



**Seven Sermons from
the Song of
Solomon**

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Christ and the Believer

“As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet unto my taste” Song of Solomon 2:2, 3.

If an unconverted man were taken away into heaven, where Christ sits in glory, and if he overheard Christ's words of admiring love towards the believer, he could not understand them, he could not comprehend how Christ should see a loveliness in poor religious people whom he in the bottom of his heart despised. Or again, if an unconverted man were to overhear a Christian at his devotions when he is really within the veil, and were to listen to his words of admiring, adoring love towards Christ, he could not possibly understand them, he could not comprehend how the believer should have such a burning affection toward one unseen, in whom he himself saw no form nor comeliness. So true it is that the natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. There may be some now hearing me who have a rooted dislike to religious people, they are so stiff, so precise, so gloomy, you cannot endure their company! Well, then, see here what Christ thinks of them: “As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” How different you are from Christ! There may some hearing me who have no desires after Jesus Christ, who never think of Him with pleasure; you see no form nor comeliness in Him, no beauty that you should desire Him; you do not love the melody of His name; you do not pray to Him continually. Well, then, see here what the believer thinks of Him, how different from you! As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.” Oh that you would

be awakened by this very thing, that you are so different from Christ, and so different from the believer, to think that you must be in a natural condition, you must be under wrath!

Doctrine. The believer is unspeakably precious in the eyes of Christ, and Christ is unspeakably precious in the eyes of the believer.

1. *Inquire what Christ thinks of the believer.* “As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.”

Christ sees nothing so fair in all this world as the believer. All the rest of the world is like thorns; but the believer is like a beautiful lily in His eyes. When you are walking in a wilderness all overgrown with briars and thorns, if your eye falls upon some lonely flower, tall and white, and pure and graceful, growing in the midst of the thorns, it looks peculiarly beautiful. If it were in the midst of some rich garden among many other flowers, then it would not be so remarkable; but when it is encompassed with thorns on every side, then it engages the eye. Such is the believer in the eyes of Christ. “As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.”

(1). See what Christ thinks of the unconverted world. It is like a field full of briars in His eyes. First, because fruitless. “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” So Christ gets no fruit from the unconverted world. It is all one wide thorny waste. Second, because, when the word is preached among them, it is like sowing among thorns. “Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them; so is preaching to the unconverted. Third, because their end will be like that of thorns they are dry, and fit only for burning. “For the earth, which is often rained upon and only bears thorns and briars, is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.” My friends, if you are in a Christless state, see what you are in the eyes of Christ — thorns. You think that you have many admirable qualities, that you are valuable members of society, and you have hope that it shall be well with you in eternity. See what Christ says, you are thorns and briars, useless in this world, and fit only

for the burning.

(2). See what Christ thinks of the believer: “As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” The believer is like a lovely flower in the eyes of Christ. First, because justified in the eyes of Christ, washed in His blood, he is pure and white as a lily. Christ can see no spot in His own righteousness, and therefore sees no spot on the believer. “Thou art all fair my love, as a lily among thorns, so is My love.” Second, a believer’s nature is changed. Once he was like the barren, prickly thorn, fit only for burning; now Christ has put a new spirit in him, the dew has been given to him, and he grows up like a lily. Christ loves the new creature. “All My delight is in them.” “As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” Are you a Christian? Then never mind though the world despise you, though they call you names; remember Christ loves you; He calls you “My love.” Abide in Him, and you shall abide in His love. “If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed.” Third, because so lonely in the world. Observe, there is but one lily, but many thorns. There is a great wilderness all full of thorns, and only one lonely flower. So there is a world lying in wickedness, and a little flock that believe in Jesus. Some believers are cast down because they feel solitary and alone. If I be in the right way, surely I would not be so lonely. Surely the wise, and the amiable, and the kind of people I see round me, surely, if there were any truth in religion, they would know it. Be not cast down. It is one of the marks of Christ’s people that they are alone in the world, and yet they are not alone. It is one of the very beauties which Christ sees in His people, that they are solitary among a world of thorns. “As a lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.” Do not be discouraged. This world is the world of loneliness. When you are transplanted to yon garden of God, then you shall be no more lonely, then you shall be away from all the thorns. As flowers in a rich garden blend together their thousand odours to enrich the passing breeze, so, in the paradise above, you shall join the thousands of the redeemed, blending with theirs the odour of your praise; you shall join with the redeemed, as living flowers, to form

a garland for the redeemer's brow.

2. *Inquire what the believer thinks of Christ.* “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.”

(1). Christ is more precious than all other saviours in the eye of the believer. As a traveller prefers an apple tree to every other tree of the wood, because he finds shelter and nourishing food under it, so the believer prefers Christ to all other saviours. When a man is travelling in Eastern countries, he is often like to drop down under the burning rays of the sun. It is a relief when he comes to a wood. When Israel were travelling in the wilderness, they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water. They were glad of the shelter of the trees. So Micah says that Gods people “dwell solitarily in the wood;” and Ezekiel promises, “They shall sleep in the woods.”

But if the traveller be hungry and faint for lack of food, then he will not be content with any tree of the wood, but he will choose out a fruit tree, under which he may sit down and find nourishment as well as shade. He sees a fair apple tree; he chooses it out of all the trees of the wood, because he can both sit under its shadow and eat its pleasant fruits. So is it with the soul awakened by God. He under the heat of God's anger; he is in a weary land; he is brought into the wilderness; he is like to perish; he comes to the wood; many trees offer their shade; where shall he sit down? Under the fig tree? Alas! What fruit has it to give? He may die there. Under the cedar tree, with its mighty branches? Alas! He may perish there, for it has no fruit to give. The soul that is taught of God seeks for a complete Saviour. The apple tree is revealed to the soul. The hungry soul chooses that evermore. He needs to be saved from hell and nourished for heaven. “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.” Awakened souls, remember you must not sit down under every tree that offers itself. “Take heed that no one deceive you; for many shall come in Christ's name, saying, I am Christ, and deceive many.” There are many ways of saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace. You

will be tempted to find peace in the world, in self repentance, in self reformation. Remember choose you a tree that will yield fruit as well as shade. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." Pray for a choosing faith. Pray for an eye to discern the apple tree. Oh, there is no rest for the soul except under that Branch which God has made strong! My hearts desire and prayer for you is that you may all find rest there.

(2). Why has the believer so high an esteem of Christ?

Answer 1. Because he has made trial of Christ. "I sat down under His shadow with great delight." All true believers have sat down under the shadow of Christ. Some people think that they be saved because they have got a head knowledge of Christ. They read of Christ in the bible, they hear of Christ in the house of God, and they think that is to be a Christian. Alas! My friends, what good would you get from an apple tree, if I were only to describe it to you — tell you how beautiful it was — how heavily laden with delicious apples? Or, if I were only to show you a picture of the tree, or if I were to show you the tree itself at a distance, what the better would you be? You would not get the good of its shade or its pleasant fruit. Just so, dear brethren, what good would you get from Christ, if you only hear of Him in books and sermons, or if you see Him pictured forth in the sacrament, or if you were to see Him with your bodily eye? What good would all this do, if you do not sit under His shadow? Oh, my friends, there must be a personal sitting down under the shadow of Christ if you would be saved! Christ is the bush that has burned, yet not consumed. Oh, it is a safe place for a hell deserving sinner to rest!

Some may be hearing me who can say "I sat down under His shadow. And yet you have forsaken Him. Ah! Have you gone after your lovers, and away from Christ? Well, then, may God hedge up your way with thorns. Return, return, O Shulamite! There is no other refuge for your soul. Come and sit down again under the shadow of the Saviour.

Answer 2. Because he sat down with great delight.

First, some people think there is no joy in religion, it is a gloomy thing, When a young person becomes a Christian, they

would say, alas! He must bid farewell to pleasure, farewell to the joys of youth, farewell to a merry heart. He must exchange these pleasures for reading of the Bible and dry sermon books, for a life of gravity and preciseness. This is what the world says. What does the Bible say? "I sat down under His shadow with great delight." Ah! Let God be true, and every man a liar. Yet no one can believe this except those who have tried it. Ah! Be not deceived, my young friends; the world has many sensual and many sinful delights, the delights of eating and drinking, and wearing gay clothes, the delights of revelry and the dance. No man of wisdom will deny that these things are delightful to the natural heart; but oh, they perish in the using, and they end in an eternal hell! But to sit down under the shadow of Christ, wearied with seeking after vain saviours, at last to find rest under the shadow of Christ, ah! This is great delight. Lord, evermore may I sit under this shadow! Lord, evermore may I be filled with this joy!

