ways illustrated, 1. From its invincibleness, which appears in this, no opposition can extinguish it, 'many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it:' waters will quench fire, but nothing will quench this love. By waters in scripture, often (as Psalm 42:7, and 93:4, and frequently) are understood afflictions, crosses, and even spiritual desertions, Psalm 40:7, 'all thy waves and billows have gone over me,' Psalm 109:1,2, and so here it saith, love to Christ is of that nature, and is so strongly fixed on him, that no cross or rod, nay not the blackest dispensations and desertions can make it alter; but it will stick to him through and over all, as, Rom. 8:35, 'neither famine, sword, pestilence,' &c. can do it, but it triumphs over all, though floods of trial and opposition were let out upon it. The second way how the peremptoriness of love is illustrated and proven, is, that it rejects all offers, that may be made to it by any other that would have Christ's room: there are two sorts of trials, that ordinarily carry souls away from Christ, the first is on the left hand, from crosses; and when these will not do it, but the thorny ground will abide the heat of the sun; yet, the second sort of trials, to wit, the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, which are tentations on the right hand, may choke the word, and carry the soul away: but (saith she) true love to Christ, will be prevailed over by neither, it will tryst and capitulate with other lovers upon no terms; nay, though a man would give it 'all the substance of his house;' that is, all that can be given, though he would leave nothing behind, but give it all to one that loves Christ, for love, that is to purchase and buy away the soul's love from Christ, that it may be given to some other thing that comes in competition with him, so to bud and bribe the soul's love from Christ, that it may settle on some other thing that is offered in his place: what entertainment would be given to such offers and

treaties? True love (saith she) in so far as it is true, and lively in exercise (otherwise where something of true love is the soul may often be ensnared) 'would utterly condemn it,' or as it is in the first language, 'contemning it should be contemned' that is, not only would all such alluring offers be rejected, but with a holy disdain and indignation, they would be despised, abhorred and abominated, as unsuitable once to be mentioned: so that true love to Christ, will not once enter to capitulate, what to have in Christ's room; but all possible overtures, which may be made by the flesh and the world to divert it, will be loathed, abhorred utterly, and 'accounted as loss and dung,' Phil. 3:8. And therefore, the reason concludes, at thy heart I must be, for my love will neither be boasted from thee, nor bribed or allured to be satisfied with any other thing in thy room; but thee I must have upon any terms, and must not be refused of this my suit, of being set as a seal upon thy heart: and this sort of peremptoriness from love, will not be accounted presumption by Christ, nor is any ways displeasing, but most acceptable to him.

Observe. 1. Where true love to Christ is, there will be many essays to cool it, or to divert it, and draw it away from him: it is no easy thing to get love to Christ kept warm; for, the devil and the world, will especially aim at the throwing down of this hold and bulwark, that maintains Christ's interest in the soul. 2. The devil hath several kinds of tentations, which do all drive especially at this, to cool the believer's affections in the love of Christ: and these tentations may be contrary, some of them mustering the difficulties that follow those that love him, and such as the tempted seekers of Christ may be oftentimes exercised with; for, they often meet with reproaches, or other afflictions in the world: others of them again, alluring the heart to embrace some other thing in Christ's room, and making fair offers of advantages, to those that will take the way of the world in following of them. 3. The lovers of Christ may be assaulted by both these extremes successively; and when tentations from the one hand fail, then tentations from the other begin, so that the believer should constantly be on his guard. 4. The tentations that come from the right hand, and entice the soul with the offers of worldly pleasure, honour, riches, &c. are more strong and subtile than the other, and more frequently do prevail, yea, sometimes when the other may be rejected; therefore, this is mentioned after the other, as being that wherewith the soul is assaulted, when the first cannot prevail, and so the devil leaves this till the last; when he was permitted to tempt Christ, having tried him with several tentations, at last he makes offer of the world to him, Matt. 4:9. 5. Tentation will sometimes make great offers, as if nothing more could be offered, 'even all the substance of the house,' and still it offers more than it can perform, when it is in its offers most specious: the devil at once offered all the world to Christ, Matt. 4:9, though he had not power of himself to dispose of one of the Gadarene's swine. 6. The great

scope of the world's courting a man with its offers, is to gain his love from Christ; this they had need to look well to, on whom the world smiles most, for then the temptation to this ill is strongest. 7. It is a proof of true love to Christ, when it can endure and hold out against temptations upon all hands, and that when they are most speciously adorned. 8. Where love is true, although it may be sometimes (as it were) violated, or the soul in which it is, circumvented and beguiled by temptations (as the experiences of saints do clear) yet when it is at itself, or in good case, it will not deliberately capitulate to admit any thing in Christ's room, but will reserve itself wholly for him: where love cedes, and yields finally, it is a sign that it was never true. 9. Temptations though most pleasant, yet tending to divert the love of the soul from Christ, should be with indignation, at their first moving and appearing, rejected. 10. Love will not only refuse a consent to some temptations, but will have a great abhorrency at the moving of them; whereas others, though they may, as to the external actings, resist these temptations, yet their wanting of this indignation, betrays their want of love. 11. As it's good to be actuated in doing duty, from a principle and motive of love; so it is good and commendable, to reject temptations upon that same account.

Verse 8. We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts; what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?

The Bride's third petition, for those that are not yet brought in to Christ, followeth in this eighth verse: her love is strong in pressing for the enjoyment of Christ; and seeing it hath two arms, as it reacheth out the one to embrace Christ, so it reacheth out the other to bring others in to him; love is very desirous to have others enjoying him with itself; and by this arm of love, the Bride is pulling in those that are yet strangers, that they may be engaged to love Christ; and she forgets them not, even when she is most serious for herself: this being an undoubted truth, that, whenever our love is most fervent after Christ for ourselves, it will also be most sensible and sympathizing, in respect of the condition of others; when love is hot and fervent the one way, so will it be the other way also, and when it cools to the one, it also decays in respect of the other. We may take up this verse in these three, 1. She remembers and propounds her little sister's case to Christ. 2. There is her suit, in reference thereunto. 3. This suit is qualified, in the last part of the verse. 1. Her little sister's case is proposed in

these words, 'We have a little sister, that hath no breasts:' here much love and sympathy appears in these three things, 1. That she is called a 'sister,' 2. 'Our sister,' 3. 'A little sister,' and without breasts, which do express much tenderness of affection and sympathy. By 'sister,' is sometimes understood, more strictly, such as are renewed converts to the faith, whether in profession only, or really, 1 Cor. 7:15, but that is not the meaning here; for, the sister here mentioned 'hath no breasts,' and is not yet spoken for. Again, 'sister' may be more largely taken, for one, or all of these three. 1. For all men, as partaking of one common nature. 2. For men of one stock and nation; so Samaria was sister to Jerusalem, &c. Ezek. 16:46. 3. For the elect who are yet unconverted, who are sisters in respect of God's purpose, as they are Christ's sheep, John 10:16, and sons of God, John 11:52, even before their conversion; for which cause, the 'sister' here spoken of, is said 'to have no breasts,' as not being yet changed from her natural condition; and so we take this especially to look to the unrenewed elect, not excluding the former two. The sense then is, there are yet many who have interest in, and many that belong to, thy election, yet uncalled. Now, it is their in-bringing, and the making of them ready to be Christ's Spouse and Bride, that she breathes after, and prayeth for. Next, it is said, 'We' have a sister, and so she is called 'our' sister, that is, thine and mine; Christ's sister, because of his purposed respect to her; the believer's sister, not only because of their native and kindly sympathy, but also because of the common adoption, to which they are designed. She is called 'a little sister,' and that 'hath no breasts,' 1. To shew the sad condition that the unconverted elect are in, like little young children that are unfit to do any thing for themselves, and altogether unmeet for the duties of marriage, as those at age, who have breasts, are: thus, Ezek. 16:7, the wretched condition of that people, before they were taken into God's covenant, is set out by this, that their breasts were not formed; and the good condition that followed their being in covenant is expressed thus, that their breasts were fashioned. This then is the scope here, to shew that this little sister was yet in nature, unmarried to Christ, yea, (as to many of the unconverted elect) not spoken for, or called. 2. She is called 'little,' to express the Bride's pity and sympathy, as one would say of a young one, that cannot do any thing for herself, what will become of her? She is a little one.

2. The suit is, 'what shall we do for our sister?' This is a petition, that seems to have more affection than distinctness in it: it is proposed by way of question, the better to express her sympathy; where she disputes not, but again asserts his relation to her, and puts no question but he will be tender of her; and withal acknowledgeth that there is a duty lying on herself, in order to the case of her little sister, but would be informed and taught by him in the right discharge of it: and so this question supposeth necessity and wretchedness in this sister,

affection and duty in herself, but unclearness how to discharge it. Now, the way she takes to be helped in it, is the putting up this petition to Christ, 'what shall we do?' saith she; not as if Christ knew not what he would do, but it shews her affection to this sister, and her familiarity with him; and also, that she will not separate his doing from hers, but looks upon it as her duty to co-operate with him, in bringing about the conversion of their little sister.

