

CHAPTER 5

In this chapter we have,

- I.** Christ's gracious acceptance of the invitation which his church had given him, and the kind visit which he made to her (v. 1).
- II.** The account which the spouse gives of her own folly, in putting a slight upon her beloved, and the distress she was in by reason of his withdrawals (v. 2-8).
- III.** The enquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem concerning the amiable perfections of her beloved (v. 9), and her particular answer to that enquiry (v. 10-16). "Unto you that believe he is thus precious."

SONG OF SOLOMON 5:1

THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO THE CHURCH

These words are Christ's answer to the church's prayer in the close of the foregoing chapter, *Let my beloved come into his garden*; here he has come, and lets her know it. See how ready God is to hear prayer, how ready Christ is to accept the invitations that his people give him, though we are backward to hear his calls and accept his invitations. He is free in condescending to us, while we are shy of ascending to him. Observe how the return answered the request, and outdid it.

1. She called him *her beloved* (and really he was so), and invited him because she loved him; in return to this, he called her his *sister and spouse*, as several times before, Song of Solomon 4. Those that make Christ their best beloved shall be owned by him in the nearest and dearest relations.

2. She called the garden *his*, and the pleasant fruits of it *his*, and he acknowledges them to be so: It is *my garden*, it is *my spice*. When God was displeased with Israel he turned them off to Moses (They are *thy people*, ⁽²⁰¹⁴⁾Exodus 32:7); and he called the appointed feasts of the Lord *their appointed feasts* (⁽²⁰¹⁴⁾Isaiah 1:14); but now that they are in his favour

he owns them for his garden. “Though of small account, yet it is mine.” Those that are in sincerity give up themselves and all they have and can do to Jesus Christ, he will do them the honour to stamp them, and what they have and do for him, with his own mark, and say, *It is mine*.

3. She invited him to *come into his garden*, and he says, *I have come*.

^{<280>}Isaiah 58:9, *Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am*. When Solomon prayed that God would come and take possession of the house he had built for him, he did come; *his glory filled the house* (^{<400>}2 Chronicles 7:2), and (v. 16) he let him know that he had chosen and sanctified this house, that his *name might be there for ever*. Those that throw open the door of their souls to Jesus Christ shall find him ready to come in to them; and in every place where he records his name he will meet his people, and bless them, ^{<020>}Exodus 20:24.

4. She desired him to *eat his pleasant fruits*, to accept of the sacrifices offered in his temple, which were as the fruits of his garden, and he does so, but finds they are not gathered and ready for eating, therefore he does himself gather them. As the fruits are his, so is the preparation of them; he finds his heart unready for his entertainment, but does himself draw out into exercise those gracious habits which he had planted there. What little good there is in us would be shed and lost if he did not gather it, and preserve it to himself.

5. She only desired him to *eat the fruits* of the garden, but he brought along with him something more, *honey*, and *wine*, and *milk*, which yield substantial nourishment, and which were the products of Canaan, Immanuel's land. Christ delights himself greatly in that which he has both conferred upon his people and wrought in them. Or we may suppose this to have been prepared by the spouse herself, as Esther prepared for the king her husband *a banquet of wine*; it is but plain fare, and what is natural, honey and milk, but, being kindly designed, it is kindly accepted; imperfections are overlooked; the honey-comb is eaten with the honey, and the weakness of the flesh passed by and pardoned, because the *spirit is willing*. When Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection he did eat with them a piece of a honey-comb (^{<020>}Luke 24:42, 43), in which this scripture was fulfilled. He did not drink the wine only, which is liquor for men, for great men, but the milk too, which is liquor for children, little children, for he was to be the *holy child Jesus*, that had need of milk.