Second, some people are afraid of anything like joy in religion. They have none themselves, and they do not love to see it in others. Their religion is something like the stars, very high, and very clear, but very cold. When they see tears of anxiety, or tears of joy, they cry out, Enthusiasm, enthusiasm! Well then to the law, and to the testimony: "I sat down under His shadow with great delight." Is this enthusiasm? O Lord evermore give us this enthusiasm! May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing! If it be really in sitting under the shadow of Christ, let there be no bounds to your joy. Oh, if God would but open your eyes, and give you simple, child like faith, to look to Jesus, to sit under His shadow, then would songs of joy rise from all our dwellings! Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!

Third, because the fruit of Christ is sweet to the taste. All true believers not only sit under the shadow, but partake of His pleasant fruits. Just as when you sit under an apple tree, the fruit hangs above you and around you, and invites you to put out the hand and taste; so when you come to submit to the righteousness of God, bow your head, and sit down under Christ's shadow, all other things are added unto you. First, Temporal mercies are sweet

to the taste. None but those of you who are Christians know this, when you sit under the shadow of Christ's temporal mercies, because covenant mercies. "Bread shall be given you; your water shall be sure." These are sweet apples from the tree Christ. O Christian! Tell me, is not bread sweeter when eaten thus? Is not water richer than wine and Daniel's pulse better than the dainties of the kings table? Second, afflictions are sweet to the taste. Every good apple has some sourness in it. So is it with the apples of the tree of Christ. He gives afflictions as well as mercies; He sets the teeth on edge; but even these are blessings in disguise, they are covenant gifts. Oh, affliction is a dismal thing when you are not under His shadow! But are you Christians? Look on your sorrows as apples from that blessed tree. If you knew how wholesome they are, you would not wish to want them. Several of you know it is no contradiction to say, these apples, though sour, are sweet to my taste. Third, the gifts of the Spirit are sweet to the taste. Ah! Here is the best fruit that grows on the tree; here are the ripest apples from the topmost branch. You who are Christians know how often your soul is fainting. Well, here is nourishment to your fainting soul. Everything you need is in Christ. "My grace is sufficient for thee." Dear Christian, sit much under that tree, feed much upon that fruit. "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." Fourth, Promises of glory. Some of the apples have a taste of heaven in them. Feed upon these, dear Christians. Some of Christ's apples give you a relish for the fruit of Canaan — for the clusters of Eshcol. Lord, evermore give me these apples; for oh, they are sweet to my taste!

The Voice of My Beloved

"The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart; behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice. My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of

birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes. My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains of Bether” Song of Solomon 2:8-17.

There is no book of the Bible which affords a better test of the depth of a man’s Christianity than the Song of Solomon. (1). If a man’s religion be *all in his head* — a well-set form of doctrines, built like mason-work, stone above stone — but exercising no influence upon his heart, this book cannot but offend him; for there are no stiff statements of doctrine here upon which his heartless religion may be built. (2). Or, if a man’s religion be *all in his fancy* — if, like Pliable in the *Pilgrim’s Progress*, he be taken with the outward beauty of Christianity — if, like the seed sown upon the rocky ground, his religion is fixed only in the surface faculties of the mind, while the heart remains rocky and unmoved; though he will relish this book much more than the first man, still there is a mysterious breathing of intimate affection in it, which cannot but stumble and offend him. (3). *But if a man’s religion be heart religion* — if he hath not only doctrines in his head, but love to Jesus in his heart — if he hath not only heard and read of the Lord Jesus, but hath felt his need of Him, and been brought to cleave unto Him, as the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely, then this book will be inestimably precious to his soul; for it contains the tenderest breathings of the believer’s heart towards the Saviour, and the tenderest breathings of the Saviour’s heart again towards the believer.

It is agreed among the best interpreters of this book — (a). That it consists not of one song, but of many songs; (b). That these songs are in a dramatic form; and (c). That, like the parables of

Christ, they contain a spiritual meaning, under the dress and ornaments of some poetical incident.

The passage which I have read forms one of these dramatical songs, and the subject of it is a sudden visit which an Eastern bride receives from her absent lord. The bride is represented to us as sitting lonely and desolate in a kiosk, or Eastern arbour — a place of safety and of retirement in the gardens of the East — described by modern travellers as “an arbour surrounded by a green wall, covered with vines and jessamines, with windows of lattice-work.”

The mountains of Bether (or, as it is on the margin, the mounts of division), the mountains that separate her from her beloved, appear almost impassable. They look so steep and craggy, that she fears he will never be able to come over them to visit her any more. *Her garden* possesses no loveliness to entice her to walk forth. All nature seems to partake in her sadness; winter reigns without and within; no flowers appear on the earth; all the singing birds appear to be sad and silent upon the trees; and the turtle’s voice of love is not heard in the land.

It is whilst she is sitting thus lonely and desolate that the voice of her beloved strikes upon her ear. Love is quick in hearing the voice that is loved; and therefore she hears sooner than all her maidens, and the song opens with her bursting exclamation, “The voice of my beloved!” When she sat in her solitude, the mountains between her and her lord seemed nearly impassable, they were so lofty and so steep; but now she sees with what swiftness and ease he can come over these mountains, so that she can compare him to nothing else but the gazelle, or the young hart, the loveliest and swiftest creatures of the mountains. “My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart.” Yea, while she is speaking, already he has arrived at the garden wall; and now, behold, “he looketh in at the window, showing himself through the lattice.” The bride next relates to us the gentle invitation, which seems to have been the song of her beloved as he came so swiftly over the mountains. While she sat alone, all nature seemed dead — winter reigned; but now he tells her that he has brought the spring-time along with him. “Arise, my

love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.” Moved by this pressing invitation, she comes forth from her place of retirement into the presence of her lord, and clings to him like timorous dove to the clefts of the rock; and then he addresses her in these words of tenderest and most delicate affection: “O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the precipice, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.” Joyfully agreeing to go forth with her lord, she yet remembers that this is the season of greatest danger to her vines, from the foxes which gnaw the bark of the vines; and therefore she will not go forth without leaving this command of caution to her maidens: “Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.” She then renews the covenant of her espousals with her beloved, in these words of appropriating affection: “My beloved is mine, and I am his; let him feed among the lilies.” And last of all, because she knows that this season of intimate communion will not last, since her beloved must hurry away again over the mountains, she will not suffer him to depart without beseeching him that he will often renew these visits of love, till that happy day dawn when they shall not need to be separated any more: “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.”

We might well challenge the whole world of genius to produce in any language a poem such as this — so short, so comprehensive, so delicately beautiful. But what is far more to our present purpose, there is no part of the Bible which opens up more beautifully some of the innermost experience of the believer’s heart.

Let us now, then, look at the parable as a description of one of those visits which the Saviour often pays to believing souls, when

He manifests himself unto them in that other way than He doeth unto the world.

1. *When Christ is away from the soul of the believer, he sits alone.* — We saw in the parable, that, when her lord was away, the bride sat lonely and desolate. She did not call for the young and the gay to cheer her solitary hours. She did not call for the harp of the minstrel to soothe her in her solitude. There was no pipe, nor tabret, nor wine at her feasts. No, she sat alone. The mountains seemed all but impassable. All nature partook of her sadness. If she could not be glad in the light of her lord's countenance, she was resolved to be glad in nothing else. She sat lonely and desolate. Just so it is with the true believer in Jesus. Whatever be the mountains of Bether that have come between his soul and Christ, — whether he hath been seduced into his old sins, so that “his iniquities have separated again between him and his God, and his sins have hid his face from Him, that He will not hear,” — or whether the Saviour hath withdrawn for a season the comfortable light of his presence for the mere trial of his servant's faith, to see if, when he “walketh in darkness and hath no light, he will still trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God,” — whatever the mountains of separation be, it is the sure mark of the believer *that he sits desolate and alone*. He cannot laugh away his heavy care, as worldly men can do. He cannot drown it in the bowl of intemperance, as poor blinded men can do. Even the innocent intercourse of human friendship brings no balm to his wound — nay, even fellowship with the children of God is now distasteful to his soul. He cannot enjoy what he enjoyed before, when they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another. The mountains between him and the Saviour seem so vast and impassable, that he fears He will never visit him more. All nature partakes of his sadness — winter reigns without and within. He sits alone, and is desolate. Being afflicted, he prays; and the burden of his prayer is the same with that of an ancient believer: “Lord, if I may not be made glad with the light of thy countenance, grant that I may be made glad with nothing else; for joy without Thee is death.”

Ah! my friends, do you know anything of this sorrow? Do you know what it is thus to sit alone and be desolate, because Jesus is out of view? If you do, then rejoice, if it be possible, even in the midst of your sadness! for this very sadness is one of the marks that you are a believer — that you find all your peace and all your joy in union with the Saviour.

But ah, how contrary is the way with most of you! You know nothing of this sadness. Yes, perhaps you make a mock at it. You can be happy and contented with the world, though you have never got a sight of Jesus. You can be merry with your companions, though the blood of Jesus has never whispered peace to your soul. Ah, how plain that you are hastening on to the place where “there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked!”