The qualification of her suit is, 'what shall we do for her, in the day that she shall be spoken for?' This phrase, to speak for her, is in allusion to the communing that is used for the attaining women in marriage: we find the same phrase in the original, 1 Sam. 25:39, 'David sent messengers to commune with Abigail, that he might take her to wife.' Now (saith she) our little sister is not ready, nor spoken for, but when she shall be suited or communed with, what shall we do then? This communing, is the Lord's dealing by his ministers in the gospel, with people, to marry and espouse his Son Christ Jesus, so it is often called, Matt. 22:3, 'He sent forth his servants, to call them that were bidden to the wedding:' the ministers of the gospel are his ambassadors, to tryst this match, and to close it, 2 Cor. 5:19, and 11:2 'The day' when they shall be spoken for, is either whilst the means are amongst people, and so that is the acceptable time, 2 Cor. 6:2, or more especially, when the means have any force on them, and God seems in a more than ordinary way to treat with them, then it is the day of their visitation, as it was in the days of Christ's ministry, though that people were treated with before. In sum, the meaning of the verse is this, there are many who in thy purpose are designed to be heirs of life, who yet are strangers, and not suited or engaged; now when the gospel comes amongst such, or, by stirring them now and then, puts them in some capacity to be dealt with, what shall be done for them, to help on the bargain, that the marriage be not given up, when it hath come to a treaty, and thou halt by the gospel bespoken them, and propounded it? It may look to sister-churches, and no question the believing Jews, who understood the prophecies of the Gentiles' conversion, did then long for their in-gathering, and in-churching of them (for we were then to them a little sister without breasts) yet we cannot astrict it to that, but now, and to the world's end, it speaks out the believer's desire of the perfecting of the saints, and the building up of Christ's body, as well as it spoke out their desire after this then: and by the same sympathy, the converted Gentiles long, and should long for the in-bringing of the elder sister, the Jews, who now have no breasts, and also of the fulness of the Gentiles, who are as yet unconverted; and according to the strain of the song, it takes in the believer's respect to the conversion of other church-members, who being indeed not converted, and not effectually called, they are without breasts, and so to be helped forward in the time when God is bespeaking them and trysting with them.

Observe. 1. There may be relations betwixt one in grace, and those who are yet in nature, which grace doth not dissolve, but sanctify; the little sister is ‘a sister,’ though unrenewed, and the Bride’s desire is to have her gained. 2. There is a jointness, and community of relations betwixt Christ and the believer, they have common friends and interests, and as it is betwixt husband and wife, the sister of the one is the sister of the other. 3. Before men be by faith married to Christ, even the elect in that estate are lying in a most miserable, wretched condition, as we may see, Ezek. 16:3, they are loathsome before God, and indisposed and unfit for being fruitful to Christ in any duty, as a little damsel without breasts is unfit for marriage. 4. The converted elect should be tenderly affected with the sad condition of the unconverted especially of those that are in any relation to them, and to whom God hath respect in his secret purpose, though definitely they be not known unto them: and this tender affection ought to appear, in sympathizing with them, pitying of them, holding up of their condition to God, and praying for them, as the Bride doth for the little sister and when the case of believers is right, they will be making conscience of longing, and praying for the gathering in of all the elect, that Christ’s work may be thorough and perfected, and that his kingdom may come in the earth. 5. It is a most difficult business, how to get the conversion of sinners promoted, and Christ’s kingdom advanced; believers will be nonplussed in it, as being put to say ‘what shall we do?’ 6. The Lord hath a way of espousing, and marrying to Christ Jesus, even such as are by nature most sinful and loathsome; it is such that he suits, woos, and speaks for, that they may be married to him. 7. Christ’s great design in the gospel, by sending ministers from the beginning, was, and is to espouse a Bride to himself, and to make up a spiritual marriage betwixt him and such as by nature were lying in their blood. 8. He hath a special time of carrying on this treaty of marriage, a day before which he treats not, and after which, there is no opportunity of a treaty of grace; it is the day of sinners’ merciful visitation, and an acceptable time for a people. 9. In this treaty, by the ministry of his ordinances, the Lord will sometimes more effectually drive the design of the gospel, namely the matching of sinners to Christ, than at other times, and will bespeak them more plainly and convincingly, as he doth, chap. 5:2. 10. When the Lord presseth closing and matching with Christ home upon sinners, there is great hazard lest it miscarry, and be given over uncompleted, through their own default. 11. It is a main and special season for believers to step in, to further the engaging of others to Christ, when the Lord is putting home upon them the suit and offers of the gospel, and when they are put to some stir, and made something serious and peremptory about it. 12. It is a great happiness to be spoken for to Christ, every one is not admitted to that privilege: and it is our great concernment, to see how we make use of that our day, when he treats with us. 13.

There is nothing wherein a believer's love to his friends, or to any others, will appear more, than in endeavouring their conversion, and in longing to have them engaged to Christ. 14. As God's call in the gospel, is a wooing, or bespeaking for marriage betwixt Christ and sinners, so believers' believing, is their consenting to accept of Christ for their husband, according to the terms of the contract proposed; and this closeth the bargain, and makes the marriage; for, then the proposed offer of matching with Christ is accepted of.

BRIDEGROOM.

Verse 9. If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver; and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.

This verse contains the Bridegroom's answer unto the Bride's last petition: our Lord loves to have his people praying for others, as for themselves, and therefore, he so accepts this petition for the little sister, that instantly he returns an answer thereunto, by a gracious promise; in which we are to consider these four things, 1. The party to whom the promise is made. 2. The promiser. 3. The promise itself. 4. The condition that it is made upon. First, the party to whom this promise is made, is implied in the words, 'she,' and 'her,' that is, the little sister yet unconverted, who is mentioned in the former verse. 2. The promiser is, 'we,' that is, the Bridegroom and the Bride; to whom this sister stands in relation, verse 8, or rather, 'we,' the Father, Son, and Spirit (as we took the like expression, chap. 1:11,) for, this work which is undertaken and engaged for in the promise, doth belong especially to them. 3. The promise is in two expressions (as is also the condition.) 1. 'We will build upon her a palace of silver:' a palace (if the word be so rendered) is a place for dwelling in; and here it signifieth the adorning of her to be a mansion for his Spirit, and wherein himself will dwell, which is a privilege that the believer in him is admitted unto, 1 Cor. 3:16, 17. and 6:19. and this is more than to be a 'wall,' which is an house, but not so completed and adorned. He is no common guest that is to dwell there, therefore it is no common palace, but 'of silver,' both precious, and also durable, and stately for its matter, which we must have to dwell in: we will make her such, saith he. The condition proposed in this part of the promise, is 'if she be a wall:' a wall is different from stones,

considered in themselves, and supposeth them to be built on a foundation: now Jesus Christ being the only 'foundation,' 1 Cor. 3:10, upon which the believer, who is the spiritual temple, is built. This to be a 'wall' supposes her to be by faith united to him, whereby she becomes fixed and settled as a wall, who before was unstable and so the sense runs thus, if she, the little sister when she shall be spoken for by the gospel, shall receive the word, and by faith close with Christ, then (saith he) we will throughly adorn her, as a mansion fit to be dwelt in, and we will 'make our abode' with her, John 14:23. If we render the word, 'towers,' we will build on her towers of silver, it comes to the same scope; walls are for defence, and they are defective till towers be built on them: and so the promise is to strengthen and adorn her more, if Christ be received by her. The second part of the promise, is, 'we will enclose her with boards of cedar:' cedar was a precious wood, and durable (as hath been often said) and to be enclosed with it, signifies the adorning of her, and strengthening of her more. The condition annexed to this part of the promise, is, if 'she be a door:' doors make way for entry, and are the weakest part of the wall: the opening of the heart to receive Christ, is compared to the opening of a door, Psalm 24:7, and chap. 5:4, here he saith, although she be weak (possibly like a door of fir) yet if she be a door, and give entrance to Christ (for all without faith, are as houses without doors to Christ, that cannot receive him) we will not only adorn her, but also fix and strengthen her more. From all which it appears, that these two things are clearly to be found in the scope, 1. That there is an access, and addition of beauty and strength promised to the little sister, even so much as may fully perfect her beginnings, and carry them on unto perfection; as a 'palace,' or towers 'of silver,' are beyond a wall; and 'boards of cedar,' beyond an ordinary door. 2. That these things promised, are here made to hang upon the condition of her receiving Christ, and being by faith united to him, and built on him. That this is the meaning of the supposed condition, is clear, 1. From the promise that is annexed to it, faith in Christ is the condition, upon which all the promises of increase of grace, and establishment, do hang; and the thing promised her can be no other thing: therefore, the condition must be her union with him by faith. 2. It agrees with scripture, to expound her being a 'wall,' to signify her union with Christ; for, Christ being the foundation, and believers being the wall, there must be supposed an union betwixt them, otherwise these names could not denote that relation which is betwixt Christ and the believers, even such as is betwixt the wall and the foundation. Now this union, by which believers are built on him, is made up by coming to him, which is believing, 1 Pet. 2:4,5, 'To whom coming as unto a living stone' (or foundation) 'ye also as lively atones, are built up a spiritual house.' Their coming to him builds them upon him, as the foundation: and, Eph. 2, those that are by nature 'aliens to the commonwealth of