6. She only invited him to come himself, but he, bringing his own

entertainment along with him, brings his friends too, and invites them to share in the provisions. *The more the merrier*, we say; and here, where there was so great a plenty, there was not the worse fare. When our Lord Jesus fed 5000 at once *they did all eat and were filled*. Christ invites all his friends to the *wine and milk* which he himself drinks of (²⁵⁸¹Isaiah 55:1), to the *feast of fat things and wines on the lees*, (²⁵⁸⁶Isaiah 25:6). The great work of man's redemption, and the riches of the covenant of grace, are a feast to the Lord Jesus and they ought to be so to us. The invitation is very free, and hearty, and loving: *Eat, O friends!* If Christ comes to sup with us, it is we that sup with him, (⁴⁸⁰Revelation 3:20). *Eat, O friends!* Those only that are Christ's friends are welcome to his table; his enemies, *that will not have him to reign over them, have no part nor lot in the matter*. *Drink, yea, drink abundantly*. Christ, in his gospel, has made plentiful provision for poor souls. *He fills the hungry with good things*; there is enough for all, there is enough for each; *we are not straitened in him* or in his grace, let us not therefore be straitened in our own bosoms. *Open the mouth widely, and Christ will fill it. Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit*, (⁴⁸⁸Ephesians 5:18). Those that entertain Christ must bid his friends welcome with him; Jesus and his disciples were called together to the marriage (⁴⁸²John 2:2), and Christ will have all his friends to rejoice with him in the day of his espousals to his church, and, in token of that, to feast with him. In spiritual and heavenly joys there is no danger of exceeding; there we may *drink abundantly, drink of the river of God's pleasures* (¹³⁶⁸Psalms 36:8), and be *abundantly satisfied*, (¹³⁷⁴Psalms 65:4).

²¹⁸²SONG OF SOLOMON 5:2-8

THE LOVE OF THE CHURCH TO CHRIST

In this song of loves and joys we have here a very melancholy scene; the spouse here speaks, not to her beloved (as before, for he has withdrawn), but of him, and it is a sad story she tells of her own folly and ill conduct towards him, notwithstanding his kindness, and of the just rebukes she fell under for it. Perhaps it may refer to Solomon's own apostasy from God, and the sad effects of that apostasy after God had come into his garden, had taken possession of the temple he had built, and he had feasted with God upon the sacrifices (v. 1); however, it is applicable to the too common case both of the churches and particular believers, who by their carelessness and security provoke Christ to withdraw from them. Observe,

I. The indisposition that the spouse was under, and the listlessness that had seized her (v. 2): *I sleep, but my heart wakes*. Here is,

1. Corruption appearing in the actings of it: *I sleep*. The wise virgins slumbered. She *was on her bed* (²⁸⁸¹Song of Solomon 3:1), but now she sleeps. Spiritual distempers, if not striven against at first, are apt to grow upon us and to get ground. *She slept*, that is, pious affections cooled, she neglected her duty and grew remiss in it, she indulged herself in her ease, was secure and off her watch. This is sometimes the bad effect of more than ordinary enlargements — a good cause. St. Paul himself was in danger of being puffed up with abundant revelations, and of saying, *Soul, take thy ease*, which made a *thorn in the flesh* necessary for him, to keep him from sleeping. Christ's disciples, when he had come into his garden, the garden of his agony, were heavy with sleep, and could not watch with him. True Christians are not always alike lively and vigorous in religion.

2. Grace remaining, notwithstanding, in the habit of it: “*My heart wakes; my own conscience reproaches me for it, and ceases not to rouse me out of my sluggishness. The spirit is willing, and, after the inner man, I delight in the law of God, and with my mind I serve that.* I am, for the present, overpowered by temptation, but all does not go one way in me. I sleep, but it is not a dead sleep; I strive against it; it is not a sound sleep; I cannot be easy under this indisposition.” Note,

(1.) We ought to take notice of our own spiritual slumbers and distempers, and to reflect upon it with sorrow and shame that we have fallen asleep when Christ has been nigh us in his garden.

(2.) When we are lamenting what is amiss in us, we must not overlook the good that is wrought in us, and preserved alive: “*My heart wakes in Christ, who is dear to me as my own heart, and is my life; when I sleep, he neither slumbers nor sleeps.*”

II. The call that Christ gave to her, when she was under this indisposition: *It is the voice of my beloved*; she knew it to be so, and was soon aware of it, which was a sign that her heart was awake. Like the child Samuel, she heard at the first call, but did not, like him, mistake the person; she knew it to be the voice of Christ. He knocks, to awaken us to come and let him in, knocks by his word and Spirit, knocks by afflictions and by our own consciences; though this is not expressly quoted, yet probably it is referred to (²⁸⁸²Revelation 3:20), *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock*. He calls

sinners into covenant with him and saints into communion with him. Those whom he loves he will not let alone in their carelessness, but will find some way or other to awaken them, to rebuke and chasten them. When we are unmindful of Christ he thinks of us, and provides that our faith fail not. Peter denied Christ, but the Lord turned and looked upon him, and so brought him to himself again. Observe how moving the call is: *Open to me, my sister, my love.*