2. *Christ’s coming to the desolate believer is often sudden and wonderful.* — We saw in the parable, that it was when the bride was sitting lonely and desolate that she heard suddenly the voice of her lord. Love is quick in hearing; and she cries out, “The voice of my beloved!” Before, she thought the mountains all but impassable; but now she can compare his swiftness to nothing but that of the gazelle or the young hart. Yea, whilst she speaks, he is at the wall — at the window — showing himself through the lattice. Just so is it oftentimes with the believer. While he sits alone and desolate, the mountains of separation appear a vast and impassable barrier to the Saviour, and he fears He may never come again. The mountains of a believer’s provocations are often very great. “That I should have sinned again, who have been washed in the blood of Jesus. It is little that other men should sin against Him; they never knew Him — never loved Him as I have done. Surely I am the chief of sinners, and have sinned away my Saviour. The mountain of my provocations hath grown up to heaven, and He never can come over it any more.” Thus it is that the believer writes bitter things against himself; and then it is that oftentimes he hears the voice of his beloved. Some text of the word, or some word from a Christian friend, or some part of a sermon, again reveals Jesus in all his fullness — the Saviour of sinners, even the chief. Or it may be that He makes himself known

to the disconsolate soul in the breaking of bread, and when He speaks the gentle words, "This is my body, broken for you; this cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for the remission of the sins of many; drink ye all of it," — then he cannot but cry out, "The voice of my beloved! behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills."

Ah! my friends, do you know anything of this joyful surprise? If you do, why should you ever sit down despairingly, as if the Lord's hand were shortened at all that He cannot save, or as if his ear were grown heavy that He cannot hear? In the darkest hour say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Still trust in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Come expectingly to the word. Do not come with that listless indifference, as if nothing that a fellow-worm can say were worth your hearing. It is not the word of man, but the word of the living God. Come with large expectations, and then you will find the promise true, that He filleth the hungry with good things, though He sends the rich empty away.

3. *Christ's coming changes all things to the believer, and his love is more tender than ever.* — We saw in the parable that when the bride sat desolate and alone, all nature was steeped in sadness. Her garden possessed no charms to draw her forth, for winter reigned without and within. But when her lord came so swiftly over the mountains, he brought the spring along with him. All nature is changed as he advances, and his invitation is, "For the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Just so it is with the believer when Christ is away; all is winter to the soul. But when He comes again over the mountains of provocation, He brings a gladsome springtime along with Him. When that Sun of Righteousness arises afresh upon the soul, not only do his gladdening rays fall upon the believer's soul, but all nature rejoices in his joy. The mountains and hills burst forth before Him into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands. It is like a change of season to the soul. It is like that sudden change from the pouring rains of a dreary winter to the full

blushing spring, which is so peculiar to the climes of the Sun.

The world of nature is all changed. Instead of the thorn comes up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier comes up the myrtle-tree. Every tree and field possesses a new beauty to the happy soul. *The world of grace* is all changed. *The Bible* was all dry and meaningless before; now, what a flood of light is poured over its pages! how full, how fresh, how rich in meaning, how its simplest phrases touch the heart! *The house of prayer* was all sad and dreary before — its services were dry and unsatisfactory; but now, when the believer sees the Saviour, as he hath seen Him heretofore within his holy place, his cry is: “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.” *The garden of the Lord* was all sad and cheerless before; now tenderness towards the unconverted springs up afresh, and love to the people of God burns in the bosom — then they that fear the Lord speak often one to another. The time of singing the praises of Jesus is come, and the turtle voice of love to Jesus is once more heard in the land; the Lord’s vine flourishes, and the pomegranate buds, and Christ’s voice to the soul is, “Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

As the timorous dove pursued by the vulture, and well-nigh made a prey, with fluttering anxious wing, hides itself deeper than ever in the clefts of the rock, and in the secret places of the precipice, so the backslidden believer, whom Satan has desired to have, that he might sift him as wheat, when he is restored once more to the all-gracious presence of his Lord, clings to Him with fluttering, anxious faith, and hides himself deeper than ever in the wounds of his Saviour. Thus it was that the fallen Peter, when he had so grievously denied his Lord, yet, when brought again within sight of the Saviour, standing upon the shore, was the only one of the disciples who girt his fisher’s coat unto him, and cast himself into the sea to swim to Jesus; and just as that backslidden apostle, when again he had hidden himself in the clefts of the Rock of Ages, found that the love of Jesus was more tender towards him than ever, when he began that conversation, which, more than all others in the Bible, combines the kindest of reproofs with the

kindest of encouragements, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” just so does every backslidden believer find, that when again he is hidden in the freshly opened wounds of his Lord, the fountain of his love begins to flow afresh, and the stream of kindness and affection is fuller and more overflowing than ever, for his word is, “Oh, my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the precipice, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.”

Ah, my friends, do you know anything of this? Have you ever experienced such a coming of Jesus over the mountain of your provocations, as made a change of season to your soul? and have you, backslidden believer, found, when you hid yourself again deeper than ever in the clefts of the rock — like Peter girding his fisher’s coat unto him, and casting himself into the sea — have you found his love tenderer than ever to your soul? Then, should not this teach you quick repentance when you have fallen? Why keep one moment away from the Saviour? Are you waiting till you wipe away the stain from your garments? Alas! what will wipe it off, but the blood you are despising? Are you waiting till you I make yourself worthier of the Saviour’s favour? Alas! though you wait till all eternity, you can never make yourself worthier. Your sin and misery are your only plea. Come, and you will find with what tenderness He will heal your backslidings, and love you freely; and say, “Oh, my dove,” etc.

4. *I observe the threefold disposition of fear, love, and hope, which this visit of the Saviour stirs up in the believer’s bosom.* These three form, as it were, a cord in the restored believer’s bosom, and a threefold cord is not easily broken.

(1). First of all, there is *fear*. — As the bride in the parable would not go forth to enjoy the society of her lord, without leaving the command behind to her maidens to take the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines, so does every believer know and feel that the time of closest communion is also the time of greatest danger. It was when the Saviour had been baptized, and the Holy Ghost, like a dove, had descended upon Him, and a voice, saying,

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” — it was then that He was driven into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil; and just so it is when the soul is receiving its highest privileges and comforts, that Satan and his ministers are nearest — the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines. (a). Spiritual pride is near. When the soul is hiding in the wounds of the Saviour, and receiving great tokens of his love, then the heart begins to say, Surely I am somebody — how far I am above the everyday run of believers! This is one of the little foxes that eats out the life of vital godliness. (b). There is making a Christ of your comforts — looking to them, and not to Christ — leaning upon them, and not upon your beloved. This is another of the little foxes. (c). There is the false notion that now you must surely be above sinning, and above the power of temptation, now you can resist all enemies. This is the pride that goes before a fall — another of the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines. Never forget, I beseech you, that fear is a sure mark of a believer. Even when you feel that it is God that worketh in you, still the word saith, Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; — even when your joy is overflowing, still remember it is written, “Rejoice with *trembling*,” and again: “Be not high-minded, but fear.” Remember the caution of the bride, and say: “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.”

(2). But if cautious fear be a mark of a believer in such a season, still more is *appropriating love*. When Christ comes anew over mountains of provocation, and reveals himself to the soul free and full as ever, in another way than He doth unto the world, then the soul can say, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” I do not say that the believer can use these words at all seasons. In times of darkness and in times of sinfulness the reality of a believer’s faith is to be measured rather by his sadness than by his confidence. But I do say, that, in seasons when Christ reveals himself afresh to the soul, shining out like the sun from behind a cloud, with the beams of sovereign, unmerited love — then no other words will satisfy the true believer but these: “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” The soul sees Jesus to be *so free a Saviour* — so anxious that all

should come to Him and have life — stretching out his hands all the day — having no pleasure in the death of the wicked — pleading with men: “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?” The soul sees Jesus to be *so fitting a Saviour* — the very covering which the soul requires. When first he hid himself in Jesus, he found Him suitable to all his need — the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. But now he finds out a new fitness in the Saviour, as Peter did when he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, and cast himself into the sea. He finds that He is a fitting Saviour for the backsliding believer; that his blood can blot out even the stains of him who, having eaten bread with Him, has yet lifted up the heel against Him. The soul sees Jesus to be *so full a Saviour* — giving to the sinner not only pardons, but overflowing, immeasurable pardons — giving not only righteousness, but a righteousness that is more than mortal, for it is all divine — giving not only the Spirit, but pouring water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. The soul sees all this in Jesus, and cannot but choose Him and delight in Him with a new and appropriating love, saying, “*My beloved is mine.*” And if any man ask, How darest thou, sinful worm, to call that Divine Saviour thine? the answer is here, *For I am his*: He chose me from all eternity, else I never would have chosen Him. He shed his blood for me, else I never would have shed a tear for Him. He cried after me, else I never would have breathed after Him. He sought after me, else I never would have sought after Him. He hath loved me, therefore I love Him. He hath chosen me, therefore I evermore choose Him. “My beloved is mine, and I am his.”