Israel' (as the little sister is here, while she hath no breasts) are by their believing on Christ, said to be of 'the household of faith, and to be built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles' doctrine, whereof Christ is 'the chief corner-stone,' verses 19,20, &c. 3. It is clear by the opposition implied; for, to be a wall supposeth her to be that which she is not now, when she hath no breasts; and what that is, is clear from the next verse, where the Bride saith, 'I am a wall, and my breasts like towers,' and so I have found favour in his eyes: therefore, to be a wall, is to be a believer, whatever it includes more: for, none is a wall but the Bride, and who find favour in his eyes, as her argument will conclude; and therefore, to be a wall, must include faith. So then, the meaning of the words comes to this, I tell thee (saith he) what we will do with our little sister, when she shall be spoken for; if she by faith come to Christ, and be built on him, we will perfect that work, for her eternal communion with him; yea, though she be weak and unstable, yet if she yield to Christ, we shall make her grace grow, till she be stable and firm, even as thou, by becoming a wall, hast thy breasts made as towers, and hast found favour to be friendly dealt with, so shall she, and upon the same terms.

Observe. 1. That receiving of Christ by faith, puts them that have been strangers to him in that same capacity, for acceptation and communion with Christ, that his Bride hath, or that those who were formerly believers have by their union with him, 2. All that are bespoken by the gospel, have not interest in the things promised, nor can they apply them, till by faith they be united to Christ, and fulfil the condition to which the promise is annexed, and that is faith. 3. One may really close with Christ, and so be 'a wall,' and yet have many things to be perfected: grace is not perfect at the beginning, but that 'wall' hath a 'palace' or tower to be built upon it. 4. The believer's growing in grace, even after his union with Christ, is a great mercy, and is as such promised here. 5. Growth and increase in grace, after conversion is no less a work of Christ's, and a gift of God's, than conversion itself. 6. Christ hath given a promise to the believer, for furthering and perfecting of his sanctification, as well as of his justification. 7. Where there is any honest begin beginning or foundation laid by real union with Christ, although it be weak, yet it will be perfected, and that may be expected; for, Christ's word, is here engaged for it. 8. There are none of the promised blessings that can be expected from Christ, without performing of the condition of believing in him; and they, who rest on him by faith, may expect all.

BRIDE.

Verse 10. I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.

In this tenth verse, and the two verses that follow, the Bride comes in speaking and accepting the Bridegroom's gracious answer and promise: and first, she doth confirm, the truth of it from her own experience, verse 10, and then she doth more fully clear and strengthen her experience, by laying down the grounds from which she draweth that comfortable conclusion (of finding favour in his eyes) in reference unto herself, verses 11,12.

First, then, in the tenth verse, the Bride brings forth her experience, for confirmation of the truth of what the Bridegroom had spoken: that they are the Bride's words, we conceive is clear; for, this 'I,' is she that put up the suit for the little sister, and by her description is opposed to her, as being 'a wall,' and having breasts like towers, which 'she,' the little sister had not; and there is none other that hath found favour in Christ's eyes but she. What the scope is, shall be cleared when we have opened the words; which have three things in them. 1. A short description of her own good condition. 2. An excellent advantage that followed thereupon. 3. The connexion of these two. First, Her condition is set forth in two expressions. 1. 'I am a wall:' that is, what the little sister was not, and what the condition, proposed by the Bridegroom in the former verse, required: in a word, that condition is fulfilled in me (saith she) by faith I am built on Christ, and like a wall stand stable on the foundation. The second expression, setting forth her condition, is, 'and my breasts like towers:' this supposeth a growth, and further degree of her faith and other graces, as having not only breasts, which the little sister had not, verse 8, but 'breasts like towers,' i.e. 'well fashioned,' Ezek. 16:7, and come to some perfection; and so she is a wall with towers.

Next, the privilege, or advantage which accompanies this her good condition. is held out in these words, 'I was in his eyes as one that found favour,' or peace; to find favour in his eyes, is to be kindly and affectionately dealt with, and to have that manifested by some suitable evidence: so it is said, Esther found favour in the eyes of the King, and he held out the golden sceptre to her, Est. 5:2.

The thing that Moses pitched on, as the evidence that he and the people found favour in God's eyes (Exod. 33:16,17) is, that his presence might go with, them, 'whereby' (saith he) 'should it be known that we have found grace in thy sight, is it not in that thou goest with us?' So then, to find favour in his eyes, is to have his presence in a gracious manner manifested to his people, as John 14:23. And in sum, this expression implies these three, 1. Love in Christ's bosom to her. 2. His manifesting of this by his complacency in her, or his making the delight which he had in her, manifest in the effects of it on her. 3. Her being comforted and delighted in the favour that she found from him.

3. The connexion of this comfortable attainment, with her gracious state, is implied in the word 'then:' 'then was I' &c. That is, when I was a wall, and by faith rested on him, I found this favour, and not before: it holds out no casualty betwixt the one and the other, but a peremptory connexion of order and time; for though God's love of benevolence, whereby he purposeth good to us (such as was his love to Jacob, 'before he had done good or evil,' Rom. 9:13) and also his love of beneficence, whereby he actively confers, and brings about our conversion and regeneration, go before our believing in him, and our love to him, and is the cause of our loving of him (who love him because he first loved us) yet his love of complacency, whereby he shews himself delighted with the graces, which by his love he hath bestowed on us, doth follow, in order of nature, upon our faith in him, and love to him; so, John 14:21,23, 'He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him;' and what is meant by this love, the words following clear 'I will manifest myself to him;' and so, verse 23, having said, 'my Father will love him,' it is added, 'we will come and make our abode with him:' This then is the sum of this verse, I am by faith founded on him, and united to him, and so am a wall, and have breasts, who by nature once was not a wall, and had no breasts; by which union my breasts becoming as towers, I did find favour from him, and had his presence friendly manifested to me. The scope, as appears from the coherence of this verse with the former, is to make good, from her experience, the truth and certainty of the promises, which he had made for the encouragement of the little sister and for comforting of herself, who had been seriously pleading with him on her behalf: thus, these promises are faithful, saith she; for, in my comfortable experience, I have found it so: I was once without the evidence of his love, as now others are; but being by faith engaged to him, I have found favour of him, so as others may be assured of obtaining the like, and on the same terms, if when he is bespeaking them by the gospel, they will close with Christ, and by faith unite with him.

Observe. 1. There are great, real, and discriminating differences betwixt one in nature, and one that is in Christ; the one is not a wall, and hath no breasts; the other is a wall, and hath breasts, which shows a great odds. 2. Believers may come to know that marches are cleared betwixt their estate and condition, now while they are in Christ, and their estate and condition as it was before; or, believers should set themselves to know, whether marches be cleared or not, or if they may say that of themselves, which cannot be said of others that are not in Christ. 3. It is no little advancement, to be able upon good grounds to assert our union with Christ, to to say that 'I am a wall,' &c. each one cannot do it. 4. Although none ought to be proud of their attainments, yet may believers humbly (where there is good ground) acknowledge the reality of grace in them. 5. Although the Lord loves the elect, and the believer always, yet there are special times or occasions upon which, or ways by which, he manifests his love to them. 6. The believer hath Christ's favour otherwise let forth and manifested to him, than it was before his conversion, although this love, as it is in God himself, be ever the same. 7. It is a singularly refreshful thing to find favour in Christ's eyes, and to have that love of his sensibly manifested, and clearly made out unto us. 8. There is an inseparable and peremptory connexion betwixt holiness in a believer's walk, and Christ's manifesting of his favour thus unto them. 9. Those that have felt by experience, the fulfilling of Christ's promises, are both more clear in the meaning of them, and more thorough in the faith of them: experience is both a good commentary upon, and proof of, the promises of Christ, which the Bride makes use of here. 10. The experience of one believer in the way of grace, which is founded upon the essentials of the covenant, and is agreeable to it, may be an encouragement to strengthen others, in expectation of the accomplishment of the same thing, when the same way is taken in suing for it. 11. Believers that are more versed in, and acquainted with experiences than others, should fitly and conveniently bring them out, and communicate them for the benefit of others, who yet have not attained that length. 12. It is the duty of hearers, when they hear gospel truths and offers (such as were held forth in the ninth verse) to reflect on themselves, and try if their experience suit with them, if they have such conditions in themselves, and have felt the fulfilling of such promises in their own particular experience and it is comfortable, when their experiences and the promises agree so together, that when he saith, 'If she be a wall, we will build on her': or, 'who loveth me, I will manifest myself to him,' they may groundedly answer, and say; 'I am a wall,' and so have 'found favour in his eyes; I love him, and so he hath manifested himself to me.'

