

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter,

I. Christ speaks both concerning himself and concerning his church (v. 1, 2).

II. The church speaks

- 1.** Remembering the pleasure and satisfaction she has in communion with Christ (v. 3, 4).
- 2.** Entertaining herself with the present tokens of his favour and taking care that nothing happen to intercept them (v. 5-7).
- 3.** Triumphant in his approaches towards her (v. 8, 9).
- 4.** Repeating the gracious calls he had given her to go along with him a walking, invited by the pleasures of the returning spring (v. 10-13), out of her obscurity (v. 14), and the charge he had given to the servants to destroy that which would be hurtful to his vineyard (v. 15).
- 5.** Rejoicing in her interest in him (v. 16).
- 6.** Longing for his arrival (v. 17). Those whose hearts are filled with love to Christ, and hope of heaven, know best what these things mean.

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:1-2

CHRIST THE ROSE OF SHARON

See here,

I. What Christ is pleased to compare himself to; and he condescends very much in the comparison. He that is the Son of the Highest, the bright and morning star, calls and owns himself *the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys*, to express his presence with his people in this world, the easiness of their access to him, and the beauty and sweetness which they find in him, and to teach them to adorn themselves with him, as shepherds and shepherdesses, when they appeared gay, were decked with roses and lilies, garlands and chaplets of flowers. *The rose*, for beauty and fragrance, is the chief of flowers, and our Saviour prefers the clothing of *the lily* before that of *Solomon in all his glory*. Christ is *the rose of Sharon*, where probably

the best roses grew and in most plenty, *the rose of the field* (so some), denoting that the gospel salvation is a common salvation; it lies open to all; whoever will may come and gather the rose-buds of privileges and comforts that grow in the covenant of grace. He is not a rose locked up in a garden, but all may come and receive benefit by him and comfort in him. He is a *lily* for whiteness, a *lily of the valleys* for sweetness, for those which we call so yield a strong perfume. He is a *lily of the valleys*, or *low places*, in his humiliation, exposed to injury. Humble souls see most beauty in him. Whatever he is to others, to those that are in the *valleys* he is a *lily*. He is the *rose, the lily*; there is none besides. Whatever excellence is in Christ, it is in him singularly and in the highest degree.

II. What he is pleased to compare his church to, v. 2.

1. She is *as a lily*; he himself is *the lily* (v. 1), she is *as the lily*. The beauty of believers consists in their conformity and resemblance to Jesus Christ. They are his love, and so they are as lilies, for those are made like Christ in whose hearts *his love is shed abroad*.

2. *As a lily among thorns, as a lily compared with thorns*. The church of Christ as far excels all other societies as a bed of roses excels a bush of thorns. *As a lily compassed with thorns*. The wicked, the *daughters* of this world, such as have no love to Christ, are as *thorns*, worthless and useless, good for nothing but to stop a gap; nay, they are noxious and hurtful; they came in with sin and are a fruit of the curse; they choke good seed, and hinder good fruit, and their *end is to be burned*. God's people are *as lilies among* them, scratched and torn, shaded and obscured, by them; they are dear to Christ, and yet exposed to hardships and troubles in the world; they must expect it, for they are planted *among thorns* (²⁴¹⁶Ezekiel 2:6), but they are nevertheless dear to him; he does not overlook nor undervalue any of his lilies for their being *among thorns*, When they are *among thorns* they must still be *as lilies*, must maintain their innocency and purity, and, though they are *among thorns*, must not be turned into *thorns*, must *not render railing for railing*, and, if they thus preserve their character, they shall be still owned as conformable to Christ. Grace in the soul is a *lily among thorns*; corruptions are *thorns in the flesh* (⁴⁷¹⁷2 Corinthians 12:7), are as Canaanites to God's Israel (⁴²³³Joshua 23:13); but *the lily* that is now *among thorns* shall shortly be transplanted out of this wilderness into that paradise where there is no *pricking brier nor grieving thorn*, ²⁵³⁴Ezekiel 28:24.