1. He sues for entrance who may demand it; he knocks who could easily knock the door down.

2. He gives her all the kind and most endearing titles imaginable: *My sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled*; he not only gives her no hard names, nor upbraids her with unkindness in not sitting up for him, but, on the contrary, studies how to express his tender affection to her still. *His loving-kindness he will not utterly take away.* Those that by faith are espoused to Christ he looks upon as his sisters, his loves, his doves, and all that is dear; and, being clothed with his righteousness, they are undefiled. This consideration should induce her to open to him. Christ's love to us should engage ours to him, even in the most self-denying instances. *Open to me.* Can we deny entrance to such a friend, to such a guest? Shall we not converse more with one that is infinitely worthy of our acquaintance, and so affectionately desirous of it, though we only can be gainers by it? **3.** He pleads distress, and begs to be admitted *sub formf pauperis* — *under the character of a poor traveller* that wants a lodging: *“My head is wet with the dew, with the cold drops of the night; consider what hardships I have undergone, to merit thee, which surely may merit from thee so small a kindness as this.”* When Christ was crowned with thorns, which no doubt fetched blood from his blessed head, then was his head *wet with the dew.* “Consider what a grief it is to me to be thus unkindly used, as much as it would be to a tender husband to be kept out of doors by his wife in a rainy stormy night.” Do we thus require him for his love? The slights which careless souls put upon Jesus Christ are him as a *continual dropping in a very rainy day.*

III. The excuse she made to put off her compliance with this call (v. 3): *I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on again?* She is half asleep; she knows the voice of her beloved; she knows his knock, but cannot find in her heart to open to him. She was undressed, and would not be at the pains to dress herself again; she had *washed her feet*, and would not have

occasion to wash them again. She could not send another to open the door (it must be our own act and deed to let Christ into our hearts), and yet she was loth to go herself; she did not say, *I will not open*, but, *How shall I?* Note, Frivolous excuses are the language of prevailing slothfulness in religion; Christ calls to us to open to him, but we pretend we have no mind, or we have no strength, or we have no time, and therefore think we may be excused, as the *sluggard* that *will not plough by reason of cold*. And those who ought to *watch for the Lord's coming* with their *loins girt*, if they ungird themselves and put off their coat, will find it difficult to recover their former resolution and to put it on again; it is best therefore to keep tight. Making excuses (^{<248>}Luke 14:18) is interpreted making light of Christ (^{<215>}Matthew 22:5), and so it is. Those put a great contempt upon Christ that cannot find in their hearts to bear a cold blast for him, or get out of a warm bed.

IV. The powerful influences of divine grace, by which she was made willing to rise and open to her beloved. When he could not prevail with her by persuasion he *put in his hand by the hole in the door*, to unbolt it, as one weary of waiting, v. 4. This intimates a work of the Spirit upon her soul, by which she was unwilling made willing, ^{<310>}Psalms 110:3. The conversion of Lydia is represented by the *opening of her heart* (^{<414>}Acts 16:14) and Christ is said to open his disciples' understandings, ^{<215>}Luke 24:45. He that *formed the spirit of man within him* knows all the avenues to it, and which way to enter into it; he can find the *hole of the door* at which to put in his hand for the conquering of prejudices and the introducing of his own doctrine and law. He has the *key of David* (^{<617>}Revelation 3:7), with which he opens the door of the heart in such a way as is suited to it, as the key is fitted to the wards of the lock, in such a way as not to put a force upon its nature, but only upon its ill nature.