Verse 11. Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers: every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.

12. My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

It is a great assertion which the Bride laid down, verse 10, that she was a wall, and had found favour in his eyes and it being of high concernment, if well grounded, therefore, to make out the warrantableness thereof she proceeds to demonstrate it, verses 11,12, thereby to give believers advertisement, that they should be well seen in the grounds of their own peace, and to shew the solid way how the well groundedness thereof may be found out and because, the conclusions, asserting our union with Christ and interest in him, follow on premises, whose major proposition is in the word, and whose assumption is to be searched, and confirmed from the conscience, speaking from inward experience and feeling, she doth formally proceed: first, by laying down a sum of the gospel, in a complex general doctrine, verse 11, to this purpose, Christ had a church, which he took pains on, for this end, that it might be fruitful, and that in such a measure. Then in the twelfth verse she compares her practice with that rule, and finds it suitable, therefore the conclusion follows. We may take it up thus in form, They who improve the trust well that is put upon them, to bring forth such fruits as Christ calls for in his covenant, may conclude, that ‘they are a wall, and have found favour in his sight:’ this truth is confirmed in the eleventh verse, because it is for that very end, and on these very terms, that Christ hath appointed the ordinances in his house, and made the promises to his people, that they should ‘bring forth a thousand for the fruit thereof to him,’ and he will not reject a consequence drawn from that which he himself hath appointed in his covenant; for, such grounds, as the word and covenant confirm, are only sure to reason from. Then she assumes, verse 12, but I have been sincere in that trust which was committed unto me, conform to the terms of the covenant, and have a thousand (according thereto) to give to Christ, Therefore, &c. And because this hath need to

be well grounded also, she proves it, partly, by instancing the fruits that belonged to him and to the keepers, which she had brought forth, to shew that his ordinances were not in vain to her; and partly, by attesting himself immediately, in these words, 'Thou, O Solomon,' speaking to him in the second person, thereby to evidence her sincerity before him, who alone could bear witness thereof, and that it was not mere external performances (which, as such, are manifest to others) upon which she grounds what she asserts in the assumption. This is the native series and scope of the words, whereby they depend on the former, and by which, now before death, leaving this way of communion with Christ, which she enjoyed here-away mediately in ordinances, and before that eternal and immediate way beyond death (which is prayed for, verse 14.) she doth collect her interest, and confirm her assurance: the particular exposition of the words will clear it more.

From the scope, *Observe*. 1. That thorough persuasion of interest in Christ had need to be solidly grounded, and believers should be distinct in the grounds thereof, and not go by guess with their confidence. 2. The nearer that people come to dying, they should be the more accurate in this search, and have the evidences of their interest in Christ the more clear. 3. We may gather from her example that the solid and only way to be thoroughly cleared of our title to Christ, is when the grounds thereof are comprehended in the Lord's covenant; as he that believes, repents, hath the fruits of the Spirit, &c. he is justified, sanctified, &c. And when the assumption, bearing the application of these grounds to ourselves, will abide the trial in Christ's sight, and may be instanced before him in the effects thereof, thus, but it is so with me, therefore, &c. this is her way of concluding.

We come now to expound the words more particularly: and first, we conceive it is out of doubt, that they are mystically and spiritually to be understood, that is, by Solomon, Christ is meant, and by the vineyard, the church, &c. for, so the strain and nature of the allegory through out this Song and the manner of speaking all along doth require; and there being but one Solomon that is spoken of in this Song, his having of a vineyard must be understood as his making of a chariot, chap. 3:9,10, which being paved with love, could not be a piece of work framed by David's Son: we are not therefore, curiously to enquire here, what place this is, called Baal-hamon or, whether Solomon had such vineyards or not, let out at such a rent? These things make not to the scope.

Again, that they are the Bride's words, is clear not only from the scope and matter thereof, but also from these things, 1. She not only speaks of Christ (by the name of Solomon) in the third person, verse 11, but to him, 'Thou, O Solomon,' &c. in the second person, verse 12. It cannot therefore be the Bridegroom that here speaks, but the Bride, as personating a believer. 2. She is differenced from

strangers and hypocrites, in this, that she hath fruit to give him, and hath that proposed to herself for her end: and she is differenced from the keepers of the vineyard, the ministers, verse 12, they get from her two hundred; it must therefore be the Bride, as personating a believer, who was speaking in the former verse, and continueth here in speaking. 3. The expressions, verse 12, where she applieth to herself what she had in the general asserted, verse 11, agree well to her, as the opening of them will clear.

The words do contain the proof of a believer's sincerity and reality in the covenant of God, made out by two things put together, 1. By laying down distinctly the nature and terms of the covenant, verse 11. 2. By comparing herself exactly and impartially therewith, verse 12. The general doctrine of the covenant, verse 11, runs on three heads; the first looks to the sum and end of all, that Christ had a church or vineyard, committed or given him. The second looks to Christ's administration in his church, by external ordinances, 'he let out to keepers.' The third holds forth the ends of his letting out this vine-yard, or the terms upon which it is leased, 'every one was to bring for the fruit thereof, a thousand pieces of silver.'

For explaining of the first, we are first to remember, that by Solomon, we are to understand Christ; for, as ever hitherto, so here, the allegory is continued, to express and set forth Christ in his way with his church, under that name. Next, the vineyard here is his church, Isa. 5:7, &c. the visible church in some respect is his vineyard, as she is separate from others, and appointed to bring forth fruits to him; but especially the church invisible and elect, who in a peculiar respect are Christ's as given to him and purchased by him, and so frequently in this Song, the believer is called a garden or vineyard. 3. The place where this vineyard is planted, is called Baal-hamon: which is the name of no proper place any where mentioned in scripture, but is borrowed for its signification, and it signifieth 'father of a multitude,' and so it points out that Christ's vineyard is planted in a soil that is fruitful, and bringing forth much; and it is on the matter the same with that, Isa. 5:1, 'my beloved had a vineyard in a fruitful hill,' or, horn of oil, as the word there in the Hebrew signifieth, to show that it was well situate in a good soil, and did lie well, and was by his industry well fitted for bringing forth of fruit. Now, Christ is said, and that in the peterite time, to have 'had' this vineyard, which shews his interest and propriety therein, and title thereto, and that by an eternal right, and afar other kind of title than he hath to the rest of the world beside: now this right of Christ's (in respect of which it is he had this vineyard) is not to be understood with relation to his essential dominion and sovereignty, whereby with the Father and Holy Ghost he created all things, and so as Creator, hath a conjunct interest in

them; but this looks to that peculiar title, which Christ hath to the church of the elect, especially as mediator, by the Lord's giving of such and such particular persons to him to be saved, John 6:38,39, &c. for, he hath this vineyard as distinct from the world, and claims title to the given ones, when he disclaims the world, John 17:6, 8, 'they are mine' (saith he) 'because thou gavest them to me:' yet, in so far as the visible church is separated to him by external ordinances (and so all Israel are said to be elected, Deut. 6) they may be said to be Christ's; but it is those who are by God's election separated from others, given to Christ, and undertaken for by him, in the covenant of redemption, that especially are intended here, and it is necessary to advert, that there are four divers parties, to which the church in divers respects is said to belong. 1. She is the Lord's: the Father, Son, and Spirit, his by eternal election; this is the first right, John 17:6, 'thine they were,' to wit, by thy eternal purpose: and, from this flows the second, to wit, the mediator's right, and thou gavest them me;' the Father is the owner and proprietor of the vineyard, Matt. 21:40, called, John. 15:1, 'the husbandman;' for, the church is first his, and next Christ's who as Mediator is the great deputy, and universal administrator of grace, to whom the elect are given as to the great bishop and shepherd, and to whom all the ordering of what concerns their good is committed this right is by donation, and differs from the former. 3. The vineyard is said to be the Bride's, verse 12, and chap. 1:6, in respect of the believer's particular trust, with oversight of, and interest in, those things that Christ hath purchased for them, and bestowed on them, which they are to improve and trade with: in which respect, Matt. 25 and Luke 19 the talent is said to be not only the master's, but also the servants because the right improving of it, brings advantage unto the servant more properly than to the master: and each believer in some kind hath a vineyard, because each of them shares of all the graces, privileges, benefits, &c. that are saving. 4. The vineyard is also the minister's; they have a title as under-keepers, overseers and dressers, therefore it is said to be let out to them by Christ; they are as farmers; Hence when Christ, Rev. 2:5, writes to the angel of the church of Ephesus, speaking to the angel, he calls the church, 'thy candlestick,' and chap. 2:15, while the vines are called 'our vines,' the minister's interest is asserted as well as Christ's: so all these interests mentioned in these two verses are well consistent.