(3). But, lastly, if love be a mark of the true believer at such a season, so also is *prayerful hope*. It was the saying of a true believer, in an hour of high and wonderful communion with Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here!” My friend, you are no believer, if Jesus hath never manifested himself to your soul in your secret devotions — in the house of prayer, or in the breaking of bread — in so sweet and overpowering a manner, that you have cried out, “Lord, it is good for me to be here!” But though it be good and very pleasant, like sunlight to the eyes, yet the Lord sees

that it is not wisest and best always to be there. Peter must come down again from the mount of glory, and fight the good fight of faith amid the shame and contumely of a cold and scornful world. And so must every child of God. We are not yet in heaven, the place of open vision and unbroken enjoyment. This is earth, the place of faith, and patience, and heavenward-pointing hope. One great reason why close and intimate enjoyment of the Saviour may not be constantly realized in the believer's breast is, to give room for hope, the third string that forms the threefold cord. Even the most enlightened believers are walking here in a darksome night, or twilight at most; and the visits of Jesus to the soul do but serve to make the surrounding darkness more visible. But the night is far spent, the day is at hand. The day of eternity is breaking in the east. The Sun of Righteousness is hasting to rise upon our world, and the shadows are preparing to flee away. Till then, the heart of every true believer, that knows the preciousness of close communion with the Saviour, breathes the earnest prayer, that Jesus would often come again, thus sweetly and suddenly, to lighten him in his darksome pilgrimage. Ah! yes, my friends, let every one who loves the Lord Jesus in sincerity, join now in the blessed prayer of the bride: "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

Holding Christ Fast

"It was a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me" Song of Solomon 3:4.

Have you found Him whom your soul loves? Have you this day seen His beauty, heard His voice, believed the record concerning Him, sat under His shadow, found fellowship with Him? Then hold Him, and do not let Him go.

1. Motives.

(1). *Because peace is to be found in Him.* — Justified by faith, we have peace with God — not peace with ourselves, not peace

with the world, with sin, with Satan, but peace with God. True divine peace is to be found only in believing, only in keeping fast hold of Christ. If you let Him go, you let go your righteousness; for this is His name. You are then without righteousness, without a covering from the wrath of God, without a way to the Father. The law will again condemn you; God's frown will again overshadow you; you will again have terrors of conscience. Hold Him then, and do not let Him go. Whatever you let go, let not Christ go; for He is our peace, not in knowledge, not in feeling, but trust in Him alone.

(2). *Holiness flows from Him.* — No true holiness in this world, but it springs from Him. A living Christ is the spring of holiness to all His members. As long as we hold Him, and do not let Him go, our holiness is secure. He is engaged to keep us from falling. He loves us too well to let us fall under the reigning power of sin. His word is engaged: "I will put my Spirit within you." His honour would be tarnished if any that cleave to Him were suffered to live in sin. If you let Him go, you will fall into sin. You have no strength, no store of grace, no power to resist a thousand enemies, no promises. If Christ be for you, who can be against you? But if you let go His arms, where are you?

(3). *Hope of glory is in Him.* — We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. If you have found Jesus this day, you have found a way into glory. A few steps more, you can say, and I shall be forever with the Lord. I shall be free from pain and sorrow, free from sin and weakness, free from enemies. As long as you hold Christ, you can see your way to the judgment seat. "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and receive me to thy glory." This gives you such joy, such transporting desires after the heavenly world! But let Christ go, and this will be gone. Let Christ go, and how can you die? The grave is covered with clouds of threatening. Let Him go, and how can you go to the judgment — where can you appear?

2. Means.

(1). *Christ promises to keep you holding Him.* — If you are really holding Christ this day, you are in a most blessed condition, for Christ engages to keep you cleaving to Him. "My soul followeth hard after thee, and thy right hand upholdeth me." He

that is the Creator of the world is the upholder of it, so He that new creates the soul keeps it in being. This is never to be forgotten. Not only does the Church lean on her beloved, but He puts His left hand under her head, and His right hand doth embrace her. "I taught Ephraim, how to go, taking them by their arms." It is good for a child to hold fast by its mother's neck; but ah! that would be a feeble support, if the maternal arm did not enfold the child, and clasp it to her bosom. Faith is good; but ah! it is nothing without the grace that gave it. "I will put my fear in your heart."

(2). *Faith in Christ.* — The only way to hold fast is to believe more and more. Get a larger acquaintance with Christ, with His person, work, and character. Every page of the gospel unfolds a new feature in His character, every line of the epistles discloses new depths of His work. Get more faith, and you will get a firmer hold. A plant that has a single root may be easily torn up by the hand, or crushed by the foot of the wild beast, or blown down by the wind; but a plant that has a thousand roots struck down into the ground can stand. Faith is like the root. Many believe a little concerning Christ, one fact. Every new truth concerning Jesus is a new root struck downward. Believe more intensely. A root may be in a right direction, but, not striking deep, it is easily torn up. Pray for deep-rooted faith. Pray to be established, strengthened, settled. Take a long intense look at Jesus — often. If you wanted to know a man again, and he was going away, you would take an intense look at his face. Look then at Jesus, deeply, intensely, till every feature is graven on your heart. Thomas Scott overcame the fear of death by looking intensely at his dead child, who had died in the Lord.

(3). *Prayer.* — Jacob at Bethel. "Take hold of my strength," (Isa. 27:5). You must begin and pray after another fashion than you have done. Let it be real intercourse with God, like Hezekiah, Jacob and Moses.

(4). *By not offending Him.* — *First*, by sloth. When the soul turns sleepy or careless, Christ goes away. Nothing is more offensive to Christ than sloth. Love is an ever-active thing, and

when it is in the heart it will keep us waking. Many a night His love to us kept Him waking. Now, can you not watch with Him one hour? *Second*, By idols. You cannot hold two objects. If you are holding Christ today, and lay hold of another object tomorrow, He cannot stay. He is a jealous God. You cannot keep worldly companions and Christ too. “A companion of fools shall be destroyed.” When the ark came into the house of Dagon, it made the idol fall flat. *Third*, By being unwilling to be sanctified. When Christ chooses us and draws us to Himself, it is that He may sanctify us. Christ is often grieved by our desiring to reserve one sin. *Fourth*, By an unholy house. “I brought him into my mother’s house.” Remember to take Christ home with you, and let Him rule in your house. If you walk with Christ abroad, but never take Him home, you will soon part company forever.

The Church a Garden and Fountain

“A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed” Song of Solomon 4:12.

Doctrine. The believer is Christ’s garden.

1. *The name here given to believers.* — ”My sister, my spouse,” or rather, “my sister-spouse.” There are many sweet names from the lips of Christ addressed to believers: “O thou fairest among women,” 1:8; “My love,” 2:2; “My love, my fair one,” 2:10; “O my dove,” 2:14; “My sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled,” 5:2; “O prince’s daughter,” 7:1. But here is one more tender than all, “*My sister, my spouse,*” 4:9; and again, verse 10, and here, verse 12. To be spoken well of by the world is little to be desired; but to hear Christ speak such words to us, is enough to fill our hearts with heavenly joy. The meaning you will see by what Paul says, 1 Cor. 11:5: “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles?” He means power to marry one who is like-minded — a sister in the Lord; one who will be both a wife and a sister in Christ Jesus — a *wife* by covenant, a *sister* by being born of the same Father in heaven. So Christ here says of believers, “My sister, my spouse,” that they are not only united to

Him by choice and covenant, but are likeminded also.

2. *These two things are inseparable.* — Some would like to be *the spouse* of the Saviour, without being the sister. Some would like to be saved by Christ, but not to be made like Christ. When Christ chooses a sinner, and sets his love on the soul, and when He woos the soul and draws it into covenant with himself, it is only that He may make the soul a sister, — that He may impart his features, his same heart, his all, to the soul. Now, many rest in the mere forgiveness of sins. Many have felt Christ wooing their soul, and offering himself freely to them, and they have accepted Him. They have consented to the match. Sinful and worthless and hell-deserving, they find that Christ desires it; that He will not be dishonoured by it; that He will find glory in it; and their heart is filled with joy in being taken into covenant with so glorious a bridegroom. But why has He done it? To make you partaker of his holiness, to change your nature, to make you sister to himself, — of his own mind and spirit. He has sprinkled you with clean water, only that He may give you a new heart also. He brings you to himself and gives you rest only that He may make you learn of Him his meekness and lowliness in heart.