V. Her compliance with these methods of divine grace at last: *My bowels were moved for him*. The will was gained by a good work wrought upon the affections: *My bowels were moved for him*, as those of the two disciples were when Christ made their *hearts to burn within them*. She was moved with compassion to her beloved, because his *head was wet with dew*. Note, Tenderness of spirit, and a heart of flesh, prepare the soul for the reception of Christ into it; and therefore his love to us is represented in such a way as is most affecting. Did Christ redeem us in his pity? Let us in pity receive him, and, for his sake, those that are his, when

at any time they are in distress. This good work, wrought upon her affections, raised her up, and made her ashamed of her dulness and slothfulness (v. 5, *I rose up, to open to my beloved*), his grace inclining her to do it and conquering the opposition of unbelief. It was her own act, and yet he wrought it in her. And now her *hands dropped with myrrh upon the handles of the lock*. Either,

1. She found it there when she applied her hand to the lock, to shoot it back; he that *put in his hand by the hole of the door* left it there as an evidence that he had been there. When Christ has wrought powerfully upon a soul he leaves a blessed sweetness in it, which is very delightful to it. With this he oiled the lock, to make it go easy. Note, When we apply ourselves to our duty, in the lively exercises of faith, under the influence of divine grace, we shall find it will go on much more readily and sweetly than we expected. If we will but rise up, to open to Christ, we shall find the difficulty we apprehended in it strangely overcome, and shall say with Daniel, *Now let my Lord speak, for thou hast strengthened me*, ²⁷¹⁹Daniel 10:19. Or,

2. She brought it thither. Her *bowels being moved for her beloved*, who had stood so long in the cold and wet, when she came to open to him she prepared to anoint his head, and so to refresh and comfort him, and perhaps to prevent his catching cold; she was in such haste to meet him that she would not stay to make the usual preparation, but dipped her hand in her box of ointment, that she might readily anoint his head at his first coming in. Those that open the doors of their hearts to Christ, those *everlasting doors*, must meet him with the lively exercises of faith and other graces, and with these must anoint him.

VI. Her said disappointment when she did open to her beloved. And here is the most melancholy part of the story: *I opened to my beloved*, as I intended, but, alas! *my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. My beloved was gone, was gone*, so the word is.

1. She did not open to him at his first knock, and now she came too late, when afterwards she *would have inherited this blessing*. Christ will be sought while he may be found; if we slip our time, we may lose our passage. Note,

(1.) Christ justly rebukes our delays with his denials, and suspends the communications of comfort from those that are remiss and drowsy in their duty.

(2.) Christ's departures are matter of great grief and lamentation to believers. The royal psalmist never complains of any thing with such sorrowful accents as God's *hiding his face* from him, and *casting him off*, and *forsaking him*. The spouse here is ready to tear her hair, and rend her clothes, and wring her hands, crying, *He is gone, he is gone*; and that which cuts her to the heart is that she may thank herself, she provoked him to withdraw. If Christ departs, it is because he takes something unkindly.

2. Now observe what she does, in this case, and what befel her.

(1.) She still calls him her *beloved*, being resolved, how cloudy and dark soever the day be, she will not quit her relation to him and interest in him. It is a weakness, upon every apprehension either of our own failings or of God's withdrawings, to conclude hardly as to our spiritual state. Every desertion is not despair. I will say, *Lord, I believe*, though I must say, *Lord, help my unbelief*. Though he leave me, I love him; he is mine.

(2.) She now remembers the words he said to her when he called her, and what impressions they made upon her, reproaching herself for her folly in not complying sooner with her convictions: "*My soul failed when he spoke*; his words melted me when he said, *My head is wet with dew*; and yet, wretch that I was, I lay still, and made excuses, and did not open to him." The smothering and stifling of our convictions is a thing that will be very bitter in the reflection, when God opens our eyes. Sometimes the word has not its effect immediately upon the heart, but it melts it afterwards, upon second thoughts. *My soul now melted because of his words* which he had spoken before.

(3.) She did not go to bed again, but went in pursuit of him: *I sought him; I called him*. She might have saved herself this labour if she would but have bestirred herself when he first called; but we cut ourselves out a great deal of work, and create ourselves a great deal of trouble, by our own slothfulness and carelessness in improving our opportunities. Yet it is her praise that, when her beloved has withdrawn, she continues seeking him; her desires toward him are made more strong, and her enquiries after him more solicitous, by his withdrawings. She calls him by prayer, calls after

him, and begs of him to return; and she not only prays but uses means, she seeks him in the ways wherein she used to find him.

(4.) Yet still she missed of him: *I could not find him; he gave me no answer*. She had no evidence of his favour, no sensible comforts, but was altogether in the dark, and in doubt concerning his love towards her. Note, There are those who have a true love for Christ, and yet have not immediate answers to their prayers for his smiles; but he gives them an equivalent if he strengthens them with the strength in their souls to continue seeking him, ^{<118B>}Psalm 138:3. St. Paul could not prevail for the removing of the *thorn in the flesh*, but was answered with grace sufficient for him.