Observe. 1. That our Lord Jesus hath some who beyond all others are his, by peculiar right and title; and he had this title to them before ever actually there was a church, this vineyard did belong to him otherwise than others, in the world; even before it was, which could not be but the Father's giving the elect to him. 2. Christ hath a notable right to, and propriety in, these elect who are given him, so that the vineyard is his, and it cannot be that one of these perish, without the

impairing and prejudice of the property of our Lord Jesus. 3. There is an old transaction, concerning the salvation of the elect betwixt the Father and the Son, which can be no other thing but the covenant of redemption; for, the Son's having an interest in some and not in others, supposeth that some were given to him and accepted by him, as that word, John 17:6, bears out, 'thine they were, and thou gavest them to me,' and so they are mine. 4. Christ's church or vineyard, hath the only choice soil in all the world to live into, it is Baal-hamon where they are planted, though often their outward lot be not desirable, yet their 'lines have fallen in pleasant places.'

The second part concerns Christ's managing of his church when he hath gotten it; he doth not immediately dress it by himself, but 'he lets it out to keepers,' as a man having purchased a field, or planted a vineyard, doth set it, or farm it for such a rent; so hath Christ thought good to commit his church to keepers, that is, to watchmen and farmers, that by their ministry, he might in a mediate way promote their edification and salvation, which he accounts his rent: the very same parable, almost in the same words, pressing this scope, is recorded, Matt. 21:33, 'A certain householder planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen, and sent servants to gather the fruit; the husbandmen are the ordinary office-bearers in the church (the scribes and pharisees did fill that room for the time) the servants are extraordinary prophets raised up of God, to put them to their duty; so here the keepers are the ministers, who are intrusted with the church's edification under Christ, as stewards are with distributing provision to the family, or shepherds with feeding their flocks, or a farmer with the labouring of his farm that he possesseth: and this name, of keepers given here to ministers, agreeth well with the names that ministers have in scripture, watchmen, overseers, stewards, builders, husbandmen, &c. and also with the nature of that office, which, 1 Cor. 3, is to plant and water this vineyard: and lastly, with the scope of this and the like parables, whereby Christ's mediate way of building up of his church, by the intervention of ordinances and ministers, is expressed. Particular professors are as vines, the ordinances like the press that presseth the grapes, the ministers like the dressers that dig, dung, prune, and water the trees, and put the grapes in the press, and gather the fruits, by applying of these ordinances convincingly to the consciences of hearers. Next, his setting of this vineyard, or church to the keepers, is borrowed from a proprietor, his farming of his heritage, and giving of a lease, or leasehold tenure under him, to some other, both for the better labouring of his land, and for furthering of his rent; and this is opposed to his immediate labouring of it himself: so here, as Christ is the proprietor (whose own the vineyard is) ministers are the farmers: which implieth, 1. That the minister hath a title and interest in the church of Christ, which no other hath, he is

a farmer and keeper of it. 2. It supposeth, that it is but a subordinate title the minister hath; he is not as a lord of Christ's vineyard, or master of the faith of God's people, but as a farmer or subordinate overseer, he is to be a helper of their joy. In sum, the sense comes to this, that this trust that was put on Christ of governing his church, he thought meet not to discharge it all immediately, but hath appointed some others as instruments under him, to promote their edification, whom singularly, he hath entrusted for that end. *Observe.* 1. Since our Lord Jesus had a church militant, he hath thought good to guide it mediately, by a standing ministry and ordinances; and that is to set out his vineyard to keepers. 2. There ought none without Christ's tenure or lease, enter upon the ministry, and become keepers of his vineyard; for, they are but lease-holders, and what right they have, it is from him: thus that which is here called his setting a lease, is, Mal. 2:4,5, called the 'covenant of Levi.' 3. Although Christ employ ministers, yet he makes them not masters, but he reserves the propriety of his church to himself, and they are such as must give an account. 4. Though ministers be not masters, yet are they keepers, and have a special trust in the church; they are intrusted with the affairs of Christ's house, for carrying on of his peoples' edification; which is a trust that no others have committed to them.

The third thing in this verse, is the end for which he lets it out, or the terms upon which; and these are, 'that every one may bring a thousand pieces of silver for the fruit thereof:' and so the condition, upon which it is set out, is, that he might have a competent revenue and fruit, as is clear from Isa. 5 and Matt. 21 and the rent is agreed on by himself, and it is 'a thousand silverings,' which is mentioned, Isa. 7:23, as a great rent. The number is a definite for an indefinite, saying, in sum, that Christ's scope, in letting out his church, is thereby to make her fruitful, that by his servants' ministry he might have rent from her, as he saith, John 15:16. 'I have chosen and ordained you, to go and bring forth fruit.' &c. Which is especially to be understood in respect of their ministerial fruit (to say so) or the fruit of their ministry.

The sum required is alike to all, that every man may bring, &c, not implying, that all ministers will have alike fruit in effect, or *de facto*, but to shew, that all of them have one commission, and *de jure*, or of right, ought to aim at having much fruit to the landlord, and should by no means seek to feed themselves, but seek the master's profit. The words aim at these four things, 1. That Christ's great design in planting of a church, and sending of a ministry, is to have souls saved, that is the fruit which he aims at, for the travail of his soul: and so to have his people brought on towards heaven, by every step of knowledge, conversion, faith, repentance, holiness, till they be brought completely through. 2.

It supposeth the people's duty, that they who are planted in the church, should be fruitful: this vineyard bears well, else the keepers could not pay so much. 3. The minister's duty is implied here also, and it is to crave in Christ's rent, that is his office, as a factor, or chamberlain to gather it in; so, Matt. 21:31, 'He sent his servants to gather in the fruits of the vineyard.' Ministers are to labour amongst the people, and either to bring fruit, or a report of ill success unto Christ. 4. Whatever fruits the minister have to render to Christ, he must return a reckoning; so the word, bring, imports a returning of an account to the owner that sent him. The last thing is the peremptoriness of this lease, in respect of the fruits or rent, which is held forth in two things, 1. It is determined it must be 'a thousand:' which saith, 1. It is not free to ministers to call for or to accept of what they will, or what men will, as enough for Christ's due; he must determine himself what he will have, and none other, and he hath determined it. 2. There can be no alteration of the terms which Christ hath set down and imposed, it is definite in itself what every one must bring. Again, 2. Its peremptoriness appears in this, that 'every one,' none excepted, are put at for this rent: this is the great article in all their leases, fruit, fruit. *Observe.* 1. Every minister of the gospel hath a weighty trust put on him, in reference to the church's edification. 2. Ministers' right discharging of their trust, may have much influence on a people's thriving, and Christ's getting of his rent from amongst them. 3. All Christ's ministers have every one of them the same commission, for the same end, and every one of them should endeavour fruits proportionable thereto. 4. The Lord hath every minister's fruit, as to the event, determined, as well as their duty is appointed them. 5. Though all ministers have not alike success, in respect of the number of souls brought in by their ministry; yet, where there is honesty and diligence, the Lord will account it a thousand, as well as where the fruit is more: therefore are they alike in his reckoning, though not in the event. O! but an unfruitful minister, and unfaithful also, who, besides what fruit a common Christian should render, ought to render a thousand for his ministry, will be much in Christ's debt, when he shall reckon with him! Let ministers consider well this double reckoning.

