

# CHAPTER 8

The affections between Christ and his spouse are as strong and lively here, in this closing chapter of the song, as ever, and rather more so.

**I.** The spouse continues her importunity for a more intimate communion and fellowship with him (v. 1-3).

**II.** She charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to interrupt her communion with her beloved (v. 4); and they, thereupon, admire her dependence on him (v. 5).

**III.** She begs of her beloved, whom she raises up by her prayers (v. 5), that he would by his grace confirm that blessed union with him to which she was admitted (v. 6, 7).

**IV.** She makes intercession for others also, that care might be taken of them (v. 8, 9), and pleases herself with the thoughts of her own interest in Christ and his affection to her (v. 10).

**V.** She owns herself his tenant for a vineyard she held of him at Baal-hamon (v. 11, 12).

**VI.** The song concludes with an interchanging of parting requests. Christ charges his spouse that she should often let him hear from her (v. 13), and she begs of him that he would hasten his return to her (v. 14).

## ~~2001~~ SONG OF SOLOMON 8:1-4

### THE LOVE OF THE CHURCH TO CHRIST

Here,

**1.** The spouse wishes for a constant intimacy and freedom with the Lord Jesus. She was already betrothed to him, but, the nuptials being yet not solemnized and published (the bride, the Lamb's wife, will not be completely ready till his second coming), she was obliged to be shy and to keep at some distance; she therefore wishes she may be taken for his sister, he having called her so (~~2001~~ Song of Solomon 5:1), and that she might have the same chaste and innocent familiarity with him that a sister

has with a brother, an own brother, that *sucked the breasts* of the same mother with her, who would therefore be exceedingly tender of her, as Joseph was of his brother Benjamin. Some make this to be the prayer of the Old-Testament saints for the hastening of Christ's incarnation, that the church might be the better acquainted with him, when, *forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood*, he should also himself likewise take part of the same, and not be ashamed to call them brethren. It is rather the wish of all believers for a more intimate communion with him, that they might *receive the Spirit of sanctification*, and so Christ must be as their brother, that is, that they might be as his brethren, which *then* they are when by grace they are made partakers of a divine nature, and *he that sanctifies, and those that are sanctified, are both of one*, <sup><821></sup>Hebrews 2:11, etc. It becomes brethren and sisters, the children of the same parents, that have been nursed at the same breast, to be very loving to and tender of one another; such a love the spouse desires might be between her and her beloved, that she might call him brother.

**2.** She promises herself then the satisfaction of making a more open profession of her relation to him than at present she could make: "*When I should find thee without, any where, even before company, I would kiss thee, as a sister does her own brother, especially her little brother that is now sucking the breasts of her mother*" (for so some understand it); "I would use all the decent freedom with thee that could be, and *should not be despised* for it, as doing any thing unbecoming the modesty of my sex." The church, since Christ's incarnation, can better own him than she could before, when she would have been laughed at for being so much in love with one that was not yet born. Christ has become as our brother; wherever we find him, therefore, let us be ready to own our relation to him and affection for him, and not fear being despised for it, nor regard that any more than David did when he danced before the ark. *If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile*. Nay, let us hope that we shall not be despised so much as some imagine. *Of the maid-servants of whom thou hast spoken I shall be had in honour*. Wherever we find the image of Christ, though it be without, among those that do not follow him with us, we must love it, and testify that love, and we *shall not be despised* for it, but catholic charity will gain us respect.

**3.** She promises to improve the opportunity she should then have for cultivating an acquaintance with him (v. 2): "*I would lead thee, as my brother, by the arm, and hang upon thee; I would show thee all the house*

of my precious things, would bring *thee into my mother's house*, into the church, into the solemn assemblies (<sup>238B</sup>Song of Solomon 3:4), into my closet” (for there the saints have most familiar communion with Christ), “and *there thou wouldst instruct me*” (so some read it), as brethren inform their sisters of what they desire to be instructed in. Those that know Christ shall be taught of him; and *therefore* we should desire communion with Christ that we may receive instruction from him. He has come that he might give us an understanding. Or, “My mother would instruct me when I have thee with me.” It is the presence of Christ in and with his church that makes the word and ordinances instructive to her children, who shall all be taught of God.