(5.) She was ill-treated by the watchmen; *They found me; they smote me; they wounded me*, v. 7. They took her for a lewd woman (because she went about the streets at that time of night, when they were walking their rounds), and beat her accordingly. Disconsolate saints are taken for sinners, and are censured and reproached as such. Thus Hannah, when she was praying in the *bitterness of her soul*, was wounded and smitten by Eli, one of the prime watchmen, when he said to her, *How long wilt thou be drunken?* so counting her a daughter of Belial, ^{<0014>}1 Samuel 1:14, 15. It is no new thing for those that are of the loyal loving subjects of Zion's King to be misrepresented by the watchmen of Zion, as enemies or scandals to his kingdom; they could not abuse and persecute them but by putting them into an ill name. Some apply it to those ministers who, though watchmen by office, yet misapply the word to awakened consciences, and through unskillfulness, or contempt of their griefs, add affliction to the afflicted, and *make the hearts of the righteous sad whom God would not have made sad* (^{<1192>}Ezekiel 13:22), discouraging those who ought to be encouraged and talking to the grief of those *whom God has wounded*, ^{<189D>}Psalm 59:26. Those watchmen were bad enough that could not, or would not, assist the spouse in her enquiries after her beloved (^{<218B>}Song of Solomon 3:3); but these were much worse, that hindered her with their severe and uncharitable censures, *smote her* and *wounded her* with their reproaches, and though they were the *keepers of the wall of Jerusalem*, as if they had been the breakers of it, *took away her veil*, from her rudely and barbarously, as if it had been only a pretence of modesty, but a cover of the contrary. Those whose outward appearances are all good, and who yet are invidiously condemned and run down as hypocrites, have reason to complain, as the spouse here, of the *taking away of their veil* from them.

(6.) When she was disabled by the abuses the watchmen gave her to prosecute her enquiry herself she gave charge to those about her to assist her in the enquiry (v. 8): *I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem!* all my friends and acquaintance, *if you find my beloved*, it may be you may meet with him before I shall, *what shall you tell him?* so some read. “Speak a good word for me; tell him that *I am sick of love.*” Observe here,

[1.] What her condition was. She loved Jesus Christ to such a degree that his absence made her sick, extremely sick, she could not bear it, and she was in pain for his return as a woman in travail, as Ahab for Naboth's vineyard, which he so passionately coveted. This is a sickness which is a sign of a healthy constitution of soul, and will certainly end well, a sickness that will not be death, but life. It is better to be sick of love to Christ than at ease in love to the world.

(2.) What course she took in this condition. She did not sink into despair, and conclude that she should die of her disease, but she sent after her beloved; she asked the advice of her neighbours, and begged their prayers for her, that they would intercede with him on her behalf. “Tell him, though I was careless, and foolish, and slothful, and rose not up so soon as I should have done to open to him, yet I love him; he *knows all things*, he *knows that I do*. Represent me to him as sincere, though in many instances coming short of my duty; nay, represent me to him as sincere, though in many instances coming short of my duty; nay, represent me as an object of his pity, that he may have compassion on me and help me.” She does not bid them tell him how the watchmen had abused her; how unrighteous soever they were in it, she acknowledges that *the Lord is righteous*, and therefore bears it patiently. “But tell him that I am wounded with love to him.” Gracious souls are more sensible of Christ's withdrawals than of any other trouble whatsoever.

Languet amaui, non languet amor —

The lover languishes, but not his love.

SONG OF SOLOMON 5:9-16

ENQUIRING AFTER THE EXCELLENCIES OF CHRIST

Here is,

I. The question which the daughters of Jerusalem put to the spouse concerning her beloved, in answer to the charge she had given them, v. 9. Observe,

1. The respectful title they give to the spouse: *O thou fairest among women!* Our Lord Jesus makes his spouse truly amiable, not only in his eyes, but in the eyes of all the daughters of Jerusalem. The church is the most excellent society in the world, the communion of saints the best communion, and the beauty of the sanctuary a transcendent beauty. The saints are the most excellent people; holiness is the symmetry of the soul; it is its agreement with itself; it recommends itself to all that are competent judges of it. Even those that have little acquaintance with Christ, as those daughters of Jerusalem here, cannot but see an amiable beauty in those that bear his image, which we should love wherever we see it, though in different dresses.