Having laid down the general doctrine, verse 11, she doth now in the twelfth verse make application thereof to herself: and this she doth. 1. By asserting of her own sincerity. 2. By proving it in two instances. Her assertion is, 'My vineyard, which is mine, is before me:' the Bride's vineyard is the particular trust which is committed to her, in reference to her soul's estate; called a vineyard, 1. Because every particular believer, intrusted with his own soul's concernment, is a part of, and of the same nature with the church of Christ, which is called a vineyard in scripture, 2. Because of the variety of graces bestowed on her, and the ordinances and privileges, whereof she is a partaker with the whole, as is said. It is

called hers, because she must make a special account for her own soul, and the talent that is given to her, according to the trust that is put on her. We have almost the same phrase, chap. 1:6, where the Bride calls it, 'mine own vineyard:' this vineyard is said to be before her, which is like the expression, Psalm 18:22, 'all thy judgments were before me;' which the scope, by the words foregoing and following, shews to be, not a pleading of innocency, but of sincerity and watchfulness in keeping himself from his iniquity; and it is to be understood in opposition to departing wickedly from God, mentioned verse 21. And thus, to have her vineyard before her, signifieth watchfulness and tenderness, as those who have their eye always on their orchard, or vineyard; and it doth import, 1. Watchfulness, as has been said. 2. Diligence and carefulness; so it is opposed to the hiding of the talent, Luke 14. She did not so, but had the talent she was intrusted with, still before her, and among her hands, that she might trade with it. 3. It imports tenderness and conscientiousness, and so is opposed to mens' casting of God's law behind their backs, Psalm 50:16,17. This she did not, but the work God had appointed to her, and the trust which was committed to her, was always in her eye. 4. It implies sincerity and honesty in aiming at her duty, and that by a constant minding of it, as suffering it never to be out of her sight: all which, being put together, holds forth the sense of the words, Christ hath given every one in his church a trust (which is, as it were, the vineyard that every believer ought to have before him) and that (saith she) which was committed to me, I have been singly and conscientiously careful to do my duty in reference thereunto, so as I have a testimony in my conscience of it. And thus her case is far different from what it was, chap. 1:6, where she acknowledgeth that her own vineyard she had not kept.

Observe. 1. It is no matter how well one be acquainted with the general truths of the gospel, if there be not a conformity of practice; whatever knowledge christians have, it will never further their peace, except their practice be suitable. 2. Every member of the church, and every believer, hath a particular trust committed to him; and he must be accountable for his carriage in reference thereto. 3. The right discharging of this trust calls for watchfulness and diligence, and it will require daily oversight and attendance, that so the believer's vineyard may be always before him. 4. They who assiduously wait upon the work committed to them, may through grace make good progress in it, and attain to a good testimony from their own consciences thereanent. 5. It is exceeding comfortable to believers, when they have a testimony within them, that they have been diligent and careful in the duty committed to them. 6. Believers should reflect on their carriage in the trust committed to them, that they may be able to make some distinct report concerning the same. 7. They who are most tender in their duty, are also most diligent to

search how it is with them, that they may know the condition of their vineyard, whether it thrive or not.

If it be moved here, how she could assert so much of her condition, seeing, chap. 1:6, she acknowledgeth the contrary, that her own vineyard, or, the vineyard which was hers, she had not kept; and it is evident, chap. 5:3, that she was under a great measure of security, in which case she fell into many escapes? I answer, both maybe true, in diverse considerations, 1. As David in one place acknowledged sin, yet, Psalm 18:21, 22, &c. pleadeth sincerity; so doth she here. *Observe.* 1. There may be a just ground of a plea for sincerity, where there is much guilt to be acknowledged: these are not inconsistent, otherwise she could not assert her sincerity so confidently here. 2. Believers' plea for peace in the discharge of their duty, and the testimony of their conscience thereanent, is not founded on perfection of degrees, but on sincerity. 2. *Answer.* Chap. 1:6, contains the Bride's case at one time; this speaks of her case afterward, when by repentance she was recovered and restored to his friendship. *Observe.* 1. There may be a great difference in the way of one and the same believer, in respect of different times: at one time (possibly in youth) most unwatchful, at other times tender and serious. 2. Those that sometimes have been under many challenges for unwatchfulness, may through God's blessing afterward obtain a good outgate, both from their sins and challenges. 3. Bygone failings, will not, nor should not, mar a present favourable testimony from the conscience, when God hath given to one the exercise of faith, repentance and true tenderness. 3. *Answer.* Since these failings, Christ hath spoken peace to her, and therefore now she remembers them not, for marring of her peace, though otherwise she hath regretted them for her humbling. *Observe.* When Christ speaks peace, believers should not obstruct it, by continuing the resentment of former provocations and quarrels to the prejudice thereof, though they should still mind them for furthering of their own humiliation.

She comes, in the next place, to make out this assertion which is done, 1. By the matter of her words, while she instanceth the fruits, that belonged both to the owner and to the keepers. 2. By the manner of her words, while she turneth her speech over to Christ himself; 'Thou, O Solomon, shalt have a thousand;' (for so it will read as well as, must have, &c. seeing either of the words, shall, or must, may be supplied) and this shews both what he should have, and with what cheerfulness she bestowed it on him. And, 1. She instanceth the fruits that Christ should have, and these are 'a thousand:' by the thousand that Christ is to get, is understood that which was appointed and conditioned in his lease of the vineyard, and is mentioned, verse 11. It is, in a word, thou shalt have what thou hast appointed, the terms shall not be altered by me. Hence it appears, that the

‘thousand’ which the minister was to bring in as the revenue of the vineyard, is the engaging of souls to Christ, and the making of them fruitful; for, then gets Christ his rent from his people, when this is effectuated by the ordinances. *Observe.* 1. That fruits are the best evidence of sincerity. 2. That there can be nothing offered to Christ as fruit, or which can be an evidence or proof of sincerity, but that same, for the matter and manner, which is prescribed by him in his covenant; our fruits must be suitable to what is called for, and accepted by him, or they will be no ground of peace. 3. True sincerity will never alter the terms that Christ hath set down in his covenant, nor lessen his rent, which he hath prescribed as his due, but will think that most suitable which he hath prescribed, and will think it a mercy to have that to render to him.

The second instance, proving her fruitfulness, holdeth forth what the keepers should receive; the keepers shall have ‘two hundred:’ two hundred is a definite number for an indefinite. The scope is to shew, that she acknowledged Christ’s care, in providing watchmen and ordinances to her, and as they were not useless to her, but were blessed for her good so he should have honour, and their pains taken on her, by her fruitfulness, should redound to their commendation and glory, yet (as it becomes) in a lesser degree than to the Master, and without wronging of the rent due to him; this ‘two hundred,’ (saith she) ought not, and shall not diminish his thousand. Now, this may relate either to the reward that faithful ministers shall have from Christ, spoken of, Dan. 12:3. O what joy and glory will result to them, from the people’s fruitfulness (amongst whom they have laboured) in the day of the Lord ‘that they have not run in vain, but with much success, will bring them much joy in that day; so, 1 Thess. 2:19,20, ‘What is our hope’ (saith the apostle) ‘or crown of rejoicing, are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy.’ It is a piece of their life and satisfaction, to see the work of the gospel thrive amongst the people: ‘We live’ (saith Paul, 1 Thess. 3:8) ‘if ye stand fast in the Lord.’ Or, 2. It may look to that which is called for from a people to their ministers, even here, they are to acknowledge them that are over them for their work’s sake, to obey and submit to them, yea, to give themselves to them by the will of God, having given themselves first to Christ, 2 Cor. 8:5, and this being a testimony of believers’ sincerity, it looks like the scope; and so the sense is, thou shalt have (saith she) that which is called for, as thy due, and the keepers shall have what respect and encouragement is due to them, for thy sake.

This ‘two hundred’ belonging to the keepers, is added here, and was not mentioned in the former verse: because there the terms that were required of the keepers themselves were set down, here the duty of every particular believer is

expressed, which is to give Christ his due, and in doing that, to give to his ordinances and ministers as commissionate from him what is their due; and this is to be given them, not as men, nor as believers, but as keepers; which though immediately it be given to them, as to the ambassadors of Christ, yet that obedience, submission, &c. being to his ordinance, and given them only for their work's sake, 1 Thess. 5:3, it is rent also due to him, and called for by him.

If it be asked, why her giving of 'two hundred' to the keepers, is subjoined to the giving of him 'a thousand?' The answers to this are so many observations from the words; and the first is, that those who are trusted by Christ to be keepers of the vineyard, and his ministers, ought also to be respected by the people over whom they are set; and Christ allows this on them. 2. Where Christ is respected and gets his due, there the keepers will be respected and get their due: if Christ be made welcome, the feet of them that bring good tidings will be beautiful, Isa. 52:7. 3. It is a good sign of honesty and sincerity before Christ, when ministers and ordinances are respected in their own place, with subordination to the respect that is due Christ; therefore it is mentioned here. 4. It is no burden to an honest believer to acknowledge Christ's ministers, to obey their doctrine, and submit to their censures; for sincere believers both willingly do this, and engage to do it, as the Bride doth here. 5. The respect that is given to ministers, should be given to them as to his ministers, without derogating from, or encroaching upon, that which is the Master's due; therefore, his thousand is reserved whole for him, and this two hundred is no part thereof. 6. Where Christ gets his due among a people, and where his ordinances be received, there, and there only do ministers get their due; for, it is (as Paul saith) not yours but you, that we seek: and less will not be accepted by faithful ministers: they will never think they get their due, if the gospel be not taken well off their hand.