**4.** She promises him to bid him welcome to the best she had; she would *cause him to drink of her spiced wine and the juice of her pomegranate*, and bid him welcome to it, wishing it better for his sake. The exercise of grace and the performance of duty are spiced wine to the Lord Jesus, very acceptable to him, as expressive of a grateful sense of his favours. Those that are pleased with Christ must study to be pleasing to him; and they will not find him hard to be pleased. He reckons hearty welcome his best entertainment; and, if he have that, he will bring his entertainment along with him.

**5.** She doubts not but to experience his tender care of her and affection to her (v. 3), that she should be supported by his power and kept from fainting in the hardest services and sufferings (*His left hand shall be under my head*) and that she should be comforted with his love — *His right hand should embrace me*. Thus Christ laid his right hand upon John when he was ready to die away, <sup>617B</sup>Revelation 1:17. See also <sup>210D</sup>Daniel 10:10, 18. It may be read as it is <sup>218B</sup>Song of Solomon 2:6, *His left hand is under my head* (for the words are the same in the original) and so it expresses an immediate answer to her prayer; she was answered with *strength in her soul*, <sup>348B</sup>Psalms 138:3. While we are following hard after Christ his *right hand sustains us*, <sup>368B</sup>Psalms 63:8. *Underneath are the everlasting arms*.

**6.** She charges those about her to take heed of doing any thing to interrupt the pleasing communion she now had with her beloved (v. 4), as she had done before, when he thus strengthened and comforted her with his presence (ch 2:7): Let me *charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem*, and reason with you, *Why should you stir up, and why should you awake, my love, until he will?* The church, our common mother, charges all her children that they never do any thing to provoke Christ to withdraw, which

we are very prone to do. Why should you put such an affront upon him? Why should you be such enemies to yourselves? We should thus reason with ourselves when we are tempted to do that which will grieve the Spirit. “What! Am I weary of Christ's presence, that I affront him and provoke him to depart from me? Why should I do that which he will take so unkindly and which I shall certainly repent of?”

## SONG OF SOLOMON 8:5-7

### THE CHURCH'S DEPENDENCE ON CHRIST

Here,

**I.** The spouse is much admired by those about her. It comes in in a parenthesis, but in it gospel-grace lies as plain, and as much above ground, as any where in this mystical song: *Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?* Some make these the words of the bridegroom, expressing himself well pleased with her reliance on him and resignation of herself to his guidance. They are rather the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she spoke (v. 4); they see her, and bless her. The angels in heaven, and all her friends on earth, are the joyful spectators of her bliss. The Jewish church came up from the wilderness supported by the divine power and favour, <sup><520></sup>Deuteronomy 32:10, 11. The Christian church was raised up from a low and desolate condition by the grace of Christ relied on, <sup><407></sup>Galatians 4:27. Particular believers are amiable, nay, admirable, and divine grace is to be admired in them, when by the power of that grace they are brought *up from the wilderness, leaning with a holy confidence and complacency upon Jesus Christ their beloved.* This bespeaks the beauty of a soul, and the wonders of divine grace, 1. In the conversion of sinners. A sinful state is a *wilderness*, remote from communion with God, barren and dry, and in which there is no true comfort; it is a wandering wanting state. Out of this wilderness we are concerned to *come up*, by true repentance, in the strength of the grace of Christ, supported by our beloved and carried in his arms.

**2.** In the consolation of saints. A soul convinced of sin, and truly humbled for it, is in a *wilderness*, quite at a loss; and there is no coming out of this *wilderness* but *leaning* on Christ as our beloved, by faith, and not *leaning to our own understanding*, nor trusting to any righteousness or strength of

our own as sufficient for us, but going forth, and going on, in the strength of the Lord God, and making mention of his righteousness, even his only, who is *the Lord our righteousness*.

**3.** In the salvation of those that belong to Christ. We must go up from the wilderness of this world having our conversation in heaven; and, at death, we must remove thither, *leaning* upon Christ, must live and die by faith in him. *To me to live is Christ*, and it is he that is gain in death.

## II. She addresses herself to her beloved.

**1.** She puts him in mind of the former experience which she and others had had of comfort and success in applying to him.