2. Their enquiry concerning her beloved: “*What is thy beloved more than another beloved?* If thou wilt have us to find him for thee, give us his marks, that we may know him when we see him.”

(1.) Some take it for a scornful question, blaming her for making such ado about him: “Why shouldst thou be so passionate in enquiring after thy beloved, more than others are after theirs? Why shouldst thou be so set upon him, more than others that yet have a kindness for him?” Those that are zealous in religion are men wondered at by such as are indifferent to it. The many careless ones laugh at the few that are solicitous and serious. “What is there in him that is so very charming, more than in another person? If he be gone, thou, who art the *fairest among women*, wilt soon have another with an equal flame.” Note, Carnal hearts see nothing excellent or extraordinary in the Lord Jesus, in his person or offices, in his doctrine or in his favours; as if there were no more in the knowledge of Christ, and in communion with him, than in the knowledge of the world and in its conversation.

(2.) Others rather take it for a serious question, and suppose that those who put it intended,

[1.] To comfort the spouse, who, they knew, would recover new spirits if she did but talk awhile of her beloved; nothing would please her better, nor give a more powerful diversion to her grief, than to be put upon the pleasing task of describing the beauties of her beloved.

[2.] To inform themselves; they had heard, in general, that he was excellent and glorious, but they desired to know more particularly. They wondered what moved the spouse to charge them concerning her beloved with so much vehemence and concern, and therefore concluded there must be something more in him than in another beloved, which they are willing to be convinced of. *Then* there begin to be some hopes of people when they begin to enquire concerning Christ and his transcendent perfections. And sometimes the extraordinary zeal of one, in enquiring after Christ, may be a means to provoke many (~~4ME~~ 2 Corinthians 9:2), as the apostle, by the faith of the Gentiles, would stir up the Jews to a holy emulation, ~~5III~~ Romans 11:14. See ~~4III~~ John 4:10.

II. The account which the spouse gives of her beloved in answer to this question. We should always be ready to instruct and assist those that are enquiring after Christ. Experienced Christians, who are well acquainted with Christ themselves, should do all they can to make others acquainted with him.

1. She assures them, in general, that he is one of incomparable perfections and unparalleled worth (v. 10): “Do not you know my beloved? Can the daughters of Jerusalem be ignorant of him that is Jerusalem's crown and crowned head? Let me tell you then,”

(1.) That he has every thing in him that is lovely and amiable: *My beloved is white and ruddy*, the colours that make up a complete beauty. This points not at any extraordinary beauty of his body, when he should be incarnate (it was never said of the child Jesus, as of the child Moses, when he was born, that he was *exceedingly fair*, ~~4III~~ Acts 7:20; nay, *he had no form nor comeliness*, ~~25II~~ Isaiah 53:2); but his divine glory, and the concurrence of every thing in him as Mediator, to make him truly lovely in the eyes of those that are enlightened to discern spiritual things. In him we may behold the *beauty of the Lord*; he was the *holy child Jesus*; that was his fairness. If we look upon him as made to us *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, he appears, in all, very amiable. His love to us renders him lovely. He is *white* in the spotless innocency of his life, *ruddy* in the bloody sufferings he went through at his death, — *white* in his glory, as God (when he was transfigured *his raiment was white as the light*), *ruddy* in his assuming the nature of man, *Adam — red earth*, — *white* in his tenderness towards his people, *ruddy* in his terrible appearances against his and their enemies. His complexion is a very happy

composition.

(2.) That he has that loveliness in him which is not to be found in any other: He is *the chief among ten thousand*, a nonsuch for beauty, *fairer than the children of men*, than any of them, than all of them; there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him; every thing else is to be accounted *loss and dung in comparison of him*, ^{<308>}Philippians 3:8. *He is higher than the kings of the earth* (^{<307>}Psalm 89:27) and has *obtained a more excellent name* than any of the principalities and powers of the upper or lower world, ^{<309>}Philippians 2:9; Hebrews 1, 4. He is a *standard-bearer among ten thousand* (so the word is), the tallest and comeliest of the company. He is himself *lifted up as an ensign* (^{<310>}Isaiah 11:10), to whom we must be gathered and must always have an eye. And there is all the reason in the world why he should have the innermost and uppermost place in our souls who is the *fairest of ten thousands* in himself and the fittest of twenty thousands for us.