(1). *Inseparable.* — You cannot be the spouse of Christ without becoming sister also. Christ offers to be the bridegroom of sin-covered souls. He came from heaven for this; took flesh and blood for this. He tries to woo sinners, standing and stretching out his hands. He tells them of all his power, and glory, and riches, and that all shall be theirs. He is a blood-sprinkled bridegroom; but that is his chief loveliness. The soul believes his word, melts under his love, consents to be his. “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” Then He washes the soul in his own blood; clothes it in his own righteousness; takes it in with Him to the presence of his Father. From that day the soul begins to reflect his image. Christ begins to live in the soul. The same heart, the same spirit, are in both. The soul becomes sister as well as spouse, — Christ’s not only by choice and covenant, but by likeness also. Some of you Christ has chosen; you have become his justified ones. Do you rest there? No; remember you must be made like Him, — reflect his image;

you cannot separate the two.

(2). *The order of the two.* — You must be first the spouse before you can be the sister of Christ, — his by covenant before his by likeness. Some think to be like Christ first, — that they will copy his features till they recommend themselves to Christ. No, this will not do. He chooses only those that have no comeliness — polluted in their own blood, that He may have the honour of washing them. “When thou wast in thy blood,” Ezek. 16:6. Are there any trying to recommend themselves to Christ by their change of life? Oh, how little you know Him! He comes to seek those who are black in themselves. Are there some of you poor, defiled, unclean? You are just the soul Christ woos. Proud, scornful? Christ woos you. He offers you his all, and then He will change you.

3. To what Christ compares believers: “A garden enclosed.”

— The gardens in the East are always enclosed; sometimes by a fence of reeds, such are the gardens of cucumbers in the wilderness; sometimes by a stone wall, as the garden of Gethsemane; sometimes by a hedge of prickly pear. But what is still more interesting is, they are often enclosed out of a wilderness. All around is often barren sand; and this one enclosed spot is like the garden of the Lord. Such is the believer.

(1). *Enclosed by election.* — In the eye of God, the world was one great wilderness, — all barren, all dead, all fruitless. No part was fit to bear anything but briars. It was nigh unto cursing. One part was no better than another in his sight. The hearts of men were all hard as rock, dry and barren as the sand. Out of the mere good pleasure of his will, He marked out a garden of delights where He might show his power and grace, that it might be to his praise. Some of you know your election of God by the fruits of it, — by your faith, love, and holiness. Be humbled by the thought that it was solely because He chose you. Why me, Lord? why me?

(2). *Enclosed by the Spirit’s work.* — Election is the planning of the garden. The Spirit’s work is the carrying it into effect. “He fenced it,” Isa. 5:2. When the Spirit begins his work, it is separating work. When a man is convinced of sin, he is no more

one with the careless, godless world. He avoids his companions — goes alone. When a soul comes to Christ, it is still more separated. It then comes into a new world. He is no more under the curse — no more under wrath. He is in the smile and favour of God. Like Gideon's fleece, he now receives the dew when all around is dry.

(3). *Enclosed by the arms of God.* — God is a wall of fire. Angels are around the soul. Elisha's hill was full of horses of fire. God is round about the soul, as the mountains stand round about Jerusalem. The soul is hid in the secret of God's presence. No robber can ever come over the fence. "A vineyard of red wine: I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" Isa. 27:2, 3. This is sung over thee.

4. *Well-watered garden.* — Watered in three ways. (1). By a hidden well. It is the custom in the East to roll a stone over the mouth of a well, to preserve the water from sand. (2). By a fountain of living water — a well always bubbling up. (3). By streams from Lebanon.

(1). "*A spring shut up.*" — This describes the Spirit in the heart, in his most secret manner of working. In some gardens there is only this secret well. A stone is over the mouth. If you wish to water the garden, you must roll away the stone, and let down the bucket. Such is the life of God in many souls. Some of you feel that there is a stone over the mouth of the well in you. Your own rocky heart is the stone. Stir up the gift of God which is in thee.

(2). *A well of living water.* — This is the same as John 4, — a well that is ever full and running over. Grace new every moment; fresh upspringings from God. Thus only will you advance.

(3). *Streams from Lebanon.* — These are very plentiful. On all sides they fall in pleasant cascades, in the bottom unite into broad full streams, and on their way water the richest gardens. The garden of Ibrahim Pacha, near Acre, is watered with streams from Lebanon. So believers are sometimes favoured with streams from the Lebanon that is above. We receive out of Christ's fullness, — drink of the wine of his pleasures. Oh for more of these streams of Lebanon! Even in the dry season they are full. The hotter the summer, the streams from Lebanon become the fuller, because the

heat only melts the mountain snows.

5. *The fruit.* — The very use of a garden is to bear fruit and flowers. For this purpose it is enclosed, hedged, planted, watered. If it bear no fruit nor flowers, all the labour is lost labour. The ground is nigh to cursing. So is it with the Christian. Three remarkable things are here.

(1). *No weeds are mentioned.* — Pleasant fruit-trees, and all the chief spices; but no weeds. Had it been a man that was describing his garden, he would have begun with the weeds — the unbelief, corruption, evil tempers, etc. Not so Christ. He covers all the sins. The weeds are lost sight of. He sees no perversity. As in John 17: “They have kept thy word; they are not of the world.” As in Rev. 2:2: “I know thy works.”

(2). *Fruits.* — The pomegranate — the very best; all pleasant fruits. And all his own. “From me is thy fruit found;” “His pleasant fruits,” verse 16. The graces that Christ puts into the heart and brings out of the life are the very best, the richest, most pleasant, most excellent that a creature can produce. Love to Christ, love to the brethren, love to the Sabbath, forgiveness of enemies, all the best fruits that can grow in the human heart. Unreasonable world! to condemn true conversion, when it produces the very fruits of paradise, acceptable to God, if not to you. Should not this make you stand and consider?

(3). *Spices.* — These spices do not naturally grow in gardens. Even in the East there never was such a display as this. So the fragrant graces of the Spirit are not natural to the heart. They are brought from a far country. They must be carefully watched. They need the stream, and the gentle zephyr. Oh, I fear most of you should hang your heads when Christ begins to speak of fragrant spices in your heart! Where are they? Are there not talkative, forward Christians? Are there not self-seeking, praise-seeking, man-pleasing Christians? Are there not proud-praying Christians? Are there not ill-tempered Christians? Are there not rash, inconsiderate ones? Are there not idle, lazy, bad-working Christians? Lord, where are the spices? Verily, Christ is a bundle of myrrh. Oh to be like Him! Oh that every flower and fruit would

grow! They must come from above. Many there are of whom one is forced to say, "Well, they may be Christians; but I would not like to be next to them in heaven!" Cry for the wind: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

I Sleep, but my Heart Waketh

"I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night," &c. Song of Solomon 5:2-16.

The passage I have read forms one of the dramatical songs of which this wonderful book is composed. The subject of it is a conversation between a forsaken and desolate wife and the daughters of Jerusalem. First of all, she relates to them how, through slothfulness, she had turned away her lord from the door. He had been absent on a journey from home, and did not return till night. Instead of anxiously sitting up for her husband, she had barred the door, and slothfully retired to rest: "I slept, but my heart was waking." In this half-sleeping, half-waking frame, she heard the voice of her beloved husband: "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." But sloth prevailed with her, and she would not open, but answered him with foolish excuses: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"

2. She next tells them her grief and anxiety to find her lord. He tried the bolt of the door, but it was fastened. This wakened her thoroughly. She ran to the door and opened, but her beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. She listened — she sought about the door — she called — but he gave no answer. She followed him through the streets; but the watchmen found her, and smote her, and took away her veil; and now with the morning light she appears to the daughters of Jerusalem, and anxiously beseeches them to help her: "I charge you, if ye find him whom my soul loveth, that ye tell him that I am sick of love."

3. The daughters of Jerusalem, astonished at her extreme anxiety, ask: “What is thy beloved more than another beloved?” This gives opportunity to the desolate bride to enlarge on the perfection of her lord, which she does in a strain of the richest descriptiveness — the heart filling fuller and fuller as she proceeds, till she says: “This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!” they seem to be entranced by the description, and are now as anxious as herself to join in the search after this altogether lovely one. “Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee?”

Such is the simple narrative before us. But you will see at once that there is a deeper meaning beneath — that the narrative is only a beautiful transparent veil, through which every intelligent child of God may trace some of the most common experiences in the life of the believer. (1) The desolate bride is the believing soul. (2) The daughters of Jerusalem are fellow-believers. (3) The watchmen are ministers. (4) And the altogether lovely one is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

1. *Believers often miss opportunities of communion with Christ through slothfulness.*

(1). *Observe, Christ is seeking believers.* It is true that Christ is seeking unconverted souls. He stretches out his hands all the day to a gainsaying and disobedient people — he is the Shepherd that seeks the lost sheep; but it is as true that he is seeking his own people also — that he may make his abode with them — that their joy may be full. Christ is not done with a soul when he has brought it to the forgiveness of sins. It is only then that he begins his regular visits to the soul. In the daily reading of the Word, Christ pays daily visits to sanctify the believing soul. In daily prayer, Christ reveals himself to his own in another way than he doth to the world. In the house of God Christ comes to his own, and says: “Peace be unto you!” And in the sacrament he makes himself known to them in the breaking of bread, and they cry out: “It is the Lord!” These are all trysting times, when the Saviour comes to visit his own.

