

CHAPTER 4

In this chapter,

I. Jesus Christ, having espoused his church to himself (~~211~~ Song of Solomon 3:11), highly commends her beauty in the several expressions of it, concluding her fair, all fair (v. 1-5 and again, v. 7).

II. He retires himself, and invites her with him, from the mountains of terror to those of delight (v. 6, 8).

III. He professes his love to her and his delight in her affection to him (v. 9-14).

IV. She ascribes all she had that was valuable in her to him, and depends upon the continued influence of his grace to make her more and more acceptable to him (v. 15, 16).

~~211~~ SONG OF SOLOMON 4:1-7

THE BEAUTY OF THE CHURCH

Here is,

I. A large and particular account of the beauties of the church, and of gracious souls on whom the image of God is renewed, consisting *in the beauty of holiness*. In general, he that is a competent judge of beauty, whose *judgment*, we are sure, *is according to truth*, and what all must subscribe to, he has said, *Behold, thou art fair*. She had commended him, and called all about her to take notice of his glories; and hereby she recommends herself to him, gains his favour, and, in return for her respects, he calls to all about him to take notice of her graces. Those that honour Christ he will honour, ~~102~~ 1 Samuel 2:30.

1. He does not flatter her, nor design hereby either to make her proud of herself or to court her praises of him; but,

(1.) It is to encourage her under her present dejections. Whatever others thought of her, she was amiable in his eyes.

(2.) It is to teach her what to value herself upon, not any external advantages (which would add nothing to her, and the want of which would deprive her of nothing that was really excellent), but upon the comeliness of grace which he had put upon her.

(3.) It is to invite others to think well of her too, and to join themselves to her: “Thou art *my love*, thou lovest me and art beloved of me, and therefore *thou art fair*.” All the beauty of the saints is derived from him, and they shine by reflecting his light; it is *the beauty of the Lord our God that is upon us*, ^{<3917>}Psalm 90:17. She was espoused to him, and that made her beautiful. *Uxor fulget radiis mariti — The spouse shines in her husband's rays*. It is repeated, *Thou art fair*, and again, *Thou art fair*, denoting not only the certainty of it, but the pleasure he took in speaking of it.

2. As to the representation here made of the beauty of the church, the images are certainly very bright, the shades are strong, and the comparisons bold, not proper indeed to represent any external beauty, for they were not designed to do so, but *the beauty of holiness, the new man, the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible*. Seven particulars are specified, a number of perfection, for the church is enriched with manifold graces by *the seven spirits that are before the throne*, ^{<604>}Revelation 1:4; ^{<605>}1 Corinthians 1:5, 7.

(1.) Her eyes. A good eye contributes much to a beauty: *Thou hast doves' eyes*, clear and chaste, and often cast up towards heaven. It is not the eagle's eye, that can face the sun, but the *dove's eye*, a humble, modest, mournful eye, that is the praise of those whom Christ loves. Ministers are the church's eyes (^{<2518>}Isaiah 52:8, *thy watchmen shall see eye to eye*); they must be like *doves' eyes*, harmless and inoffensive (^{<606>}Matthew 10:16), having their *conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity*. Wisdom and knowledge are the eyes of the new man; they must be clear, but not haughty, *not exercised in things too high for us*. When our aims and intentions are sincere and honest, then we have *doves' eyes*, when we look not unto *idols* (^{<386>}Ezekiel 18:6), but have *our eyes ever towards the Lord*, ^{<425>}Psalm 25:15. The *doves' eyes are within the locks*, which are as a shade upon them, so that,

[1.] They cannot fully see. As long as we are here in this world we *know but in part*, for a hair hangs in our eyes; *we cannot order our speech by*

reason of darkness; death will shortly cut those locks, and then we shall see all things clearly.

[2.] They cannot be fully seen, but as the stars through the thin clouds. Some make it to intimate the bashfulness of her looks; she suffers not her eyes to wander, but limits them with her locks.