**(1.)** For her own part: *“I raised thee up under the apple tree, that is, I have many a time wrestled with thee by prayer and have prevailed. When I was alone in the acts of devotion, retired in the orchard, under the apple-tree”* (which Christ himself was compared to, <sup><217B></sup>Song of Solomon 2:3), as *Nathanael under the fig-tree* (<sup><404B></sup>John 1:48), *“meditating and praying, then I raised thee up, to help me and comfort me,”* as the disciples raised him up in the storm, saying, *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* (<sup><406B></sup>Mark 4:38), and the church (<sup><442B></sup>Psalm 44:23), *Awake, why sleepest thou?* Note, The experience we have had of Christ's readiness to yield to the importunities of our faith and prayer should encourage us to continue instant in our addresses to him, to strive more earnestly, and not to faint. *I sought the Lord, and he heard me,* <sup><424A></sup>Psalm 34:4.

**(2.)** Others also had like experience of comfort in Christ, as it follows there (<sup><424B></sup>Psalm 34:5), *They looked unto him, as well as I, and were lightened.* There *thy mother brought thee forth*, the universal church, or believing souls, in whom Christ was formed, <sup><401B></sup>Galatians 4:15. They were in pain for the comfort of an interest in thee, and *travailed in pain with great sorrow* (so the word here signifies); but they *brought thee forth*; the pangs did not continue always; those that had *travailed* in convictions at last *brought forth* in consolations, and the *pain was forgotten* for joy of the Saviour's birth. By this very similitude our Saviour illustrates the joy which his disciples would have in his return to them, after a mournful separation for a time, <sup><4362></sup>John 16:21, 22. After the bitter pangs of repentance many a one has had the blessed birth of comfort; why then may not I?

2. She begs of him that her union with him might be confirmed, and her communion with him continued and made more intimate (v. 6): *Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm.*

(1.) “Let me have a place in thy heart, an interest in thy love.” This is that which all those desire above any thing that know how much their happiness is bound up in the love of Christ.

(2.) “Let me never lose the room I have in thy heart; let thy love to me be ensured, as that deed which is sealed up not to be robbed. Let nothing ever prevail either to separate me from thy love, or, by suspending the communications of it, to deprive me of the comfortable sense of it.”

(3.) “Let me be always near and dear to thee, as the *signet on thy right hand*, not to be parted with (<sup>2024</sup>Jeremiah 22:24), *engraven upon the palms of thy hands* (<sup>2304</sup>Isaiah 49:14), be loved with a peculiar love.”

(4.) “Be thou my high priest; let my name be written on thy breast-plate, nearer thy heart, as the names of all the tribes were engraven like the engravings of a signet in twelve precious stones on the breast-plate of Aaron, and also on two precious *stones* on the *two shoulders* or arms of the ephod,” <sup>4001</sup>Exodus 28:11, 12, 21.

(5.) “Let thy power be engaged for me, as an evidence of thy love to me; let me be not only a *seal upon thy heart*, but a *seal upon thy arm*; let me be ever borne up in thy arms, and know it to my comfort.” Some make these to be the words of Christ to his spouse, commanding her to be ever mindful of him and of his love to her; however, if we desire and expect that Christ should set us as a *seal on his heart*, surely we cannot do less than set him as a seal on ours.

3. To enforce this petition, she pleads the power of love, of her love to him, which constrained her to be thus pressing for the tokens of his love to her.

(1.) Love is a violent vigorous passion.

[1.] It is *strong as death*. The pains of a disappointed lover are like the pains of death; nay, the pains of death are slighted, and made nothing of, in pursuit of the beloved object. Christ's love to us was *strong as death*, for it broke through death itself. *He loved us, and gave himself for us*. The love of true believers to Christ is *strong as death*, for it makes them dead

to every thing else; it even parts between soul and body, while the soul, upon the wings of devout affections, soars upward to heaven, an even forgets that it is yet clothed and clogged with flesh. Paul, in a rapture of this love, knew not whether he was in *the body or out of the body*. By it a believer is crucified to the world.