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:3-7

THE LOVE OF THE CHURCH TO CHRIST

Here,

I. The spouse commends her beloved and prefers him before all others: As *the apple-tree among the trees of the wood*, which perhaps does not grow so high, nor spread so wide, as some other trees, yet is useful and serviceable to man, yielding pleasant and profitable fruit, while the other trees are of little use, no, not the cedars themselves, till they are cut down, *so is my beloved among the sons*, so far does he excel them all, — all *the sons* of God, the angels (that honour was put upon him which was never designed for them, ^{<3014>}Hebrews 1:4), — all *the sons* of men; he is *fairer* than them all, fairer than the choicest of them, ^{<4982>}Psalm 45:2. Name what creature you will, and you will find Christ has the pre-eminence above them all. The world is a barren tree to a soul; Christ is a fruitful one.

II. She remembers the abundant comfort she has had in communion with him: She *sat down* by him *with great delight*, as shepherds sometimes repose themselves, sometimes converse with one another, under a tree. A double advantage she found in sitting down so near the Lord Jesus: —

1. A refreshing shade: *I sat down under his shadow*, to be sheltered by him from the scorching heat of the sun, to be cooled, and so to take some rest. Christ is to believers *as the shadow* of a great tree, nay, *of a great rock in a weary land*, ^{<2332>}Isaiah 32:2; 25:4. When a poor soul is parched with convictions of sin and the terrors of the law, as David (^{<1324>}Psalm 32:4), when fatigued with the troubles of this world, as Elijah when he *sat down under a juniper tree* (^{<1194>}1 Kings 19:4), they find that in Christ, in his name, his graces, his comforts, and his undertaking for poor sinners, which revives them and keeps them from fainting; those that *are weary and heavily laden* may find *rest* in Christ. It is not enough to pass by this *shadow*, but we must *sit down under it* (*here will I dwell, for I have desired it*); and we shall find it not like Jonah's gourd, that soon withered, and left him in a heat, both inward and outward, but like the tree of life, the leaves whereof were not only for shelter, but for the healing of the nations. We must *sit down under this shadow with delight*, must put an entire confidence in the protection of it (as ^{<0095>}Judges 9:15), and take an

entire complacency in the refreshment of it. But that is not all:

2. Here is pleasing nourishing food. This tree drops its fruits to those that *sit down under its shadow*, and they are welcome to them, and will find them *sweet unto their taste*, whatever they are to others. Believers have tasted that the Lord Jesus is *gracious* (^{40B}1 Peter 2:3); his *fruits* are all the precious privileges of the new covenant, purchased by his blood and communicated by his Spirit. Promises are sweet to a believer, yea, and precepts too. *I delight in the law of God after the inward man*. Pardons are sweet, and peace of conscience is sweet, assurances of God's love, joys of the Holy Ghost, the hopes of eternal life, and the present earnestness and foretastes of it are sweet, all sweet to those that have their spiritual senses exercised. If our mouths be put out of taste for the pleasure of sin, divine consolations will be *sweet to our taste, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb*.

III. She owns herself obliged to Jesus Christ for all the benefit and comfort she had in communion with him (v. 4): "*I sat down under the apple-tree, glad to be there, but he admitted me, nay, he pressed me, to a more intimate communion with him: Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without? He brought me to the house of wine, the place where he entertains his special friends, from lower to higher measures and degrees of comfort, from the fruit of the apple tree to the more generous fruit of the vine.*" *To him that values the divine joys he has more shall be given.* One of the rabbins by *the banqueting-house* understands the *tabernacle of the congregation, where the interpretation of the law was given*; surely we may apply it to Christian assemblies, where the gospel is preached and gospel-ordinances are administered, particularly the Lord's supper, that *banquet of wine*, especially to the inside of those ordinances, communion with God in them. Observe,

1. How she was introduced: "*He brought me, wrought in me an inclination to draw nigh to God, helped me over my discouragements, took me by the hand, guided and led me, and gave me an access with boldness to God as a Father,*" ^{40B}Ephesians 2:18. We should never have come *into the banqueting-house*, never have been acquainted with spiritual pleasures, if Christ had not brought us, by opening for us a new and living way and opening in us a new and living fountain.