(2.) Her *hair*; it is compared to a *flock of goats*, which looked white, and were, on the top of the mountains, like a fine head of hair; and the sight was more pleasant to the spectator because the goats have not only gravity from their beards, but they are *comely in going* (^{<400>}Proverbs 30:29), but it was most pleasant of all to the owner, much of whose riches consisted in his flocks. Christ puts a value upon that in the church, and in believers, which others make no more account of than of their hair. He told his disciples that *the very hairs of their head were all numbered*, as carefully as men number their flocks (^{<400>}Matthew 10:30), and that *not a hair of their head should perish*, (^{<4218>}Luke 21:18. Some by the *hair* here understand the outward conversation of a believer, which ought to be comely, and decent, and agreeable to the holiness of the heart. The apostle opposes good works, such as become the professors of godliness, to *the plaiting of the hair*, (^{<5109>}1 Timothy 2:9, 10. Mary Magdalen's hair was beautiful when she wiped the feet of Christ with it.

(3.) Her *teeth*, v. 2. Ministers are the church's teeth; like nurses, they chew the meat for the babes of Christ. The Chaldee paraphrase applies it to the priests and Levites, who fed upon the sacrifices as the representatives of the people. Faith, by which we feed upon Christ, meditation, by which we ruminate on the word and chew the cud upon what we have heard, in order to the digesting of it, are the teeth of the new man. These are here compared to a *flock of sheep*. Christ called his disciples and ministers a *little flock*. It is the praise of teeth to be *even*, to be white, and kept clean, *like sheep from the washing*, and to be firm and well fixed in the gums, and not like sheep that cast their young; for so the word signifies which we translate *barren*. It is the praise of ministers to be even in mutual love and concord, to be pure and clean from all moral pollutions, and to be fruitful, bringing forth souls to Christ, and nursing his lambs.

(4.) Her *lips*; these are compared to a *thread of scarlet*, v. 3. Red lips are comely, and a sign of health, as the paleness of the lips is a sign of faintness and weakness; her *lips* were the colour of *scarlet*, but thin *lips*, *like a thread of scarlet*. The next words explain it: *Thy speech is comely*,

always with grace, *good*, and *to the use of edifying*, which adds much to the beauty of a Christian. When we praise God with *our lips, and with the mouth make confession* of him *to salvation*, then they are as a *thread of scarlet*. All our good works and good words must be *washed in the blood of Christ*, dyed like the *scarlet thread*, and then, and not till then, they are acceptable to God. The Chaldee applies it to the chief priest, and his prayers for Israel on the day of atonement.

(5.) Her *temples*, or cheeks, which are here compared to *a piece of a pomegranate*, a fruit which, when cut in two, has rich veins or specks in it, like a blush in the face. Humility and modesty, blushing to lift up our faces before God, blushing at the remembrance of sin and in a sense of our unworthiness of the honour put upon us, will beautify us very much in the eyes of Christ. The blushes of Christ's bride are *within her locks*, which intimates (says Mr. Durham) that she blushes when no other sees, and for that which none sees but God and conscience; also that she seeks not to proclaim her humility, but modestly covers that too; yet the evidences of all these, in a tender walk, appear and are comely.

(6.) Her *neck*; this is here compared to *the tower of David*, v. 4. This is generally applied to the grace of faith, by which we are united to Christ, as the body is united to the head by the neck; this *is like the tower of David*, furnishing us with weapons of war, especially *bucklers* and *shields*, as the soldiers were supplied with them out of that tower, for *faith* is our *shield* (²⁶⁶Ephesians 6:16): those that have it never want a *buckler*, for God will compass them *with his favour as with a shield*. When this *neck is like a tower*, straight, and stately, and strong, a Christian goes on in his way, and works with courage and magnanimity, and does not hang a drooping head, and he does when faith fails. Some make the *shields of the mighty men*, that are here said to hang up in *the tower of David*, to be the monuments of the valour of David's worthies. Their shields were preserved, to keep in remembrance them and their heroic acts, intimating that it is a great encouragement to the saints to hold up their heads, to see what great things the saints in all ages have accomplished and won by faith. In Hebrews 11 we have the *shields of the mighty men* hung up, the exploits of believers and the trophies of their victories.