2. She gives a particular detail of his accomplishments, conceals not his power or comely proportion. Every thing in Christ is amiable. Ten instances she here gives of his beauty, which we need not be nice in the application of, lest the wringing of them bring forth blood and prove the wresting of them. The design, in general, is to show that he is every way qualified for his undertaking, and has all that in him which may recommend him to our esteem, love, and confidence. Christ's appearance to John (^{<613>}Revelation 1:13, etc.) may be compared with the description which the spouse gives of him here, the scope of both being to represent him transcendently glorious, that is, both great and gracious, made lovely in the eyes of believers and making them happy in himself.

(1.) *His head is as the most fine gold. The head of Christ is God* (^{<613>}1 Corinthians 11:3), and it is promised to the saints that *the Almighty shall be their gold* (^{<307>}Job 22:25), their defence, their treasure; much more was he so to Christ, *in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, ^{<309>}Colossians 2:9. Christ's head bespeaks his sovereign dominion over all and his vital influence upon his church and all its members. This is as *gold, gold*; the former word in the original signifies shining gold, the latter strong solid gold; Christ's sovereignty is both beautiful and powerful. Nebuchadnezzar's monarchy is compared to a *head of gold* (^{<308>}Daniel 2:38), because it excelled all the other monarchies, and so does Christ's government.

(2.) *His locks are bushy and black*, not *black as the tents of Kedar*, whose blackness was their deformity, to which therefore the church compares herself (²¹¹⁶Song of Solomon 1:5), but *black as a raven*, whose blackness is his beauty. Sometimes Christ's hair is represented as *white* (⁶¹⁴Revelation 1:14), denoting his eternity, that he is *the ancient of days*; but here as *black and bushy*, denoting that he is ever young and that there is in him no decay, nothing that waxes old. Every thing that belongs to Christ is amiable in the eyes of a believer, even his hair is so; it was pity that it should be wet, as it was, *with the dew*, and these *locks with the drops of the night*, while he waited to be gracious, v. 2.

(3.) *His eyes are as the eyes of doves*, fair and clear, and chaste and kind, *by the rivers of waters*, which doves delight in, and in which, as in a glass, they see themselves. They are washed, to make them clean, *washed with milk*, to make them white, and *fitly set*, neither starting out nor sunk in. Christ is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, for they are doves' eyes, ³¹¹³Habakkuk 1:13. All believers speak with pleasure of the omniscience of Christ, as the spouse here of *his eyes*; for, though it be terrible to his enemies *as a flame of fire* (⁶¹⁴Revelation 1:14), yet it is amiable and comfortable to his friends, as *doves' eyes*, for it is a witness to their integrity. *Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*. Blessed and holy are those that walk always as under the eye of Christ.

(4.) *His cheeks* (the rising of the face) *are as a bed of spices*, raised in the gardens, which are the beauty and wealth of them, and *as sweet flowers*, or towers of sweetness. There is that in Christ's countenance which is amiable in the eyes of all the saints, in the least glimpse of him, for the cheek is but a part of the face. The half discoveries Christ makes of himself to the soul are reviving and refreshing, fragrant above the richest flowers and perfumes.

(5.) *His lips are like lilies*, not white like lilies, but sweet and pleasant. Such are *the words of his lips* to all that are sanctified, *sweeter than honey and the honey-comb*; such are the *kisses of his lips*, all the communications of his grace; *grace is poured into his lips*, and those that heard him *wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*. *His lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh*. Never any lilies in nature dropped myrrh, but nothing in nature can fully set forth the beauty and excellence of Christ, and therefore, to do it by comparison, there must be a composition of images.

(6.) *His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl*, a noted precious stone, v. 14. Great men had their hands adorned with gold rings on their fingers, set with diamonds or other precious stones, but, in her eye, *his hands* themselves were *as gold rings*; all the instances of his power, the works of his hands, all the performances of his providence and grace, are all rich, and pure, and precious, as gold, *as the precious onyx and the sapphire*, all fitted to the purpose for which they were designed *as gold rings* to the finger, and all beautiful and very becoming, *as rings set with beryl*. His hands, which are stretched forth both to receive his people and to give to them, are thus rich and comely.