2. How she was entertained: *His banner over me was love; he brought me in with a banner displayed over my head, not as one he triumphed over,*

but as one he triumphed in, and whom he always caused to triumph with him and in him, ^{<404>}2 Corinthians 2:14. The gospel is compared to a banner or ensign (^{<2012>}Isaiah 11:12), and that which is represented in the banner, written in it in letters of gold, letters of blood, is *love, love*; and this is the entertainment in *the banqueting-house*. Christ is the *captain of our salvation*, and he enlists all his soldiers under the *banner of love*; in that they centre; to that they must continually have an eye, and be animated by it. *The love of Christ* must *constrain* them to fight manfully. When a city was taken the conqueror set up his standard in it. “He has conquered me with his love, overcome me with kindness, and that is the *banner over me*.” This she speaks of as what she had formerly had experience of, and she remembers it with delight. Eaten bread must not be forgotten, but remembered with thankfulness to that God who has fed us with manna in this wilderness.

IV. She professes her strong affection and most passionate love to Jesus Christ (v. 5): *I am sick of love*, overcome, overpowered, by it. David explains this when he says (^{<380>}Psalm 119:20), *My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto thy judgments*, and (v. 81), *My soul faints for thy salvation*, languishing with care to make it sure and fear of coming short of it. The spouse was now absent perhaps from her beloved, waiting for his return, and cannot bear the grief of distance and delay. Oh how much better it is with the soul when it is *sick of love* to Christ than when it is surfeited with the love of this world! She cries out for cordials: “Oh *stay me with flagons*, or *ointments*, or *flowers*, any thing that is reviving; *comfort me with apples*, with the fruits of that *apple-tree*, Christ (v. 3), with the merit and meditation of Christ and the sense of his love to my soul.” Note, Those that are *sick of love* to Christ shall not want spiritual supports, while they are yet waiting for spiritual comforts.

V. She experiences the power and tenderness of divine grace, relieving her in her present faintings, v. 6. Though he seemed to have withdrawn, yet he was even then a very present help,

1. To sustain the love-sick soul, and to keep it from fainting away: “*His left hand is under my head*, to bear it up, nay, as a pillow to lay it easy.” David experienced God's hand upholding him then when *his soul was following hard after God* (^{<358>}Psalm 63:8), and Job in a state of desertion yet found that God *put strength* into him, ^{<826>}Job 23:6. *All his saints are in his hand*, which tenderly holds their aching heads.

2. To encourage the love-sick soul to continue waiting till he returns: “For, in the mean time, *his right hand embraces me*, and thereby gives me an unquestionable assurance of his love.” Believers owe all their strength and comfort to the supporting left hand and embracing right hand of the Lord Jesus.

VI. Finding her beloved thus nigh unto her she is in great care that her communion with him be not interrupted (v. 7): *I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem*. Jerusalem, the mother of us all, charges all her daughters, the church charges all her members, the believing soul charges all its powers and faculties, the spouse charges herself and all about her, not to *stir up, or awake, her love until he please*, now that he is asleep in her arms, as she was borne up in his, v. 6. She gives them this charge *by the roes and the hinds of the field*, that is, by every thing that is amiable in their eyes, and dear to them, *as the loving hind and the pleasant roe*. “My love is to me dearer than those can be to you, and will be disturbed, like them, with a very little noise.” Note,

1. Those that experience the sweetness of communion with Christ, and the sensible manifestations of his love, cannot but desire the continuance of these blessed views, these blessed visits. Pester would make tabernacles upon the holy mount, ~~4108~~ Matthew 17:4.