(7.) Her *breasts*; these are *like two young roes that are twins*, v. 5. The church's breasts are both for ornament (²⁶⁷Ezekiel 16:7) and for use; they are the *breasts of her consolation* (²⁶⁸Isaiah 66:11), as she is said to *suck*

the breasts of kings, ^{<2316>}Isaiah 60:16. Some apply these to the two Testaments; others to the two sacraments, the seals of the covenant of grace; others to ministers, who are to be spiritual nurses to the children of God and to give out to them the *sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby*, and, in order to that, are themselves to *feed among the lilies* where Christ feeds (^{<2316>}Song of Solomon 2:16), that they may be to the babes of the church as full breasts. Or the breasts of a believer are his love to Christ, which he is pleased with, as a tender husband is with the affections of his wife, who is therefore said to be to him *as the loving hind and the pleasant roe*, because *her breasts satisfy him at all times*, ^{<2319>}Proverbs 5:19. This includes also his edifying others and communicating grace to them, which adds much to a Christian's beauty.

II. The bridegroom's resolution hereupon to retire *to the mountain of myrrh* (v. 6) and there to make his residence. This *mountain of myrrh* is supposed to signify Mount Moriah, on which the temple was built, where incense was daily burnt to the honour of God. Christ was so pleased with the beauty of his church that he chose this to be his rest for ever; here he will dwell *till the day break and the shadows flee away*. Christ's parting promise to his disciples, as the representatives of the church, answer to this: *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world*. Where the ordinances of God are duly administered there Christ will be, and there we must meet him at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Some make these to be the words of the spouse, either modestly ashamed of the praises given her, and willing to get out of the hearing of them, or desirous to be constant to the holy hill, not doubting but there to find suitable and sufficient succour and relief in all her straits, and there to cast anchor, and wish for the day, which, at the time appointed, would *break and the shadows flee away*. The holy hill (as some observe) is here called both a *mountain of myrrh*, which is bitter, and a *hill of frankincense*, which is sweet, for there we have occasion both to mourn and rejoice; repentance is a bitter sweet. But in heaven it will be all frankincense, and no myrrh. Prayer is compared to incense, and Christ will meet his praying people and will bless them.

III. His repeated commendation of the beauty of the spouse (v. 7): *Thou art all fair, my love*. He had said (v. 1), *Thou art fair*; but here he goes further, and, in review of the particulars, as of those of the creation, he pronounces *all very good*: "*Thou art all fair, my love; thou art all over beautiful, and there is nothing amiss in thee, and thou hast all beauties in*

thee; thou art *sanctified wholly* in every part; *all things have become new* (^{<4187>}2 Corinthians 5:17); there is not only a new face and a new name, but a new man, a new nature; *there is no spot in thee*, as far as thou art renewed.” The spiritual sacrifices must be without blemish. *There is no spot* but such as is often the spot of God's children, none of the leopard's spots. The church, when Christ shall present it to himself a glorious church, will be altogether *without spot or wrinkle*, ^{<4187>}Ephesians 5:27.

^{<218>}SONG OF SOLOMON 4:8-14

THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO THE CHURCH

These are still the words of Christ to his church, expressing his great esteem of her and affection to her, the opinion he had of her beauty and excellency, the desire he had of, and the delight he had in, her converse and society. And so ought men to love their wives as Christ loves the church, and takes pleasure in it as if it were spotless and had no fault, when yet it is compassed with infirmity. Now, observe here,

I. The endearing names and titles by which he calls her, to express his love to her, to assure her of it, and to engage and excite her love to him. Twice here he calls her *My spouse* (v. 8, 11) and three times *My sister, my spouse*, v. 9, 10, 12. Mention was made (^{<2181>}Song of Solomon 3:11) of *the day of his espousals*, and, after that, she is called his *spouse*, not before. Note, There is a marriage-covenant between Christ and his church, between Christ and every true believer. Christ calls his church his *spouse*, and his calling her so makes her so. “I have betrothed thee unto me for ever; and, as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” He is not ashamed to own the relation, but, as becomes a kind and tender husband, he speaks affectionately to her, and calls her his *spouse*, which cannot but strongly engage her to be faithful to him. Nay, because no one relation among men is sufficient to set forth Christ's love to his church, and to show that all this must be understood spiritually, he owns her in two relations, which among men are incompatible, *My sister, my spouse*. Abraham's saying of Sarah, *She is my sister*, was interpreted as a denying of her to be his wife; but Christ's church is to him both a *sister* and a *spouse*, as ^{<4125>}Matthew 12:50, a *sister and mother*. His calling her *sister* is grounded upon his taking our nature upon him in his

incarnation, and his making us partakers of his nature in our sanctification. He clothed himself with a *body* (^{<324>}Hebrews 2:14), and he clothes believers with his *Spirit* (^{<417>}1 Corinthians 6:17), and so they become his *sisters*. They are children of God his Father (^{<468>}2 Corinthians 6:18) and so they become his *sisters*; he that sanctifies, and those that are sanctified, are all of one (^{<321>}Hebrews 2:11); and he owns them, and loves them, as his sisters.