[2.] *Jealousy is cruel as the grave*, which swallows up and devours all; those that truly love Christ are jealous of every thing that would draw them from him, and especially jealous of themselves, lest they should do any thing to provoke him to withdraw from them, and, rather than do so, would *pluck out a right eye and cut off a right hand*, than which what can be more cruel? Weak and trembling saints, who conceive a jealousy of Christ, doubting of his love to them, find that jealousy to prey upon them like the grave; nothing wastes the spirits more; but it is an evidence of the strength of their love to him.

(3.) *The coals thereof*, its lamps, and flames, and beams, are very strong, and burn with incredible force, as the *coals of fire that have a most vehement flame, a flame of the Lord* (so some read it), a powerful piercing flame, as the lightning, ~~1817~~ Psalm 29:7. Holy love is a fire that begets a vehement heat in the soul, and consumes the dross and chaff that are in it, melts it down like wax into a new form, and carries it upwards as the sparks towards God and heaven.

(2.) Love is a valiant victorious passion. Holy love is so; the reigning love of God in the soul is constant and firm, and will not be drawn off from him either by fair means or foul, by *life or death* ~~1818~~ Romans 8:38.

[1.] Death, and all its terrors, will not frighten a believer from loving Christ: *Many waters*, though they will quench fire, *cannot quench this love*, no, nor the *floods drown it*, v. 7. The noise of these waters will strike no terror upon it; let them do their worst, Christ shall still be the best beloved. The overflowing of these waters will strike no damp upon it, but it will enable a man to rejoice in tribulation. *Though he slay me*, I will love him and *trust in him*. No waters could quench Christ's love to us, nor any floods drown it; he waded through the greatest difficulties, even seas of blood. Love sat king upon the floods; let nothing then abate our love to him.

[2.] Life, and all its comforts, will not entice a believer from loving Christ: *If a man could hire him with all the substance of his house*, to take his

love off from Christ and set it upon the world and the flesh again, he would reject the proposal with the utmost disdain; as Christ, when the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them were offered him, to buy him off from his undertaking, said, *Get thee hence, Satan*. It would utterly be contemned. Offer those things to those that know no better. Love will enable us to repel and triumph over temptations from the smiles of the world, as much as from its frowns. Some give this sense of it: *If a man would give all the substance of his house to Christ, as an equivalent instead of love, to excuse it, it would be contemned*. He seeks not ours, but us, the heart, not the wealth. *If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it is nothing*, <sup><218></sup>1 Corinthians 13:1. Thus believers stand affected to Christ: the gifts of his providence cannot satisfy them without the assurances of his love.

## <sup><218></sup>SONG OF SOLOMON 8:8-12

### PRIVILEGES AND DUTIES OF THE CHURCH

Christ and his spouse having sufficiently confirmed their love to each other, and agreed it to be on both sides *strong as death* and inviolable, they are here, in these verses, like a loving husband and his wife, consulting together about their affairs, and considering what they should do. Yoke-fellows, having laid their hearts together, lay their heads together, to contrive about their relations and about their estates; and, accordingly, this happy pair are here advising with one another about a sister, and a vineyard.

**I.** They are here consulting about their sister, their little sister, and the disposing of her.

**1.** The spouse proposes her case with a compassionate concern (v. 8): *We have a little sister and she has no breasts* (she has not grown up to maturity); *what shall we do for this little sister of ours in the day that she shall be spoken for*, so as that we may do well for her?

**(1.)** This may be understood as spoken by the Jewish church concerning the Gentile world. God has espoused the church of the Jews to himself, and she was richly endowed, but what shall become of the poor Gentiles, *the barren that has not borne, and the desolate?* <sup><250></sup>Isaiah 54:1. Their



condition (say the pious Jews) is very deplorable and forlorn; they are *sisters*, children of the same fathers, God and Adam, but they are *little*, because not dignified with the knowledge of God; they *have no breasts*, no divine revelation, no scriptures, no ministers, no breasts of consolation drawn out to them, when they might suck, being *strangers to the covenants of promise*, no breasts of instruction themselves to draw out to their children, to nourish them, <sup><402></sup>1 Peter 2:2. *What shall we do for them?* We can but pity them, and pray for them. Lord, what wilt thou do for them? The saints, in Solomon's time, might know, from David's psalms, that God had mercy in store for them, and they begged it might be hastened to them. Now the tables are turned; the Gentiles are betrothed to Christ, and ought to return the kindness by an equal concern for the bringing in of the Jews again, our eldest sister, that once had breasts, but now has none. If we take it in this sense, the unbelieving posterity of these pious Jews contradicted this prayer of their fathers; for, when the day came that the Gentiles should be *spoken for* and courted to Christ, instead of considering what to do for them they plotted to do all they could against them, which filled up the measure of their iniquity, <sup><376></sup>1 Thessalonians 2:16. Or,