2. Yet Christ will, when he pleases, withdraw those extraordinary communications of himself, for he is a free-agent, and the Spirit, as *the wind, blows where and when it listeth*, and in his pleasure it becomes us to acquiesce. But,

3. Our care must be that we do nothing to provoke him to withdraw and to hide his face, that we carefully watch over our own hearts and suppress every thought that may grieve his good Spirit. Let those that have comfort be afraid of sinning it away.

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:8-13

MUTUAL LOVE OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

The church is here pleasing herself exceedingly with the thoughts of her further communion with Christ after she has recovered from her fainting fit.

I. She rejoices in his approach, v. 8.

1. She hears him speak: "It is *the voice of my beloved*, calling me to tell me he is coming." Like one of his own sheep, she *knows his voice* before she sees him, and can easily distinguish it from the *voice of a stranger* (^{430B}John 10:4, 5), and, like a faithful friend of the bridegroom, she *rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice*, (^{402B}John 3:29). With what an air of triumph and exultation does she cry out, "*It is the voice of my beloved*, it can be the voice of no other, for none besides can speak to the heart and make that burn."

2. She sees him come, sees the goings of *our God, our King*, (^{480B}Psalms 48:24. *Behold, he comes*. This may very well be applied to the prospect with the Old-Testament saints had of Christ's coming in the flesh. *Abraham saw his day* at a distance, *and was glad*. The nearer the time came the clearer discoveries were made of it; and those that waited for the consolation of Israel with an eye of faith saw him come, and triumphed in the sight: *Behold, he comes*; for they had heard him say (^{490B}Psalms 40:7), *Lo, I come*, to which their faith here affixes its seal: *Behold, he comes* as he has promised.

(1.) He comes cheerfully and with great alacrity; he comes leaping and skipping *like a roe* and *like a young hart* (v. 9), as one pleased with his own undertaking, and that had his heart upon it and his delights with the sons of men. When he came to be baptized with the baptism of blood, how was he *straitened till it was accomplished!* (^{425B}Luke 12:50).

(2.) He comes slighting and surmounting all the difficulties that lay in his way; he comes *leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills* (so some read it), making nothing of the discouragements he was to break through; the curse of the law, the death of the cross, must be undergone, all the powers of darkness must be grappled with, but, before the

resolutions of his love, these great mountains become plains. Whatever opposition is given at any time to the deliverance of God's church, Christ will break through it, will get over it.

(3.) He comes speedily, *like a roe or a young hart*; they thought the time long (every day a year), but really he hastened; as now, so then, *surely he comes quickly; he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*. When he comes for the deliverance of his people he *flies upon a cloud*, and never stays beyond his time, which is the best time. We may apply it to particular believers, who find that even when Christ has withdrawn sensible comforts, and seems to forsake, yet it is but for a small moment, and he will soon return with everlasting loving-kindness.

II. She pleases herself with the glimpses she has of him, and the glances she has of his favour: "He *stands behind our wall*; I know he is there, for sometimes *he looks forth at the window*, or *looks in* at it, and displays *himself through the lattice*." Such was the state of the Old-Testament church while it was in expectation of the coming of the Messiah. The ceremonial law is called *a wall of partition* (^{<4014>}Ephesians 2:14), *a veil* (^{<4013>}2 Corinthians 3:13); but Christ stood behind that wall. They had him near them; they had him with them, though they could not see him clearly. He that was the substance was not far off from the shadows, ^{<5017>}Colossians 2:17. They saw him looking through the windows of the ceremonial institutions and smiling through those lattices; in their sacrifices and purifications Christ discovered himself to them, and gave them intimations and earnestings of his grace, both to engage and to encourage their longings for his coming. Such is our present state in comparison with what it will be at Christ's second coming. We now *see him through a glass darkly* (the body is a wall between us and him, through the windows of which we now and then get a sight of him), but not *face to face*, as we hope to see him shortly. In the sacraments Christ is near us, but it is *behind the wall* of external signs, through *those lattices* he manifests himself to us; but we shall shortly *see him as he is*. Some understand this of the state of a believer when he is under a cloud; Christ is out of sight and yet not far off. See ^{<4814>}Job 34:14, and compare ^{<4818>}Job 23:8-10. She calls the wall that interposed between her and her beloved *our wall*, because it is sin, and nothing else, that separates between us and God, and that is a wall of our own erecting (^{<2811>}Isaiah 59:1); behind that he stands, as *waiting to be gracious*, and ready to be reconciled, upon our repentance. Then *he looks in at the window*, observes the frame of our hearts and the working of our