II. The gracious call he gives her to come along with him as a faithful bride, that must forget her own people and her father's house, and leave all to cleave to him. *Ubi tu Caius, ibi ego Caia* — *Where thou Caius art, I Caia will be. Come with me from Lebanon*, v. 8.

1. It is a precept; so we take it, like that (^{<210>}Song of Solomon 2:10, 13), *Rise up, and come away*. All that have by faith come to Christ must come with Christ, in holy obedience to him and compliance with him. Being joined to him, we must walk with him. This is his command to us daily: “*Come with me, my spouse; come with me to God as a Father; come with me onward, heavenward; come forward with me; come up with me; come with me from Lebanon, from the top of Amana, from the lions' dens.*” These mountains are to be considered,

(1.) As seemingly delightful places. Lebanon is called *that goodly mountain*, (^{<625>}Deuteronomy 3:25. We read of the *glory of Lebanon* (^{<381>}Isaiah 35:2) and its goodly smell, (^{<346>}Hosea 14:6. We read of the pleasant *dew of Hermon* (^{<428>}Psalms 133:3) and the *joy of Hermon* (^{<392>}Psalms 89:12); and we may suppose the other mountains here mentioned to be pleasant ones, and so this is Christ's call to his spouse to come off from the world, all its products, all its pleasures, to sit loose to all the delights of sense. All those must do so that would come with Christ; they must take their affections off from all present things; yea, though they be placed at the upper end of the world, on *the top of Amana* and *the top of Shenir*, though they enjoy the highest satisfactions the creature can propose to give, yet they must *come away* from them all, and live above the tops of the highest hills on earth, that they may have *their conversation in heaven*. *Come from those mountains, to go along with Christ to the holy mountain, the mountain of myrrh*, v. 6. Even while we have our residence on these mountains, yet we must look for them, look above them. Shall we *lift up our eyes to the hills*? No; *our help comes from the Lord*, (^{<401>}Psalms 121:1, 2. We must look beyond them, to *the*

things that are not seen (as these high hills are), that are eternal. From the tops of Shenir and Hermon, which were on the other side Jordan, as from Pisgah, they could see the land of Canaan; from this world we must look forward to the better country.

(2.) They are to be considered as really dangerous. These hills indeed are pleasant enough, but there are in them *lions' dens*; they are *mountains of the leopards*, mountains of prey, though they seem *glorious and excellent*, ^{<476>}Psalm 76:4. Satan, that *roaring lion*, in the *prince of this world*; in the things of it he lies in wait to devour. On the tops of these mountains there are many dangerous temptations to those who would take up their residence in them; and therefore *come with me from them*; let us not set our hearts upon the things of this world, and then they can do us no hurt. *Come with me from the temples of idolaters, and the societies of wicked people* (so some understand it); *come out from among them, and be you separate. Come from under the dominion of your own lusts, which are as lions and leopards, fierce upon us, and making us fierce.*

2. It may be taken as a promise: Thou shalt *come with me from Lebanon, from the lions' dens*; that is,

(1.) “Many shall be brought home to me, as living members of the church, from every point, from Lebanon in the north, Amana in the west, Hermon in the east, Shenir in the south, from all parts, to *sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*,” ^{<408>}Matthew 8:11. See ^{<241>}Isaiah 49:11, 12. Some *from the tops* of these mountains, some of the great men of this world, shall give themselves to Christ.

(2.) The church shall be delivered from her persecutors, in due time; though now she *dwells among lions* (^{<157>}Psalm 57:4), Christ will take her with himself from among their dens.