(2). *Observe, Christ also knocks at the door of believers.* Even believers have got doors upon their hearts. You would think, perhaps, that when once Christ had found an entrance into a poor sinner's heart, he never would find difficulty in getting in any more. You would think that as Samson carried off the gates of Gaza, bar and all, so Christ would carry away all the gates and bars from believing hearts; but no, there is still a door on the heart, and Christ stands and knocks. He would fain be in. It is not his pleasure that we should sit lonely and desolate. He would fain come into us, and sup with us, and we with him.

(3). *Observe, Christ speaks.* "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." O what a meeting of tender words is here! — all applied to a poor sinner who has believed in Christ. (a) "*My sister;*" for you remember how Jesus stretched his hand toward his disciples, and said: "Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother." (b) "*My love;*" for you know how he loved sinners — left heaven out of love — lived, died, rose again, out of love, for poor sinners; and when one believes on him he calls him "My love." (c) "*My dove;*" for you know that when a sinner believes in Jesus, the holy dove — like Spirit is given him; so Jesus calls that soul "My dove." (d) "*My undefiled*" — strangest name of all to give to a poor defiled sinner. But you remember how Jesus was holy, harmless, and undefiled. He was that in our stead — when a poor sinner believes in him, he is looked on as undefiled. Christ says: "My undefiled." Such are the winning words with which Christ desires to gain an entrance into the believer's heart. Oh, how strange that any heart could stand out against all this love!

(4). *Observe, Christ waits:* "My head is filled with dew, and locks with the drops of the night." Christ's patience with unconverted souls is very wonderful. Day after day he pleads with them. — "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Never did beggar stand longer at a rich man's gate, than Jesus, the almighty Saviour, stands at the gate of sinful worms. But his patience with his own is still more wonderful. They know his preciousness, and yet will not

let him in. Their sin is all the greater, and yet he waits to be gracious.

(5). *Believers are often slothful at these trysting times, and put the Saviour away with vain excuses.* (a). The hour of daily devotion is a trysting hour with Christ, in which he seeks, and knocks, and speaks, and waits; and yet, dear believers, how often are you slothful, and make vain excuses! You have something else to attend to, or you are set upon some worldly comfort, and you do not let the Saviour in. (b). The Lord's table is the most famous trysting-place with Christ. It is then that believers hear him knocking — saying: "Open to me." How often is this opportunity lost through slothfulness — through want of stirring up the gift that is in us — through want of attention — through thoughts about worldly things — through unwillingness to take trouble about it!

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

Doubtless, there are some children of God here, who did not find Christ last Sabbath-day at his table — who went away unrefreshed and uncomforted. See here the cause — it was your own slothfulness. Christ was knocking; but you would not let him in. Do not go about to blame God for it. Search your own heart, and you will find the true cause. Perhaps you came without deliberation — without self-examination and prayer — without duly stirring up faith. Perhaps you were thinking about your worldly gains and losses, and you missed the Saviour. Remember, then, the fault is yours, not Christ's. He was knocking — you would not let him in.

2. Believers in darkness cannot rest without Christ.

In the parable we find that, when the bride found her husband was gone, she did not return to her rest. Oh, no! her soul failed for his word. She listens — she seeks — she calls. She receives no answer. She ask the watchmen, but they wound her, and take away, her veil; still she is not broken off from seeking. She sets the daughters of Jerusalem to seek along with her.

So is it with the believer. When the slothful believer is really awakened to feel that Christ has withdrawn himself, and is gone, he is slothful no longer. Believers remain at ease only so long as they flatter themselves that all is well; but if they are made sensible, by a fall into sin, or by a fresh discovery of the wickedness of their heart, that Christ is away from them, they cannot rest. The world can rest quite well, even while they know that they are not in Christ. Satan lulls them into fatal repose. Not so the believer — he cannot rest. (1). He does all he can do himself. He listens — he seeks — he calls. The Bible is searched with fresh anxiety. The soul seeks and calls by prayer; yet often all in vain. He gets no answer — no sense of Christ's presence. (2). He comes to ministers — God's watchmen on the walls of Zion. They deal plainly and faithfully with the backslidden soul — take away the veil and show him his sin. The soul is thus smitten and wounded, and without a covering; and yet it does not give over its search for Christ. A mere natural heart would fall away under this — not so the believer in darkness. (3). He applies to Christian friends and companions — bids them help him, and pray for him: "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find him whom my soul loveth, tell him that I am sick of love."

Is there any of you, then, a believer in darkness, thus anxiously seeking Christ? You thought that you had really been a believer in Jesus; but you have fallen into sin and darkness, and all your evidences are overclouded. You are now anxiously seeking Christ. Your soul fails for his Word. You seek, you call, even though you get no answer. You do search the Bible, even though it is without comfort to you. You do pray, though you have no comfort in prayer — no confidence that you are heard. You ask counsel of his ministers; and when they deal plainly with you, you are not offended. They wound you, and take away the veil from you. They tell you not to rely on any past experiences — that they may have been delusive — they only increase your anxiety; still you follow hard after Christ. You seek the daughter of Jerusalem — them that are the people of Christ — and you tell them to pray for you.

Is this your case? As face answers to face, so do you see your

own image here? Do you feel that you cannot rest out of Christ? then do not be too much cast down. This is no mark that you are not a believer, but the very reverse. Say:

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
Why art thou disquieted in me?
Still trust in God; for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

Is there any of you awakened, since last Sabbath-day, by some fall into sin, to feel that Christ is away from you?

Doubtless, there must be some who, within this little week, have found out that, though they ate bread with Christ, they have lifted up the heel against him. And are you sitting down contented — without anxiety? Have you fallen, and do you not get up and run, that, if possible, you may find Christ again? Ah, then! I stand in doubt of you; or rather, there is no need of doubt — you have never known the Saviour — you are none of his.

3. *Believers in darkness are sick of love, and full of the commendation of Christ — than ever.*

In the parable, the bride told the daughters of Jerusalem that she was sick of love. This was the message she bade them carry; and when they asked her about her beloved, she gave them a rich and glowing description of his perfect beauty, ending by saying: “He is altogether lovely.”

So it is with the believer in time of darkness: “He is sick of love.” When Christ is present to the soul, there is no feeling of sickness. Christ is the health of the countenance. When I have him full in my faith as a complete surety, a calm tranquillity is spread over the whole inner man — the pulse of the soul has a calm and easy flow — the heart rests in a present Saviour with a healthy, placid affection. The soul is contented — with him — at rest in him: “Return unto thy rest, O my soul.” There is no feeling of sickness. It is health to the bones; it is the very health of the soul to look upon him, and to love him. But when the object of affection is away, the heart turns sick. When the heart searches here and there, and cannot find the beloved object, it turns faint

with longing: “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.” When the ring-dove has lost its mate, it sits lone and cheerless, and will not be comforted. When the bird that hath been robbed of its young, comes back again and again, and hovers with reluctant wing over the spot where her nest was built, she fills the grove with her plaintive melodies — she is “sick of love.” These are the yearnings of nature. Such also are the yearnings of grace. When Jesus is away from the believing soul it will not be comforted. When the soul reads and prays, and seeks, yet Jesus is not found, the heart yearns and sickens — he is “sick of love.” Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.”

Did you ever feel this sickness? Did you ever feel that Christ was precious, but not present — that you could not lay hold on Christ as you used to do, and yet your soul yearned after him, and would not be comforted without him? If you have — (1). Remember it is a happy sickness — it is a sickness not of nature at all, but of grace. All the struggles of nature would never make you “sick of love.” Never may you be cured of it, except it be in the revealing of Jesus!

(2). Remember it is not best to be “sick of love” — it is better to be in health — to have Christ revealed to the soul, and to love him with a free, healthy love. In heaven, the inhabitants never say they are sick. Do not rest in this sickness; press near to Jesus to be healed.

(3). Most, I fear, never felt this sickness — know nothing of what it means. Oh! dear souls, remember this one thing: If you never felt the sickness of grace, it is too likely you never felt the life of grace. If you were told of a man, that he never felt any pain or uneasiness of any kind all his days, you would conclude that he must have been dead — that he never had any life; so you, if you know nothing of the sick yearnings of the believer’s heart, it is too plain that you are dead — that you never had any life.