souls; he looks forth at the window, and shows himself in giving them some comfort, that they may continue hoping for his return.

III. She repeats the gracious invitation he had given her to come a walking with him, v. 10-13. She remembers what her beloved said to her, for it had made a very pleasing and powerful impression upon her, and the word that quickens us we shall never forget. She relates it for the encouragement of others, telling them what he had said to her soul and done for her soul, ^{<1766>}Psalm 66:16.

1. He called her his love and his fair one. Whatever she is to others, to him she is acceptable, and in his eyes she is amiable. Those that take Christ for their beloved, he will own as his; never was any love lost that was bestowed upon Christ. Christ, by expressing his love to believers, invites and encourages them to follow him.

2. He called her to *rise and come away*, v. 10, and again v. 13. The repetition denotes backwardness in her (we have need to be often called to come away with Jesus Christ; *precept must be upon precept and line upon line*), but it denotes earnestness in him; so much is his heart set upon the welfare of precious souls that he importunes them most pressingly to that which is for their own good.

3. He gave for a reason the return of the spring, and the pleasantness of the weather.

(1.) The season is elegantly described in a great variety of expressions.

[1.] *The winter is past*, the dark, cold, and barren winter. Long winters and hard ones pass away at last; they do not endure always. And the spring would not be so pleasant as it is if it did not succeed the winter, which is a foil to its beauty, ^{<1774>}Ecclesiastes 7:14. Neither the face of the heavens nor that of the earth is always the same, but subject to continual vicissitudes, diurnal and annual. *The winter is past*, but has not passed away for ever; it will come again, and we must provide for it in summer, ^{<1066>}Proverbs 6:6, 8. We must weep in winter, and rejoice in summer, as though we wept and rejoiced not, for both are passing.

[2.] *The rain is over and gone*, the winter-rain, the cold stormy rain; it is over now, and *the dew is as the dew of herbs*. Even the rain that drowned the world was over and gone at last (^{<1001>}Genesis 8:1-3), and God promised to drown the world no more, which was a type and figure of the covenant

of grace, ^{<250>}Isaiah 54:9.

[3.] *The flowers appear on the earth.* All winter they are dead and buried in their roots, and there is no sign of them; but in the spring they revive, and show themselves in a wonderful variety and verdure, and, like the dew that produces them, *tarry not for man*, ^{<318>}Micah 5:7. They appear, but they will soon disappear again, and man in herein like *the flower of the field*, ^{<342>}Job 14:2.

[4.] *The time of singing of birds has come.* The little birds, which all the winter lie hid in their retirements and scarcely live, when the spring returns forget all the calamities of the winter, and to the best of their capacity chant forth the praises of their Creator. Doubtless he who understands the birds that cry for want (^{<179>}Psalm 147:9) takes notice of those that *sing for joy* ^{<342>}Psalm 104:12. The singing of the birds may shame our silence in God's praises, who are better fed (^{<165>}Matthew 6:26), and better taught (^{<351>}Job 35:11), and are of *more value than many sparrows*. They live without inordinate care (^{<165>}Matthew 6:26) and therefore they sing, while we murmur.

[5.] *The voice of the turtle is heard in our land*, which is one of the season-birds mentioned ^{<247>}Jeremiah 8:7, that observe the time of their coming and the time of their singing, and so shame us who *know not the judgment of the Lord*, understand not the times, nor do that which is *beautiful in its season*, do not sing in singing time.