III. The great delight Christ takes in his church and in all believers. He delights in them,

1. As in an agreeable bride, *adorned for her husband* (^{<621>}Revelation 21:2), who *greatly desires her beauty*, ^{<151>}Psalm 45:11. No expressions of love can be more passionate than these here, in which Christ manifests his affection to his church; and yet that great proof of his love, his dying for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, goes far beyond them all. A spouse so dearly bought and paid for could not but be dearly loved. Such a price being given for her, a high value must needs be put upon her

accordingly; and both together may well set us a wondering at *the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge*, that love in which he *gave himself for us* and gives himself to us. Observe,

(1.) How he is affected towards his spouse: *Thou hast ravished my heart*; the word is used only here. *Thou hast hearted me*, or *Thou has unhearted me*. New words are coined to express the inexpressibleness of Christ's surprising love to his church; and the strength of that love is set forth by that which is a weakness in men, the being so much in love with one object as to be heartless to every thing else. This may refer to that love which Christ had to the chosen remnant, before the worlds were, when *his delights were with the sons of men* (⁽²⁰⁸⁾Proverbs 8:31), that first love, which brought him from heaven to earth, to *seek and save* them at such vast expense, yet including the complacency he takes in them when he has brought them to himself. Note, Christ's heart is upon his church; so it has appeared all along. His treasure is in it; it is his *peculiar treasure* (⁽¹⁰⁹⁾Exodus 19:5); and therefore there his heart is also. "Never was love like unto the love of Christ, which made him even mindless of himself, when he emptied himself of his glory, and despised all shame and pain, for our sakes. The wound of love towards us, which he had from eternity in himself, made him neglect all the wounds and reproaches of the cross;" so Bishop Reynolds. Thus let us love him.

(2.) What it is that thus affects him with delight.

[1.] The regard she has to him: *Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thy eyes*, those *doves' eyes*, clear and chaste (which were commended, v. 1), with one glance of those eyes. Christ is wonderfully pleased with those that look unto him as their Saviour, and through the eye of faith dart their affections to him, above any rival whatsoever, and whose *eyes are ever towards him*; he is soon aware of the first look of a soul towards him and meets it with his favours.

[2.] The ornaments she has from him, that is, the obedience she yields to him, for that is the *chain of her neck*, the graces that enrich her soul, which are connected as links in chain, the exercise of these graces in a conversation which adorns both herself and the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which she professes to believe (as a gold chain is an ornament to persons of quality), and an entire submission to the commanding power of his love. Having shaken off the *bands of our neck*, by which we were tied to

this world (^{251D}Isaiah 52:2), and *the yoke of our transgressions*, we are bound with the *cords of love*, as *chains of gold*, to Jesus Christ, and our necks are brought under his sweet and easy yoke, to drawn in it. This recommends us to Jesus Christ, for this is that true wisdom which, in his account, is *an ornament of grace unto the head and chains about the neck*, ^{210D}Proverbs 1:9.

[3.] The affection she has for him: *How fair is thy love!* how beautiful is it! Not only thy love itself, but all the fruits and products of it, its working in the heart, its works in the life. How well does it become a believer thus to love Christ, and what a pleasure does Christ take in it! Nothing recommends us to Christ as this does. *How much better is thy love than wine*, than all the wine that was poured out to the Lord in the drink-offerings! Hence the fruit of the vine is said to *cheer God and man*, ^{209D}Judges 9:13. She had said of Christ's love, *It is better than wine* (^{210D}Song of Solomon 1:2), and now Christ says so of hers; there is nothing lost by praising Christ, nor will he be behindhand with his friends in kindness.

[4.] The ointments, the odours wherewith she is perfumed, the gifts and graces of the Spirit, her good works, which are *an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God*, ^{208D}Philippians 4:18. *The smell of thy ointment is better than all spices*, such as the queen of Sheba presented to Solomon, camel-loads of them (^{211D}1 Kings 10:2), or, rather, than all the spices that were used in compounding the holy incense which was burned daily on the golden altar. Love and obedience to God are more pleasing to Christ than sacrifice or incense. *The smell of her garments* too, the visible profession she makes of religion, and relation to Christ, before men, and wherein she appears to the world, this is very grateful to Christ, as *the smell of Lebanon*. Christ having put upon his spouse the *white raiment* of his own righteousness (^{208D}Revelation 3:18), and *the righteousness of saints* (^{208D}Revelation 19:8), and this perfumed with holy joy and comfort, he is well pleased with it.