The last thing in the verse, is the way she takes to prove her uprightness, by attesting Christ to bear witness to the sincerity of her fruits; and this is held forth in the change of the person, from the third to the second, 'Thou, O Solomon' (saith she) 'shalt have a thousand:' which, in short, is done for evidencing of her sincerity, that it was such as might abide his trial; and so she doth pass sentence upon herself, as in his sight, who knew what was truth: and this doth not proceed from boasting, but from humble confidence, being desirous that he would accept of it, and approve her in it. *Observe.* 1. Sincerity gives one boldness in approaching to Christ. 2. It is a good evidence of sincerity, when believers are not very anxious, and careful what is the judgment of men concerning them, if they may have Christ's approbation; and therefore they consider their case and practice as speaking to Christ, and before him. 3. It is delectable, in the most spiritual

passages of our inward walk, to turn them over into addresses to Christ, and to speak them over betwixt him and us. 4. It is best gathering conclusions concerning our condition, and best learning how to esteem of it, when we are set as in Christ's presence, and are speaking to him: every thing will then be best discerned, and the soul will be in the best posture for discerning itself.

BRIDEGROOM.

Verse 13. Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.

The thirteenth and fourteenth verses contain the last part of this kindly conference, that hath been betwixt these two loving parties, and express their farewell and last suits, which each of them hath to the other. He speaks in this verse, and being to close, as a kind husband, leaving his beloved wife for a time, he desires to hear frequently from her till he return; this is his suit: and she, like a loving wife, entreats him to hasten his return, in the next verse, and this is the scope of both these verses. That the words in this thirteenth verse are spoken by him, appears by the title he gives the Bride, 'Thou that dwellest in the gardens,' which in the original, is in the feminine gender, as if one would say, 'thou woman,' or, 'thou Bride,' or, 'thou my wife:' or, take it in one word, as it is in the original, it may be rendered, 'O inhabitress of the gardens;' which can be applied to none other, but to her; and therefore, these words must be spoken by him to her, and thus the scope laid down is clear.

There are three parts in the verse, 1. The title he gives her. 2. A commendation, that is insinuated. 3. A request made to her, or duty laid on her. The title is, 'Thou that dwellest in the gardens:' by gardens, in the plural number, we understand (as chap. 6:2.) particular congregations, where the ordinances are administered, called gardens in the plural number, as contradistinguished from the catholic church, and from a particular believer, who are also called a garden in the singular number. To 'dwell in,' or inhabit these gardens, imports three things, 1. A frequenting of these meetings. 2. A continuance in them ordinarily, as if there were her residence. 3. A delight in them, and in the exercises of his worship and service there. And in sum, the meaning is, 'thou, my Bride, who frequentest and

lovest the assemblies of my people, and my public ordinances,' &c. *Observe.* 1. That Christ Jesus loveth to leave his people comforted, and therefore, is distinct in this his farewell, that there be no mistakes of him in his absence: and this way he used also with his apostles, John 14:13,14,15, &c. before his ascension. 2. Christ hath ordinarily ever preserved the public ordinances, by particular assemblies, in his church. See, chap. 6:2. 3. Where God's people are in good case, there the public ordinances are most frequented and esteemed of; and still the better in case they be, the ordinances are the more prized, and haunted by them; for, this is a special character and property of such, that they love to dwell among the ordinances, Psalm 27:4. Also, this is pleasant and acceptable to Jesus Christ, and the title he gives the Bride here, shews his approbation thereof.

The second part of the verse, namely the commendation he gives her, is insinuated in these words, 'The companions hearken to thy voice.' By companions here, are understood particular believers, members of the church, called also 'brethren' and 'companions,' Psalm 122:8, and the 'brotherhood,' 1 Pet. 2:17, so also, Psalm 45:14, and 119:63. 'I am a companion of all that fear thee,' &c. and this title is given them for these two reasons, 1. Because there is a jointness and communion amongst them, in all their interests, both of duties and privileges, and also in sufferings, &c. and so John, Rev. 19 calls himself their brother and companion in tribulation: they are all fellow-citizens of one city, Eph. 2. And, 2. Because they have a familiar way of living together, according to that joint interest, by sympathizing with each other, freedom to each other, and kindness of affection to one another, opposite to that strangeness and particularness that is amongst the men of the world: and this is the right improving of the former, and results from it. Next, by the Bride's 'voice,' is here understood her instructions, admonitions, and such parts of Christian fellowship, which tend to edification, wherein that companionry (so to speak) doth most appear: an example whereof we find in the instructions she gave to the daughters, chap. 5. The companions, their hearkening to her voice, is more than simple hearing (for hearkening and hearing are much different, and have different words in the original) and it implieth, their laying weight on what she said, by pondering of it, and yielding to it, as the daughters did, chap. 6:1, to which this may relate. And so the meaning is, thy fellow-worshippers (saith he) with reverence and respect, receive thy words, thou speakest so weightily unto them. And this doth import not only the practice and duty of the Bride and her companions, but also a commendation of them, both which we may take up in the doctrines. *Observe.* 1. That there is a most friendly union and familiar relation amongst all believers; they are companions in this respect, though there may be many differences in externals, which this takes not away. 2. Believers ought to walk friendly together, according to that relation; and

it is pleasant when they converse together as such, Psalm 133:3. Believers ought not to be useless in their fellowship and mutual conversing one with another, but should be speaking, by instructions, admonitions, and exhortations, that others with whom they converse may hear their voice. 4. Believers should not only hearken to public ordinances, and the word spoken by the office-bearers in the church, but also to that which is spoken by a companion when it is edifying. 5. It is a thing pleasant to Jesus Christ (who takes notice how companions walk together) when there is conscience made of mutual fellowship, with fruit and freedom amongst his people: this were good company. 6. God's making the stamp of his Spirit on a particular believer to have weight on others, so as their fellowship with them hath success, should provoke the believer to pursue more after fellowship with Christ himself; which is the scope of this part of the verse, compared with that which follows.

The last part of the verse, containing his desire to her, or the duty he layeth on her, is in these words, 'Cause me to hear it.' The words, as they are in the original, are, 'Cause to hear me:' which occasioneth a twofold reading. 1. 'Cause me to be heard,' and let me be the subject of thy discourse to others, seeing they give ear unto thee, improve that credit which thou halt with them for that end: thus this same phrase is rendered, Psalm 66:8, 'Make the voice of his praise to be heard,' or, as it is in the original, 'Cause to be heard the voice,' &c. 2. They may be read as they here stand, 'Cause me to hear it;' and thus Christ desires, he may be the object spoken unto, as by the former reading he is to be the subject spoken of; so this same phrase is rendered, Psalm 143, 'Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness:' and this translation agrees well with the scope here, where before he brake off communing with the Bride, as in the first part of the verse he had commended her for her frequenting of public ordinances, and in the second, for her keeping fellowship with others, in both which her duty is insinuated; so here he calls for her keeping of fellowship with himself, by her sending frequent messages to him in prayer; which he not only requires as a duty, but now requests as a favour (to speak so) that he may hear often from her, which he will account as much of, as any man will do of hearing from his wife in his absence. And, thus, to make him hear her voice, is by frequent prayer to make addresses to him, as, Psalm 5:3. 'In the morning shalt thou hear my voice:' and, chap. 2:14, of this song, speaking to the Bride, 'Let me hear thy voice,' saith he. *Observe*. 1. That though Jesus be a great Prince, and sometimes be absent to the sense of his people, yet hath he laid down a way how his Bride may keep correspondence with him, and let him hear from her when she will, in his greatest distance: he hath, as it were, provided posts for that end, prayers, ejaculations, thoughts, looks, if wakened by his Spirit, which will carry their message very speedily and faithfully.

2. The Bride ought to be frequent in sending posts and messages to her blessed Bridegroom, that he may hear from her; and both duty and affection call for this. 3. Messages from the believer are most welcome and acceptable to Jesus Christ, they are as messages from a loving wife to an husband at a distance, and believers may expect that such messages shall be well entertained; they cannot be too frequent in suits and prayers to him, when these duties are rightly discharged; and there will be no letter sent to him so short, or ill written, but he will read it: and sure, the neglecting of this, is a sin doth exceedingly displease and wound our kind Bridegroom. 4. In this verse, frequenting public ordinances, fellowship with believers, and much corresponding with Christ in secret prayer, are all put together, to shew, that they who rightly discharge the duties of public worship, and the duties of mutual fellowship, and the duties of communion and corresponding with Christ in prayer, must necessarily join all together; and when it goes well with a believer in one of these, they will all be made conscience of; and this last is subjoined, as the life of both the former, without which they will never be accepted by him.

BRIDE.