[6.] *The fig-tree puts forth her green figs*, by which we know that summer is nigh (^{<162>}Matthew 24:32), when the green figs will be ripe figs and fit for use; and the *vines with the tender grape give a good smell*. The earth produces not only *flowers* (v. 12), but *fruits*; and the smell of the fruits, which are profitable, is to be preferred far before that of the flowers, which are only for show and pleasure. Serpents, they say, are driven away by the smell of the vines; and who is the old serpent, and who the true vine, we know very well.

(2.) Now this description of the returning spring, as a reason for coming away with Christ, is applicable

[1.] To the introducing of the gospel in the room of the Old-Testament dispensation, during which it had been winter time with the church. Christ's gospel warms that which was cold, makes that fruitful which before was dead and barren; when it comes to any place it puts a beauty and glory upon that place (^{<162>}2 Corinthians 3:7, 8) and furnishes occasion

for joy. Spring-time is pleasant time, and so is gospel-time. *Aspice venturo laetentur ut omnia seculo* — *Behold what joy the dawning age inspires!* said Virgil, from the Sibyls, perhaps with more reference to the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom at that time than he himself thought of. See ~~491~~ Psalm 96:11. *Arise then*, and improve this spring-time. *Come away* from the world and the flesh, come into *fellowship with Christ*, ~~419~~ 1 Corinthians 1:9.

[2.] To the delivering of the church from the power of persecuting enemies, and the restoring of liberty and peace to it, after a severe winter of suffering and restraint. When the storms of trouble are over and gone, when the *voice of the turtle*, the joyful sound of the gospel of Christ, is again heard, and ordinances are enjoyed with freedom, then *arise and come away* to improve the happy juncture. Walk in the light of the Lord; sing in the ways of the Lord. When the churches had rest, then were they edified, ~~498~~ Acts 9:31.

[3.] To the conversion of sinners from a state of nature to a state of grace. That blessed change is like the return of the spring, a universal change and a very comfortable one; it is a new creation; it is being born again. The soul that was hard, and cold, and frozen, and unprofitable, like the earth in winter, becomes fruitful, like the earth in spring, and by degrees, like it, brings its fruits to perfection. This blessed change is owing purely to the approaches and influences of the sun of righteousness, who calls to us from heaven to *arise and come away*; come, gather in summer.

[4.] To the consolations of the saints after a state of inward dejection and despondency. A child of God, under doubts and fears, is like the earth in winter, its nights long, its days dark, good affections chilled, nothing done, nothing got, the hand sealed up. But comfort will return; the birds shall sing again, and the flowers appear. Arise therefore, poor drooping soul, and *come away* with thy beloved. *Arise, and shake thyself from the dust*, ~~251~~ Isaiah 52:2. *Arise, shine, for thy light has come* (~~261~~ Isaiah 60:1); *walk in that light*, ~~215~~ Isaiah 2:5.

[5.] To the resurrection of the body at the last day, and the glory to be revealed. The bones that lay in the grave, as the roots of the plants in the ground during the winter, shall then *flourish as a herb*, ~~264~~ Isaiah 66:14; 26:19. That will be an eternal farewell to winter and a joyful entrance upon an everlasting spring.

~~2114~~ SONG OF SOLOMON 2:14-17

THE LOVE OF THE CHURCH TO CHRIST

Here is,

I. The encouraging invitation which Christ gives to the church, and every believing soul, to come into communion with him, v. 14.

1. His love is now his *dove*; David had called the church God's *turtle-dove* (~~1814~~ Psalm 84:19), and so she is here called; a dove for beauty, her *wings covered with silver* (~~1813~~ Psalm 18:13), for innocence and inoffensiveness; a gracious spirit is a dove-like spirit, harmless, loving quietness and cleanliness, and faithful to Christ, as the turtle to her mate. The Spirit descended *like a dove* on Christ, and so he does on all Christians, making them of a *meek and quiet spirit*. She is Christ's *dove*, for he owns her and delights in her; she can find no rest but in him and his ark, and therefore to him, as her Noah, she returns.