[5.] Her words, both in her devotion to God and her discourses with men (v. 11): *Thy lips O my spouse! drop as the honeycomb*, drop that which is very sweet, and drop it freely and plentifully. If what God speaks to us be *sweeter* to us *than the honey and the honeycomb* (^{209D}Psalms 19:10), what we say to him in prayer and praise shall also be pleasing to him: *Sweet is thy voice*. And if *out of a good treasure in the heart we bring forth good things*, if our *speech be always with grace*, if our *lips use knowledge*

aright, if they *disperse knowledge*, they then, in Christ's account, even *drop the honeycomb*, out-drop it. *Honey and milk* (the two staple commodities of Canaan) *are under thy tongue*; that is, in thy heart, not only reserved there for thy own use as a sweet morsel for thyself, but ready there for the use of others. In the word of God there is sweet and wholesome nourishment, milk for babes, honey for those that are grown up. Christ is well-pleased with those that are full of his word.

2. As in a pleasant garden. And well may a very great delight be compared to the delight taken in a garden, when the happiness of Adam in innocency was represented by the putting of him into a garden, a garden of pleasure. This comparison is pursued, v. 12-14. The church is fitly compared to a *garden*, to a garden which, as was usual, had a *fountain* in it. Where Solomon made himself *gardens* and *orchards* he made himself *pools of water* (^{<2185>}Ecclesiastes 2:5, 6), not only for curiosity and diversion, in water-works, but for use, to *water the gardens*. Eden was *well watered*, ^{<1000>}Genesis 2:10; 13:10. Observe,

(1.) The peculiarity of this garden: It is *a garden enclosed*, a paradise separated from the common earth. It is appropriated to God; he has *set it apart for himself*; Israel is God's portion, the lot of his inheritance. It is enclosed for secrecy; the saints are God's hidden ones, therefore *the world knows them not*; Christ walks in his garden unseen. It is enclosed for safety; a hedge of protection is made about it, which all the powers of darkness cannot either find or make a gap in. God's vineyard is *fenced* (^{<2180>}Isaiah 5:2); there is a wall about it, a wall of fire. It has a spring in it, and a fountain, but it is *a spring shut up* and *a fountain sealed*, which sends its streams *abroad* (^{<2186>}Proverbs 5:16), but is itself carefully locked up, that it may not by any injurious hand be muddied or polluted. The souls of believers are as *gardens enclosed*; grace in them is as *a spring shut up* there in *the hidden man of the heart*, where the water that Christ gives is *a well of living water*, ^{<4044>}John 4:14; 7:38. The Old-Testament church was *a garden enclosed* by the partition wall of the ceremonial law. The Bible was then *a spring shut up* and *a fountain sealed*; it was confined to one nation; but now the wall of separation is removed, the gospel preached to every nation, and *in Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew*.

(2.) The products of this garden. It is as the garden of Eden, where *the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food*, ^{<1009>}Genesis 2:9. *Thy plants*, or plantations, *are an orchard of*

pomegranates with pleasant fruits, v. 13. It is not like *the vineyard of the man void of understanding*, that was *all grown over with thorns and nettles*; but here are *fruits, pleasant fruits, all trees of frankincense, and all the chief spices*, v. 14. Here is a great plenty of fruits and great variety, nothing wanting which might either beautify or enrich this garden, might make it either delightful or serviceable to its great Lord. Every thing here is the best of the kind. Their *chief spices* were much more valuable, because much more durable, than the choicest of our flowers. Solomon was a great master in botany as well as other parts of natural philosophy; he treated largely of trees (^{<104B>}1 Kings 4:33), and perhaps had reference to some specific qualities of the fruits here specified, which made them very fit for the purpose for which he alludes to them; but we must be content to observe, in general, the saints in the church, and graces in the saints, are very fitly compared to these *fruits and spices*; for,

[1.] They are planted, and do not grow of themselves; *the trees of righteousness* are the *planting of the Lord* (^{<21B>}Isaiah 61:3); grace springs from an incorruptible seed.

[2.] They are precious and of high value; hence we read of the *precious sons of Zion* and their *precious faith*; they are *plants of renown*.

[3.] They are pleasant, and of a sweet savour to God and man, and, as strong aromatics, diffuse their fragraney.

[4.] They are profitable and of great use. Saints are the blessings of this earth, and their graces are their riches, with which they trade as the merchants of the east with their spices.