**(2.)** It may be applied to any other that belong to the election of grace, but are yet uncalled. They are remotely related to Christ and his church, and sisters to them both, *other sheep that are not of this fold*, <sup><406></sup>John 10:16; <sup><483></sup>Acts 18:10. They *have no breasts*, none yet fashioned (<sup><307></sup>Ezekiel 16:7), no affection to Christ, no principle of grace. *The day* will come *when they shall be spoken for*, when the chosen shall be called, shall be courted for Christ, by the ministers, the friends of the bridegroom. A blessed day it will be, a day of visitation. What shall we do, in that day, to promote the match, to conquer their coyness, and persuade them to consent to Christ and present themselves chaste virgins to him? Note, Those that through grace are brought to Christ themselves should contrive what they may do to help others to him, to carry on the great design of his gospel, which is to espouse souls to Christ and convert sinners to him from whom they have departed.

**2.** Christ soon determines what to do in this case, and his spouse agrees with him in it (v. 9): "*If she be a wall*, if the good work be once begun with the Gentiles, with the souls that are to be called in, if the *little sister*, *when she shall be spoken for* by the gospel, will but receive the word, and build herself upon Christ the foundation, and frame her doings to turn to the Lord, as the wall is in order to the house, *we will build upon her a*

*palace of silver*, or build her up into such a palace; we will carry on the good work that is begun, till the wall become a palace, the wall of stone a palace of silver,” which goes beyond the boast of Augustus Caesar, that what he found brick he left marble. This *little sister*, when once she is joined to the Lord, shall be made to *grow into a holy temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit*, <sup>(402)</sup>Ephesians 2:21, 22. *If she be a door*, when this palace comes to be finished, and the doors of this wall set up, which was the last thing done (<sup>(401)</sup>Nehemiah 7:1), then *we will enclose here with boards of cedar*; we will carefully and effectually protect her, that she shall receive no damage. *We will* do it; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all concur in contriving, carrying on, and crowning, the blessed work when the time comes. Whatever is wanting shall be set in order, and the work of faith shall be fulfilled with power. Though the beginnings of grace be small, the latter end shall greatly increase. The church is in care concerning those that are yet uncalled. “Let me alone,” says Christ; “I will do all that which is necessary to be done for them. Trust me with it.”

**3.** The spouse takes this occasion to acknowledge with thankfulness his kindness to her, v. 10. She is very willing to trust him with her *little sister*, for she herself had had great experience of his grace, and, for her part, she owed her all to him: *I am a wall, and my breasts like towers*. This she speaks, not as upbraiding her little sister that had no breasts, but comforting her concerning her, that he who had made her what she was, who had built her up upon himself and made her to grow up to maturity, could and would do the same kindness for those whose case she bore upon her heart. *Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour*. See,

**(1.)** What she values herself upon, her having found favour in the eyes of Jesus Christ. Those are happy, truly happy, and for ever so, that have the favour of God and are accepted of him.

**(2.)** How she ascribes the good work of God in her to the good-will of God towards her: “He has *made me a wall and my breasts as towers*, and then, in that instance more than in any thing, I experienced his love to me.” *Hail, thou that art highly favoured*, for in thee Christ is formed.

**(3.)** What pleasure God takes in the work of his own hands. When we are made as a *wall*, as a *brazen wall* (<sup>(2018)</sup>Jeremiah 1:18; 15:20), that stands firmly against *the blast of the terrible ones* (<sup>(2304)</sup>Isaiah 25:4), then God takes delight in us to do us good.

(4.) With what joy and triumph we ought to speak of God's grace towards us, and with what satisfaction we should look back upon the special times and seasons when *we were in his eyes as those that find favour*; these were days never to be forgotten.