Last of all, the believer in darkness commends the Saviour. There is no more distinguishing mark of a true believer than this. To the unawakened there is no form nor comeliness in Christ — no beauty that they should desire him. Even awakened souls have no

true sense of Christ's perfect comeliness. If they saw how Christ answers their need, they could not be anxious. But to believers in darkness there is all comeliness in Christ — he is fairer than ever he was before. And when the sneering world, or cold-hearted brethren, ask: "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" he delights to enumerate his perfections, his person, his offices, his everything: he delights to tell that "he is the chiefest among ten thousand his mouth is most sweet" — yea, "he is altogether lovely."

A word to believers in darkness. There may be some who are walking in darkness, not having any light. Be persuaded to do as the bride did — not only to seek your beloved, but to commend him, by going over his perfections.

1. Because this is the best of all ways to find him. One of the chief reasons of your darkness is your want of considering Christ. Satan urges you to think of a hundred things before he will let you think about Christ. If the eye of your faith be fully turned upon a full Christ, your darkness will be gone in the instant. "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Now, nothing so much engages your eye to look at Christ as going over his perfections to others.

2. Because you will lead others to seek him with you. Oh! dear brethren, the great reason of our having so many dark Christians now-a-days is, that we have so many selfish Christians. Men live for themselves. If you would live for others, then your darkness would soon flee away. Commend Christ to others, and they will go with you. Parents, commend him to your children; children, commend him to your parents, and who knows but God may bless the word, even of a believer walking in darkness, that they shall cry out: Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women?

Whither is thy beloved turned aside,
that we may seek him with thee?

The Church Coming Up From the Wilderness

"(Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?) I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there

thy mother brought thee forth, there she brought thee forth that bare thee. 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. 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” Song of Solomon 8:5–7.

We are introduced to the great Redeemer and a believing soul, and are made to overhear their converse.

1. *The posture of the church*

(1). *From the wilderness.* — To a child of God this world is a wilderness. *First, Because everything is fading here.* Here is nothing abiding; money takes wings and flees away; friends die. All are like grass; and if some are more beautiful or more engaging than others, still they are only like the flower of the grass, — a little more ornamented, but withering often sooner. Sometimes a worldly comfort is like Jonah’s gourd, — it came up over his head to be a shadow to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm, when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. So our worldly comfort sometimes grows up over our head like a shadow, and we are exceeding glad of our gourd; but God prepares a worm, we faint, and are ready to die. Here we have no continuing city; but we seek one to come. This is a wilderness: “Arise, depart, this is not thy rest, for it is polluted.” An experienced Christian looks upon everything here as not abiding; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal. *Second, Because everything is stained with sin here.* Even the natural scenery of this world is stained with sin. The thorns and thistles tell of a cursed earth. Above all, when you look at the floods of ungodly men. — “We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” The world does not know a Christian, and does not love him. Though you love them, and would lay down your body that they might pass over to glory, yet they will not hear. Above all, the sin in our own heart makes us

bend down under our burden, and feel this to be a valley of weeping. Ah! wretched man, if we had no body of sin, what a sweet glory would appear in everything; we would sing like the birds in spring.

(2). *Coming out of it.* — Unconverted souls are going down into the wilderness to perish there. All Christians are coming up out of it. Sabbath-days are like milestones, marking our way; or rather they are like the wells we used to come to at evening. Every real Christian is making progress. If the sheep is on the shoulder of the shepherd, it is always getting nearer the fold. With some the shepherd takes long steps. Dear Christians, you should be advancing, getting higher, nearer to Canaan, riper for glory. In the south of Russia, the country is of vast plains, rising by steppes. Dear friends, you should get on to a higher place; up another step every Sabbath-day. In travelling, you never think of making a house in the wilderness. So, dear friends, do not take up your rest here, we are journeying. Let all your endeavours be to get on in your journey.

(3). *Leaning upon her beloved.* — It is very observable that there is none here but the bride and her beloved in a vast wilderness. She is not leaning upon him with one arm, and upon somebody else with the other; but she is leaning upon him alone. So is it with the soul taught of God; it feels alone with Christ in this world; it leans as entirely upon Christ as if there were no other being in the universe. She leans all her weight upon her husband. When a person has been saved from drowning, they lean all their weight upon their deliverer. When the lost sheep was found, he took it upon his shoulder. You must be content then to lean all your weight upon Christ. *Cast the burden of temporal things upon Him. Cast the care of your soul upon Him.* If God be for us, who can be against us? They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. The eagle soars so directly upward, that poets have fancied it was aiming at the sun. So does the soul that waits on Christ.

2. Christ's word to the leaning soul

(1). *"I raised thee up," etc.* — He reminds the believer of his natural state. Every soul now in Christ was once like an exposed

infant (Ezek. 16), cast out into the open field. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity." Do not forget what you were. If ever you come to forget what you were, then you may be sure you are not right with God. Observe when the contrition comes. When you are leaning on Christ, then He tells you of your sin and misery, Ezek. 36:31.

(2). He reminds you of his love: "I raised thee up." *He himself* is the apple-tree, open on all sides round, affording shadow and fruit. *I raised thee*. Christ not only shelters, but draws into the shelter. "To Him be glory." Are there not some who feel like an infant — cast out? Turn your eye to Christ, He only can raise up your soul under the apple-tree.

3. The leaning soul cries for continued grace

Set me as a seal. — It is a sure mark of grace to desire more. The High Priest had a beautiful breastplate over his breast, adorned with jewels, — make me one of these. He had also a jewel on each shoulder, — make me one of these. These were bound with chains of gold, but the believer with chains of love. This is a true mark of grace. If you be contented to remain where you are, without any more nearness to God, or any more holiness, this is a clear mark you have got none. Hide me deeper, bind me closer, and carry me more completely.

(1). *The love of Christ is strong as death.* — Death is awfully strong. When he comes upon a stout young man, he brings him down. So is the love of Christ.

(2). *Cruel, or stubborn, as the grave.* — The grave will not give up its dead, nor will Christ give up his own. Oh! pray that this love may embrace you. Vehement as hell, — unquenchable fire. You have your choice, dear friends, of two eternal fires. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ," etc.? Rom. 8. Floods cannot drown it, — afflictions cannot.

(3). *It cannot be bought.* — "If a man would give all the substance," etc. You must accept it free or not at all.

The Soul of the Believer a Garden

"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken

to thy voice: cause me to hear it. Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices” Song of Solomon 8:13, 14.

1. *The description of the Church, or of the believing soul:* “Thou that dwellest in the gardens.” This is true of the believer in two ways.

1. *He is enclosed and separated from the world:* “A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse.” — Song of Solomon 4:12. All believers dwell within an enclosure. Just as the gardens in the East are enclosed with a fence of reeds, or of prickly pear, or by a stone wall, so all that are Christ’s are enclosed out of the world. Jesus says: “If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Paul says, he was “separated unto the Gospel of God.” And again, John says: “The world knoweth us not, even as it knew him not.” Great mistakes are made here. There are many hedges that are none of Christ’s planting. Many are separated, but not unto the Gospel of God. (1). Some are separated by education. They are brought up far away from the noise and bustle of the world. They see little of its vices, and hear little of its profanity. They are never allowed to come within its magic ring. They are a kind of separated people. But, ah! they have a world in their own heart. (2). Some, again, are separated from the world by worldly griefs and distresses, or by sickness of body. Their proud spirit is broken. Their heart used madly to follow the world; but now it sickens and dies within them; desire fails. They have no more heart for their idols. These are a kind of separated people. But, ah! they dwell not in the gardens; that is the separation of nature, not of grace. (3). Some have a haughty separation from the world, like those that said: “Stand back, for I am holier than thou: like the Pharisees, who would not speak to a publican. These are known by their little compassion for the world. Ah! these do not dwell in Christ’s garden. (4.) There is a nominal separation from the world. These people have a name to live, and are dead. They belong, it may be,

to a peculiar congregation, and to a peculiar prayer-meeting; they have a Christian name and a Christian appearance; they often speak as Christians, and are spoken of as Christians; the world are afraid of them, and treat them as if they were believers; but all the time beneath that mantle there beats an unchanged, unbelieving, ungodly heart. Ah! brethren, this is a separation of Satan's making.

But all that are truly Christ's are dwellers in the gardens. They are separated from the world by an infinite, impassable chasm.

First, By blood. Just as the houses of Israel were separated from the houses of the Egyptians by having the doors sprinkled with blood; so there are a set of men in this world, the doors of whose hearts have been sprinkled with blood. The blood of Christ upon their conscience marks them out as pardoned men. They had the same nature as other men; the same enmity to God, and desperate departure from him; they had the same love of idols as Other men; they spent their youth in the same sins as other men; many of them went into the lowest depths of sin; but the Lord Jesus loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood. "Justified by faith they have peace with God." These are they who dwell in the gardens. Ah! brethren, have you been separated by blood? — have you got the red blood of Jesus, making your soul different from the rest of men?