[5.] They are permanent, and will be preserved to good purpose, when flowers are withered and good for nothing. Grace, ripened into glory, will last for ever.

^{<2015>}SONG OF SOLOMON 4:15-16

THE LOVE OF THE CHURCH TO CHRIST

These seem to be the words of the spouse, the church, in answer to the commendations which Christ, the bridegroom, had given of her as a pleasant fruitful garden. Is she a garden?

I. She owns her dependence upon Christ himself to make this garden fruitful. To him she has an eye (v. 15) as the *fountain of gardens*, not only the founder of them, by whom they are planted and to whom they owe their being, but the fountain of them, by which they are watered and to which they own their continuance and well-being, and without whose constant supplies they would soon become like the dry and barren wilderness. To him she gives all the glory of her fruitfulness, as being nothing without him: *O fountain of gardens!* fountain of all good, of all grace, do not thou fail me. Does a believer say to the church, *All my springs are in thee*, in thee, O Zion? (^{<387>}Psalm 87:7), the church transmits the praise to Christ, and says to him, *All my springs are in thee*; thou art *the well of living waters* (^{<243>}Jeremiah 2:13), out of which flow the *streams of Lebanon*, the river Jordan, which had its rise at the foot of Mount Lebanon, and the waters of the sanctuary, which issued out *from under the threshold of the house*, ^{<351>}Ezekiel 47:1. Those that are gardens to Christ must acknowledge him a fountain to them, from whose fulness they receive and to whom it is owing that their souls are as *a watered garden*, ^{<2812>}Jeremiah 31:12. *The city of God* on earth is made glad with the river that flows from this fountain (^{<944>}Psalm 46:4), and the new Jerusalem has its *pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb*, ^{<621>}Revelation 22:1.

II. She implores the influences of the blessed Spirit to make this garden fragrant (v. 16): *Awake, O north wind! and come, thou south*. This is a prayer, 1. For the church in general, that there may be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon it, in order to its flourishing estate. Ministers' gifts are *the spices*; when the Spirit is poured out these flow forth, and then *the wilderness becomes a fruitful field*, ^{<3325>}Isaiah 32:15. This prayer was answered in the pouring out of the Spirit on *the day of pentecost* (^{<411>}Acts 2:1), ushered in by a *mighty wind*; then the apostles, who were bound up before, flowed forth, and were *a sweet savour to God*, ^{<4715>}2 Corinthians 2:15.

2. For particular believers. Note,

- (1.)** Sanctified souls are as gardens, gardens of the Lord, enclosed for him.
- (2.)** Graces in the soul are as spices in these gardens, that in them which is valuable and useful.

(3.) It is very desirable that the spices of grace should flow forth both in pious and devout affections and in holy gracious actions, that with them we may honour God, adorn our profession, and do that which will be grateful to good men.

(4.) The blessed Spirit, in his operations upon the soul, is as the *north and the south wind*, which *blows where it listeth*, and from several points, ~~438~~John 3:8. There is the north wind of convictions, and the south wind of comforts; but all, like the wind, brought *out of God's treasures* and *fulfilling his word*.

(5.) The flowing forth of the spices of grace depends upon the gales of the Spirit; he stirs up good affections, and works in us both to will and to do that which is good; it is he that makes manifest the savour of his knowledge by us.

(6.) We ought therefore to wait upon the Spirit of grace for his quickening influences, to pray for them, and to lay our souls under them. God has promised to give us his Spirit, but he will for this be enquired of.

III. She invites Christ to the best entertainment the garden affords: "*Let my beloved then come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits*; let him have the honour of all the products of the garden (it is fit he should), and let me have the comfort of his acceptance of them, for that is the best account they can be made to turn to." Observe,

1. She calls it *his* garden; for those that are espoused to Christ call nothing their own, but what they have devoted to him and desire to be used for him. When the spices flow forth then it is fit to be called his garden, and not till then. The fruits of the garden are his pleasant fruits, for he planted them, watered them, and gave the increase. What can we pretend to merit at Christ's hands when we can invite him to nothing but what is his own already?

2. She begs he would visit it, and accept of what it produced. The believer can take little pleasure in his garden, unless Christ, the beloved of his soul, come to him, nor have any joy of the fruits of it, unless they redound some way or other to the glory of Christ, and he will think all he has well bestowed upon him.