(7.) *His bowels are as bright ivory*, for so it should be rendered, rather than *his belly*, for it is the same word that was used for *bowels* (v. 4) and is often ascribed to God (as ^{<2365>}Isaiah 63:15; ^{<2810>}Jeremiah 31:20), and so it denotes his tender compassion and affection for his spouse, and the love he has to her even in her desolate and deserted state. This love of his is like *bright ivory*, finely polished, and richly *overlaid with sapphires*. The love itself is strong and firm, and the instances and circumstances of it are bright and sparkling, and add much to the inestimable value of it.

(8.) *His legs are as pillars of marble*, so strong, and stately, and no disgrace, no, not to the *sockets of fine gold upon* which they are *set*, v. 15. This bespeaks his stability and stedfastness; where he sets his foot he will fix it; he is able to bear all the weight of the government that is upon his shoulders, and his legs will never fail under him. This sets forth the stateliness and magnificence of *the goings of our God, our King, in his sanctuary* (^{<1893>}Psalms 68:24), and the steadiness and evenness of all his dispensations towards his people. *The ways of the Lord are equal*; they are all *mercy and truth*; these are the *pillars of marble*, more lasting than the pillars of heaven.

(9.) *His countenance* (his port and mien) *is as Lebanon*, that stately hill; his aspect beautiful and charming, like the prospect of that pleasant forest or park, *excellent as the cedars*, which, in height and strength, excel other trees, and are of excellent use. Christ is a goodly person; the more we look upon him the more beauty we shall see in him. (10.) *His mouth is most sweet*; it is sweetness itself; it is *sweetnesses* (so the word is); it is pure essence, nay, it is the quintessence of all delights, v. 16. The words of his mouth are all sweet to a believer, sweet as milk to babes (to whom it is agreeable), as honey to those that are grown up (^{<1813>}Psalms 119:103), to

whom it is delicious. The kisses of his mouth, all the tokens of his love, have a transcendent sweetness in them, and are most delightful to those who have their *spiritual senses exercised*. *To you that believe he is precious*.

3. She concludes with a full assurance both of faith and hope, and so gets the mastery of her trouble.

(1.) Here is a full assurance of faith concerning the complete beauty of the Lord Jesus: “*He is altogether lovely*. Why should I stand to mention particulars, when throughout there is nothing amiss?” She is sensible she does him wrong in the particular descriptions of him, and comes far short of the dignity and merit of the subject, and therefore she breaks off with the general encomium: *He is truly lovely*, he is wholly so; there is nothing in him but what is amiable, and nothing amiable but what is in him. *He is all desires*; he has all in him that one can desire. And therefore all her desire is towards him, and she seeks him thus carefully and cannot rest contented in the want of him. Who can but love him who is so lovely?

(2.) Here is a full assurance of hope concerning her own interest in him: “*This is my beloved, and this is my friend*; and therefore wonder not that I thus long after him.” See with what a holy boldness she claims relation to him, and then with what a holy triumph she proclaims it. It is property that sweetens excellency. To see Christ, and not to see him as ours, would be rather a torture than a happiness; but to see one that is thus lovely, and to see him as ours, is a complete satisfaction. Here is a true believer,

[1.] Giving an entire consent to Christ: “He is mine, *my Lord and my God* (~~John~~ John 20:28), mine according to the tenour of the gospel-covenant, mine in all relations, bestowed upon me, to be all that to me that my poor soul stands in need of.”

[2.] Taking an entire complacency in Christ. It is spoken of here with an air of triumph: “This is he whom I have chosen, and to whom I have given up myself. None but Christ, none but Christ. This is he on whom my heart is, for he is my best-beloved; this is he in whom I trust, and from whom I expect all good, *for this is my friend*.” Note, Those that make Christ their beloved shall have him their friend; he has been, is, and will be, a special friend to all believers. He loves those that love him; and those that have him their friend have reason to glory in him, and speak of him with delight. “Let others be governed by the love of the world, and seek their

happiness in its friendship and favours, *This is my beloved and this is my friend.* Others may do as they please, but this is my soul's choice, my soul's rest, my life, my joy, my all; this is he whom I desire to live and die with.”