Verse 14. Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

The last verse hath in it the Bride's last and great suit to her Bridegroom, that he would haste his return: as in the former verse the Bridegroom commended all his will, as it were, in one suit to the Bride; let me often hear from thee that I may know how it is with thee, said he so here, she sums up all her desire in one snit, which to her is both first and last, I beseech thee (saith she) my Beloved, 'make haste' and do not tarry. In the words there are, 1. Her suit. 2. The title she gives him. 3. Her repeating and qualifying of her suit. Her request is, 'make haste:' the word, in the original signifieth 'flee away,' importing the greatest haste and speed that maybe, so would she have Christ hasting his coming in the most swift manner; whereby the holy impatience of her affection, that cannot endure delays, doth appear; therefore abruptly she breaks out with this as her last suit, and that which especially her heart desires of him. That it is for a speedy return, the scope, her love that expresseth it, and the manner which she useth through the Song, doth clear; and there being two comings of Christ spoken

of in scripture, 1. His coming in grace, which already she had prayed for, and it is promised, John 14:21,23. 2. His coming in glory at the last day to judge the world; we conceive that it will agree with her scope here, to take in both, but principally the last, that is, her desire, that Christ Jesus would hasten his second coming: not that she would have him to precipitate, or leave any thing undone that is to do before the end: but her desire is, that in due time and manner it may be brought about, and that what is to go before it, may be hastened, for making way for it; for, the phrase, 'haste, my Beloved,' is indefinite, and therefore it may look both to his second coming, and to all that must necessarily precede it; and therefore, so long as there is yet any thing to be performed, as previous to his coming, she bids him hasten it. 2. We take this desire to look mainly to his second coming, because that only can perfect believers' consolation, and put an end to their prayers: till he come, their consolation cannot be full, and all shadows are not away, chap. 2:17. There is ever something to be done, and therefore they have ever something to pray for (to wit, that his kingdom may come) till that time. 3. This is the great, joint, and main suit of all believers; they all concur in this, Rev. 22:17, 'The Spirit and the Bride say, come.' &c. It is essential to all who have the Spirit, to join in this suit; and the Bride cannot but be supposed to love the last appearing of our Lord Jesus, which will perfect all her desires: and this coming of his, was prophesied of by Enoch, the seventh from Adam, Jude, verse 14, and was delighted in by believers (Psalm 96:12, &c. Psalm 98:6,7) before Solomon wrote this.

2. The title which she gives him, is, 'my Beloved,' that which ordinarily she gave him, and is here inserted, 1. To be a motive to press her suit, and it is the most kindly motive which she could use to him, that there was such a relation betwixt him and her, and therefore she prayeth, that he would not leave her comfortless, but return again. 2. It is made use of as a stay to her faith, for sustaining of her against discouragement: and that there is such a tie standing betwixt him and believers, is a notable consolation, seeing he is faithful and kind in all his relations; and by this she sweetens this her farewell-wish. 3. It is an expression of her affection, she cannot speak to him, but her heart is kindled, and must speak kindly: and it shows that their parting is in very good terms, like friends. 4. It shows, her clearness of her interest in him, on which she grounds this suit, so as heartily she hereby makes ready, and prepares for his coming, knowing that he is hers.

3. The qualification of her suit is in these words, 'Be thou like to a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains of spices:' roes and harts frequent mountains, and do run swiftly, speedily and pleasantly on them, as hath been often said: see

upon chap. 2:8,17, the allusion and scope here is, as roes and harts run swiftly over mountains, so, my Beloved (saith she) make haste to return with all diligence: or, because 'the mountains of spices' signify some excellent mountains, such as it may be, were not ordinary for roes and harts to run upon (though in these countries it might be so in part) therefore we may read the words, thus, my Beloved, be thou upon the mountains of spices, like a roe, &c. and so heaven may be compared to such savoury and refreshful mountains. The scope is one, and speaks thus, 'now my Beloved, seeing there is a time coming, when there will be a refreshful meeting betwixt thee and me, never to be interrupted, therefore I entreat thee, so to expedite thy affairs which are to precede, which in reason I cannot obstruct, that that blessed and longed-for meeting may be hastened, and thou may come to receive thy Bride at the last day.' From all these, *Observe*. 1. which is supposed, that there is a final and glorious coming of our Lord Jesus to judgment, which will be when all that he hath to do in the earth is perfected otherwise this could not be prayed for by the Bride. 2. It is implied, that this coming of JESUS CHRIST, is a most comfortable and desirable thing to believers; there is nothing that they more aim at and pant for, than his company; and that being so desirable here, it must be much more so hereafter, when all his people shall be gathered to him, and the queen shall be brought to the King in raiment of needle-work, and shall enter into the palace with him, there to abide for ever: that cannot but be desirable, and therefore it is pressed as her farewell-suit. 3. This suit of the Bride's implies, that this glorious coming of our LORD JESUS is much in the thoughts of his people, and useth to be meditated on by them; for, this prayer of hers, is the expression of what useth to be in her heart. 4. It implies, that believers ought to be established in the faith of CHRIST'S second coming, so as it may be a ground of prayer to them. 5. Even the thoughts of this second coming, which flow from the faith thereof, long ere it come, will be refreshful to the believer. 6. It is peculiar to the believer to be delighted with, and to be longing for Christ's second coming; for, it agrees with this relation the Bride hath to him as her Beloved: and whatever others may say, yet this coming of CHRIST JESUS, really is, and will be dreadful to them: and therefore are believers differenced from all others by this name, that they are such who love his appearing, 2 Tim. 4:8.

That we may further consider this prayer of the Bride's we may look upon it, first, more generally, and so gather these. *Observe*. 1. Faith and love will comend much in few words, and will thrust together many suits in a short expression; there is much in this same word, flee, or haste; it is not the longest prayer that is made up of maniest words. 2. Faith in CHRIST, and love to him, where they are in exercise, will make the believer to meddle in his prayers with things of the greatest concernment: so doth this prayer of the Bride's, it looks not

only to his second coming, but also takes in the overturning Satan's kingdom, the calling of Jews and Gentiles, the dissolution of heaven and earth, &c. which go alongst with, and before, CHRIST'S coming: these are great things, and yet that they may be accomplished, is that which she here prayeth for. 3. Faith will look far off in prayer, it will be minding things that are to be performed long after the person's removal out of this life.

Again, we may consider this suit as it followeth on the former long conference, and goes before the off-breaking thereof: and so, *Observe*. 1. That the most lively and longest continued enjoyments of Christ, that believers have here upon earth, may, and will have their interruptions and off breakings for a time: uninterrupted communion is reserved for heaven. 2. Believers that have been admitted to familiar access unto, and fellowship with CHRIST JESUS, should endeavour to have it distinctly breaking off: so that although they cannot entertain it always, yet they should be careful that it slip not away, and they not knowing how, nor understanding in what terms their souls stand with CHRIST; neglects here occasion many challenges. 3. Those who are best acquainted with fellowship with CHRIST here-away, and are clearest of their interest in him, will be most desirous of, and most pressing after his second coming: and the little acquaintance that many have with him here-away, is the reason that so few are taken up with this suit. 4. When believers have been admitted to much sweet fellowship with CHRIST, before their sun decline, or before his sensible presence be withdrawn, they ought to have a new design and desire tabled for his returning; and this is a good way to close such sweet and comfortable conferences with CHRIST, by referring distinctly to a new meeting, especially to this last, which will never admit of a parting again. 5. When temporal enjoyments of Christ break off, believers should endeavour the clearing of their hope of that eternal enjoyment which is coming, and should comfort themselves in the expectation of that, which no time will put an end unto.

3. We may consider the words in themselves, as this particular prayer holds forth a pattern and copy of prayer to believers, and as the Bride evidenceth the nature of true love by this suit. And so we may *Observe*, 1. That it is the duty of a believer to long and pray for CHRIST'S second coming, and when they are in a right frame and case, they will do so: love to Christ himself, who at his appearing is to be glorified; love to the church in general, which that day is to be adorned as a bride for her husband, and fully to be freed from all outward crosses and inward defects; and love to a believer's own happiness, which that day is fully to be perfected, do all call for this. 2. This second coming of our LORD doth fully satisfy the believer in all respects; they have no suit nor prayer after this, when

that day is once come, there will be no more complaints, all sorrow and sighing flies then away; there will be then no more prayer, for there will be no more necessities and wants, but all they can desire will be then enjoyed, and praise will be the work of that blessed world, amongst all the saints to all eternity: there will be no such use of the promises and of faith, as we have of them now, but all will be in possession; our warfare will be ended, and our victory completed, when we shall see him as he is, and be like him: it is no marvel then that he ‘Spirit and the Bride say, come,’ and cry constantly, ‘haste, my beloved,’ until this desire be fulfilled. *Even so, come, LORD JESUS.*

FINIS

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