Second, By his Spirit. All that are truly Christ's are separated from the world by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature." He has got new desires given him. Once he desired what other men do — praise of men, a name, power, money, pleasure. These were the chief objects set before him. Now these have lost their power over him. The world is become crucified. Now he desires more nearness to God — more complete change of heart; he desires to spread the knowledge of Jesus over the world. He is separated unto the Gospel of God. He has got new sorrows. Once all his sorrows were worldly sorrows — he wept at the loss of friends or this world's possessions; but now these sorrows are light afflictions. His heaviest grief now is, when he is deserted of God — when he

wants the presence of Christ and the smile of God; or perhaps the absence of the Spirit and the burning of corruption within, or sin abounding around him, makes him sigh and cry; or the ark of God makes his heart tremble. That man is separated — he dwells in the gardens;

Dear souls, have you been thus separated from the world? “We are bound always to thank God for you, beloved: because he hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Ah! brethren, does the blood of Christ separate you from the unpardoned world? Does the Spirit of Christ separate you from the unregenerate world? Is there a real, eternal separation made between you and the world? If not, you will perish with the world.

2. *Dwelling in the gardens seems also to mean dwelling in delight.* When God made man at the first, he planted a garden eastward in Eden; and out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food — the tree of life also in the midst of the garden. And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress and to keep it. That garden was a sweet type of the delight of Adam’s soul; and there, day by day, he heard the voice of God walking in the garden, in the cool of the day. When Adam fell, God drove him out of the garden into this bleak world, covered with thorns and thistles, to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Man no more walked with God in a garden of delights. But when a sinner is brought to Christ, he is brought into Christ’s garden: “We who believe, do enter into rest.” He says: “I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” He becomes one that dwells in the gardens. True, he is one coming up from the wilderness. This world is a wilderness to the believer — full of pain, sickness, sighing, death — a world that crucified his Lord, and persecutes him — a cold, unbelieving, ungodly world. Still, the soul dwells in the gardens: “His soul shall dwell at ease.” True, a believer has his times of desertion, and clouds, and doubts, and deep waters. At such times, his cry is:

“O wretched man!” Still, when his eye rests on Jesus, his soul dwells in a garden of delights.

Oh! brethren, have you been brought into Christ’s garden; have you found great delight in him; a better Eden — a right to the tree of life that is in the midst of the paradise of God? Many of you think it a dull thing to become a Christian. You look upon their outside, their quiet, humble walk, through the world. You think them dull, morose, severe. But, O man! you are only looking at the shell: could you see what is felt within — could you see the sunshine of heaven that rests upon that soul, could you taste for a moment the pleasure of being at peace with God, you would feel that all your pleasures are but the husks which the swine are eating.

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
And the man that getteth understanding.
She is more precious than rubies;

And all the things thou canst desire
are not to be compared unto her.
Length of days is in her right hand;
In her left hand riches and honour.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.

She’s a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her:
And happy is every one that retaineth her.”

Ah! brethren, go and learn the hymn that begins -

“Shall men pretend to pleasure
That never knew the Lord?
Can all the worldling’s treasure
True peace of mind afford?”

1. *The complaint of Christ:* “The companions hear thy voice.”

(1). The soul in Christ has many sweet companions, brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. The soul that is united to the vine tree is united to all the branches: “We know that we are passed from

death unto life, because we love the brethren” — ”I am a companion of all them that fear thee.”

Believers have many things to say to each other; as John says to Gaius: “I had many things to write unto thee, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face.” So did believers in the days of Malachi: “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard.” And so do believers still. They may tell of their past experiences modestly, humbly, with self-loathing, and for the glory of Christ; as Jesus told the maniac: “Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee” (Luke 8:39); and *as* David speaks: “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.” — Ps. 66:10.

They speak to one another in their distresses, as it is written, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” Not comfort yourselves, but comfort one another, it is God’s ordinance that comfort should be ministered by believer to believer; that the gentle hand of love should bring the cup of consolation. They speak to one another of Jesus: “Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?” — ”Whither is thy Beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy Beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee?” They exhort one another daily, while it is called today.

Ah! this is a true mark of all true believers. “The companions hearken to thy voice.” How many of you may know that you are not in Christ by this, that you have never learned the pure language of Canaan. True, there are many have the outward phrase of Christians, and have much talk, who will turn out to be clouds without rain, foolish virgins, having a lamp, and wick, and flame — no drop of oil within; still, if you have not the speech of Canaan, if you have not a word for those that are journeying towards glory, I fear you belong not to that company.

(2). *Hear the complaint of Christ.* “Cause me to hear it.” Christ complains that we speak more to one another than to him. This is too often the case, especially with young believers. When the

bosom is filled with joy. the believer pours it out before his companions, rather than before the Lord. In sorrow, when clouds have covered the soul, Christ is forgotten, and some companion sought out to hear your complaints. In difficulty, how often the believer runs first to some companion on earth for counsel! Now the word of Christ is, "*Cause me to hear it*" — Run first to me.

(a). *Because Christ is a jealous Saviour*: "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God." When Christ took us to himself he said, "Thou shalt call me Ishi. and shalt call me no more Baalim; for I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth." Remember how he said, "Lovest thou me more than these?" And we said to him, — "What have I to do any more with idols?" Now, the Lord Jesus cannot bear that we should have a nearer friend than himself. He must be our next of kin. We must lean on the Beloved. "Cause me to hear it."

(b). *Because in him is the full supply of all our need*. True, the companions are lovely and pleasant in their lives; but where did they get all the grace that made them so? Was it not from Christ? Perhaps we love their gentleness and meekness; their holy wisdom, to advise us in difficult circumstances; but ah! where did they get all that? from Jesus. They are but cisterns; Christ is the fountain. They are but creatures; Christ is the Creator. We must leave them, and betake ourselves to him. "Cause me to hear it."

(c). *Communion with Christ is always sanctifying*. Communion with men, even with good men, often hardens and hurts the soul. Are you telling experiences? you are apt to be man-pleasing, to seek to appear something wonderful, very humble, or very believing; you are apt to seek the praise of men more than the praise of God. Are you seeking comfort? you are apt to lean on the creature, and to forget the only Comforter; but communion with Christ is always sanctifying. Oh! it is good for the soul to meet with Jesus. Oh! if you would go to Jesus and tell him all; if you would cause him to hear it, how much happier lives you would lead! Let there be the utmost frankness between your soul and Christ. Cover no sin before him; pour out every joy, unbosom every grief, seek counsel in every perplexity. See here, he bids you

come and tell him all: "Cause me to hear it."

2. *The believer's prayer.*

(1). *He prays for a swift return of Christ to his own soul.* It is the presence of Christ with the soul that gives true peace and true holiness. It is not circumstances, nor ministers, nor place, nor time, but Jesus present. To sit under his shadow, gives great delight. To lean upon the Beloved alone supports his faltering steps. A true believer cannot be satisfied while Christ is away; "Make haste, my beloved." One that is not a wife may be content with other lovers; but the faithful wife longs for the return of her Lord. The ordinances are all cold and barren till he return. Ministers speak, but not to the heart. The companions cannot give rest nor ease. Oh, brethren! do you know what it is to long for himself; to cry, "make haste, my Beloved?"

(2). *He prays for a swift return of Christ to the Church.* — It is the presence of Christ that makes a sweet time of refreshing in the Church. When he comes leaping on the mountains, skipping upon the hills, the flowers immediately appear on the earth. The Lord's people are quickened in all their graces; they begin to sing songs of deliverance; anxious souls spring up like the grass; and the whole garden of the Lord sends out spices. Ah! if the Lord Jesus were to come in here with power, I would preach and you would hear in another way than we do. I could not be so hardhearted, and you would be melted under his Word. Oh! will you not pray, "Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." Is not such a time desirable?

(3). *He prays for the second glorious coming of Christ.* It is the real visible coming and presence of Jesus, the king, in his beauty, that will perfect the joy of his believing people. (a). The love of the soul will then be satisfied. At present we are tossed with many doubts. Am I really converted? Am I in Christ? Will I persevere to the end? The soul has oftentimes a hungering after Christ, and cannot get its fill. But when we shall see him as he is, the shadows will all flee away. We shall never have another doubt for ever; we shall be ever with the Lord. (b). Jesus shall then be fully glorified. At present he is scorned and spit upon. His enemies have the

upper hand. Kings despise him, and most men lightly esteem him. But then he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. Ah! his saints shall then bless him. "Men shall be blessed in him. All nations shall call him blessed."

Ah! my friends, can you honestly say you long for that day, Is it a blessed hope to you? Those only who can say, "My Beloved," can desire his coming. "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light." Ah! brethren, when Jesus comes in the clouds of heaven, every eye shall see him; and most of you, I fear, will wail because of him. Ah, there he is! the Saviour we rejected, neglected all our life, despised; there he comes to take vengeance on us that know not God, and obey not the Gospel. Those of you that can say, "My Beloved" are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Your prayer is: "Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

“I am the rose of Sharon, and the



lily of the valleys” Song of Solomon 2:1.