II. They are here consulting about *a vineyard* they had in the country, the church of Christ on earth considered under the notion of *a vineyard* (v. 11, 12): *Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon*, had a kingdom in the possession of a multitude, a numerous people. As he was a type of Christ, so his vineyard was a type of the church of Christ. Our Saviour has given us a key to these verses in the parable of the vineyard let out to the unthankful husbandmen, <sup><403></sup>Matthew 21:33. The bargain was that, every one of the tenants having so much of the vineyard assigned him as would contain 1000 vines, he was to pay the annual rent of 1000 *pieces of silver*; for we read (<sup><202></sup>Isaiah 7:23) that in a fruitful soil there were 1000 *vines at 1000 silverlings*. Observe,

1. Christ's church is his vineyard, a pleasant and peculiar place, privileged with many honours; he delights to walk in it, as a man in his vineyard, and is pleased with its fruits.

2. He has entrusted each of us with his vineyard, as *keepers* of it. The privileges of the church are that good thing which he has committed to us, to be kept as a sacred trust. The service of the church is to be our business, according as our capacity is. *Son, go work to-day in my vineyard*. Adam, in innocency, was *to dress the garden, and to keep it*.

3. He expects rent from those that are employed in his vineyard and entrusted with it. *He comes, seeking fruit*, and requires gospel-duty of all those that enjoy gospel-privileges. Every one, of what rank or degree soever, must bring glory and honour to Christ, and do some service to the interest of his kingdom in the world, in consideration of what benefit and advantage they enjoy by their share of the privileges of the vineyard.

4. Though Christ has *let out his vineyard to keepers*, yet still it is his, and he has his eye always upon it for good; for, if he did not watch over it *night and day* (<sup><201></sup>Isaiah 27:1, 2), *the watchmen*, to whom he has let it out, would keep it *but in vain*, <sup><401></sup>Psalms 127:1. Some take these for Christ's words (v. 12): *My vineyard, which is mine, is before me*; and they observe how he dwells upon his property in it: It is *my vineyard, which is mine*; so dear is his church to him, it is *his own in the world* (<sup><401></sup>John 13:1), and

therefore he will always have it under his protection; it is his own, and he will look after it.

**5.** The church, that enjoys the privileges of the vineyard, must have them always before her. The keeping of the vineyard requires constant care and diligence. They are rather the words of the spouse: *My vineyard, which is mine, is before me*. She has lamented her fault and folly in not keeping her *own vineyard* (~~2006~~ Song of Solomon 1:6), but now she resolves to reform. Our hearts are our vineyards, which we must *keep with all diligence*; and therefore we must have a watchful jealous eye upon them at all times.

**6.** Our great care must be to pay our rent for what we hold of Christ's vineyard, and to see that we do not go behind-hand, nor disappoint the messengers he sends to *receive the fruits* (~~4034~~ Matthew 21:34): *Thou, O Solomon! must have 1000, and shalt have*. The main of the profits belong to Christ; to him and his praise all our fruits must be dedicated.

**7.** If we be careful to give Christ the praise of our church-privileges, we may then take to ourselves the comfort and benefit of them. If the owner of the vineyard have had his due, the keepers of it shall be well paid for their cares and pains; they shall have 200, which sum, no doubt, was looked upon as a good profit. Those that work for Christ are working for themselves, and shall be unspeakable gainers by it.

## ~~2006~~ SONG OF SOLOMON 8:13-14

### MUTUAL LOVE OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Christ and his spouse are here parting for a while; she must stay below *in the gardens* on earth, where she has work to do for him; he must remove to *the mountains of spices* in heaven, where he has business to attend for her, as *an advocate with the Father*. Now observe with what mutual endearments they part.