2. This dove is *in the clefts of the rock and in the secret places of the stairs*. This speaks either,

(1.) Her praise. Christ is the rock, to whom she flies for shelter and in whom alone she can think herself safe and find herself easy, as a dove in the hole of a rock, when struck at by the birds of prey, ~~2483~~ Jeremiah 48:28. Moses was hid in a cleft of the rock, that he might behold something of God's glory, which otherwise he could not have borne the brightness of. She retires *into the secret places of the stairs*, where she may be alone, undisturbed, and may the better commune with her own heart. Good Christians will find time to be private. Christ often withdrew to a mountain *himself alone, to pray*. Or,

(2.) her blame. She crept into the *clefts of the rock*, and the *secret places*, for fear and shame, any where to hide her head, being heartless and discouraged, and shunning even the sight of her beloved. Being conscious to herself of her own unfitness and unworthiness to come into his presence, and speak to him, she drew back, and was *like a silly dove without heart*, ~~3071~~ Hosea 7:11.

3. Christ graciously calls her out of her retirements: Come, *let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice*. She was *mourning like a dove*

(²³⁸⁴Isaiah 38:14), bemoaning herself like the *doves of the valleys*, where they are near the clefts of the impending rocks, *mourning for her iniquities* (³⁰⁷⁶Ezekiel 7:16) and refusing to be comforted. But Christ calls her to *lift up her face without spot*, being purged from an evil conscience (³⁸¹⁵Job 11:15; 22:26), to *come boldly to the throne of grace*, having a great *high priest* there (³⁰¹⁶Hebrews 4:16), to tell what her petition is and what her request: Let me *hear thy voice*, hear what thou hast to say; *what would you that I should do unto you?* Speak freely, speak up, and fear not a slight or repulse.

4. For her encouragement, he tells her the good thoughts he had of her, whatever she thought of herself: *Sweet is thy voice; thy praying voice*, though thou canst but *chatter like a crane or a swallow* (²³⁸⁴Isaiah 38:14); it is music in God's ears. He has assured us that *the prayer of the upright is his delight*; he smelled a sweet savour from Noah's sacrifice, and the *spiritual sacrifices* are no less *acceptable*, (⁴⁰²⁵1 Peter 2:5. This does not so much commend our services as God's gracious condescension in making the best of them, and the efficacy of the *much incense* which is *offered with the prayers of saints*, (⁴⁰⁸⁸Revelation 8:3. "That countenance of thine, which thou art ashamed of, is comely, though now mournful, much more will it be so when it becomes cheerful." *Then* the voice of prayer is sweet and acceptable to God when the countenance, the conversation in which we show ourselves before men, is holy, and so comely, and agreeable to our profession. Those that are sanctified have the best comeliness.

II. The charge which Christ gives to his servants to oppose and suppress that which is a terror to his church and drives her, like a poor frightened dove, into the clefts of the rock, and which is an obstruction and prejudice to the interests of his kingdom in this world and in the heart (v. 15): *Take us the foxes* (take them for us, for it is good service both to Christ and the church), *the little foxes*, that creep in insensibly; for, though they are little, they do great mischief, they *spoil the vines*, which they must by no means be suffered to do at any time, especially now when our vines have *tender grapes* that must be preserved, or the vintage will fail. Believers are as vines, weak but useful plants; their fruits are as *tender crops* at first, which must have time to come to maturity. This charge to *take the foxes* is,

1. A charge to particular believers to mortify their own corruptions, their sinful appetites and passions, which are as *foxes*, *little foxes*, that destroy their graces and comforts, quash good motions, crush good beginnings,

and prevent their coming to perfection. Seize the *little foxes*, the first risings of sin, the littles ones of Babylon (^{<4170>}Psalm 137:9), those sins that seem little, for they often prove very dangerous. Whatever we find a hindrance to us in that which is good we must put away.

2. A charge to all in their places to oppose and prevent the spreading of all such opinions and practices as tend to corrupt men's judgments, debauch their consciences, perplex their minds, and discourage their inclinations to virtue and piety. Persecutors are foxes (^{<4033>}Luke 13:32); false prophets are foxes, ^{<4374>}Ezekiel 13:4. Those that sow the tares of heresy or schism, and, like Diotrophes, trouble the peace of the church and obstruct the progress of the gospel, they are the *foxes, the little foxes*, which must not be knocked on the head (*Christ came not to destroy men's lives*), but taken, that they may be tamed, or else restrained from doing mischief.

III. The believing profession which the church makes of her relation to Christ, and the satisfaction she take sin her interest in him and communion with him, v. 16. He had called her to *rise* and *come away* with him, to let him see her face and hear her voice; now this is her answer to that call, in which, though at present in the dark and at a distance,

1. She comforts herself with the thoughts of the mutual interest and relation that were between her and her beloved: *My beloved to me* and *I to him*, so the original reads it very emphatically; the conciseness of the language speaks the largeness of her affection: "What he is to me and I to him may better be conceived than expressed." Note,

(1.) It is the unspeakable privilege of true believers that Christ is theirs: *My beloved is mine*; this denotes not only propriety ("I have a title to him") but possession and tenure — "I receive from his fulness." Believers are partakers of Christ; they have not only an interest in him, but the enjoyment of him, are taken not only in the covenant, but into communion with him. All the benefits of his glorious undertaking, as Mediator, are made over to them. He is that to them which the world neither is nor can be, all that which they need and desire, and which will make a complete happiness for them. All he is is theirs, and all he has, all he has done, and all he is doing; all he has promised in the gospel, all he has prepared in heaven, all is yours.

(2.) It is the undoubted character of all true believers that they are Christ's, and then, and then only, he is theirs. They have given their own selves to

him (~~408~~2 Corinthians 8:5); they receive his doctrine and obey his laws; they bear his image and espouse his interest; they belong to Christ. If we be his, his wholly, his only, his for ever, we may take the comfort of his being ours.

2. She comforts herself with the thoughts of the communications of his grace to his people: *He feeds among the lilies*. When she wants the tokens of his favour to her in particular, she rejoices in the assurance of his presence with all believers in general, who are lilies in his eyes. He *feeds* among them, that is, he takes as much pleasure in them and their assemblies as a man does in his table or in his garden, for he *walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks*; he delights to converse with them, and to do them good.

IV. The church's hope and expectation of Christ's coming, and her prayer grounded thereupon.

1. She doubts not but that the *day will break* and the *shadows will flee away*. The gospel-day will dawn, and the shadows of the ceremonial law will flee away. This was the comfort of the Old-Testament church, that, after the long night of that dark dispensation, the *day-spring from on high would at length visit them, to give light to those that sit in darkness*. When the sun rises the shades of the night vanish, so do the shadows of the day when the substance comes. The day of comfort will come after a night of desertion. Or it may refer to the second coming of Christ, and the eternal happiness of the saints; the shadows of our present state will flee away, our darkness and doubts, our griefs and all our grievances, and a glorious day shall dawn, a morning when the *upright shall have dominion*, a day that shall have no night after it.

2. She begs the presence of her beloved, in the mean time, to support and comfort her: "*Turn, my beloved, turn to me, come and visit me, come and relieve me, be with me always to the end of the age*. In the day of my extremity, make haste to help me, *make no long tarrying*. Come over even *the mountains of division*, interposing time and days, with some gracious anticipations of that light and love." 3. She begs that he would not only turn to her for the present, but hasten his coming to fetch her to himself. "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*. Though there be mountains in the way, thou canst, *like a roe, or a young hart*, step over them with ease. *O show thyself to me, or take me up to thee.*"