**I.** He desires to hear often from her. She is ready at her pen; she must be sure to write to him; she knows how to direct (v. 13): "*Thou that, for the present, dwellest in the gardens, dressing and keeping them till thou remove from the garden below to the paradise above — thou, O believer! whoever thou art, that dwellest in the gardens of solemn ordinances, in the gardens of church-fellowship and communion, the companions are so happy as to hear thy voice, cause me to hear it too.*" Observe,

**1.** Christ's friends should keep a good correspondence one with another, and, as dear companions, speak often to one another (<sup>318</sup>Malachi 3:16) and hearken to one another's voice; they should edify, encourage, and respect one another. They are companions in the kingdom and patience of Christ, and therefore, as fellow-travellers, should keep up mutual freedom, and not be shy of, nor strange to, one another. *The communion of saints* is an article of our covenant, as well as an article of our creed, *to exhort one another daily*, and be glad to be exhorted by another. *Hearken to the voice* of the church, as far as it agrees with the voice of Christ; his companions will do so.

**2.** In the midst of our communion with one another we must not neglect our communion with Christ, but let him see our countenance and hear our voice; he here bespeaks it: "*The companions hearken to thy voice*; it is a pleasure to them; *cause me to hear it*. Thou makest thy complaints to them when any thing grieves thee; why does thou not bring them to me, and let me hear them? Thou art free with them; be as free with me; pour out thy heart to me." Thus Christ, when he left his disciples, ordered them to send to him upon every occasion. *Ask, and you shall receive*. Note, Christ not only accepts and answers, but even courts his people's prayers, not reckoning them a trouble to him, but an honour and a *delight*, <sup>318</sup>Proverbs 15:8. *We cause him to hear* our prayers when we not only pray, but wrestle and strive in prayer. He loves to be pressingly importuned, which is not the manner of men. Some read it, "*Cause me to be heard*; thou hast often an opportunity of speaking to thy companions, and they hearken to what thou sayest; speak of me to them; let my name be heard among them; let me be the subject of thy discourse." "One word of Christ" (as archbishop Usher used to say) "before you part." No subject is more becoming, or should be more pleasing.

**II.** She desires his speedy return to her (v. 14): *Make haste, my beloved, to come again, and receive me to thyself; be thou like a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains of spices*; let no time be lost; it is pleasant dwelling here *in the gardens, but to depart, and be with thee, is far better*; that therefore is what I wish, and wait, and long for. *Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*. Observe,

**1.** Though Jesus Christ be now retired, he will return. The heavens, those high *mountains of sweet spices*, must *contain him till the times of refreshing shall come*; and those times will come, *when every eye shall*

*see him*, in all the pomp and power of the upper and better world, the mystery of God being finished and the mystical body completed.

**2.** True believers, as they are looking for, so they are hastening to, the coming of that *day of the Lord*, not that they would have him make more haste than good speed, but that the intermediate counsels may all be fulfilled, and then that the end may come — the sooner the better. Not that they think him *slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness*, but thus they express the strength of their affections to him and the vastness of their expectations from him when he comes again.

**3.** Those only that can in sincerity call Christ their *beloved*, their *best beloved*, can, upon good grounds, desire him to hasten his second coming. As for those whose hearts go a whoring after the world, and who set their affections on the things of the earth, they cannot love his appearing, but dread it rather, because then the earth, and all the things of it which they have chosen for their portion, will be burnt up. But those that truly love Christ long for his second coming, because it will be the crown both of his glory and their bliss.

**4.** The comfort and satisfaction which we sometimes have in communion with God in grace here should make us breathe the more earnestly after the immediate vision and complete fruition of him in the kingdom of glory. The spouse, after an endearing conference with her beloved, finding it must break off, concludes with this affectionate request for the perfecting and perpetuating of this happiness in the future state. The clusters of grapes that meet us in this wilderness should make us long for the full vintage in Canaan. If a day in his courts be so sweet, what then will an eternity within the veil be! If this be heaven, O that I were there!

**5.** It is good to conclude our devotions with a joyful expectation of the glory to be revealed, and holy humble breathings towards it. We should not part but with the prospect of meeting again. It is good to conclude every sabbath with thoughts of the everlasting sabbath, which shall have no night at the end of it, nor any week-day to come after it. It is good to conclude every sacrament with thoughts of the everlasting feast, when we shall sit down with Christ at his table in his kingdom, to rise no more, and drink of the wine new there, and to break up every religious assembly in hopes of *the general assembly of the church of the first-born*, when time and days shall be no more: Let the blessed Jesus hasten that blessed day.

*Why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?*