

are a figurative description of the infirmities that usually accompany old age, so ver. 6 notices the circumstances which take place in the hour of death. If sin had not entered into the world, these infirmities would not have been known. Surely then the aged should reflect on the evil of sin.

8—14. Solomon repeats his text, VANITY OF VANITIES, ALL IS VANITY. These are the words of one that could speak by dear-bought experience of the vanity of the world, which can do nothing to ease men of the burden of sin.—As he considered the worth of souls, he gave good heed to what he spake and wrote; words of truth will always be acceptable words. The truths of God are as goads to such as are dull and draw back, and nails to such as are wandering and draw aside; means to establish the heart, that we may never sit loose to our duty, nor be taken from it.—The Shepherd of Israel is the Giver of inspired wisdom. Teachers and guides all receive their communications from him. The title is applied in Scripture to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The prophets sought diligently, what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.—To write many books was not suited to the shortness of human life, and would be weariness to the writer, and to the reader; and then was much more so to both than it is now. All things would be vanity and vexation, except they led to this conclusion, That to fear God, and keep his commandments, is the whole of man. The fear of God includes in it all the affections of the soul towards him, which are produced by the Holy Spirit. There may be terror where there is no love, nay, where there is hatred. But this is different from the gracious fear of God, as the feelings of an affectionate child. The fear of God, is often put for the whole of true religion in the heart, and includes its practical results in the life.—Let us attend to the one thing needful, and now come to him as a merciful Saviour, who will soon come as an almighty Judge, when he will bring to light the things of darkness, and manifest the counsels of all hearts. Why does God record in his word, that ALL IS VANITY, but to keep us from deceiving ourselves to our ruin? He makes our duty to be our interest. May it be graven in all our hearts. Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is all that concerns man.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

This book is a Divine allegory, which represents the love between Christ and his church of true believers, under figures taken from the relation and affection that subsist between a bridegroom and his espoused bride; an emblem often employed in Scripture, as describing the nearest, firmest, and most sure relation: see Psa. xlv.; Isa. liv. 5, 6; lxii. 5; Jer. ii. 2; iii. 1; also in Ezekiel, Hosea, and by our Lord himself, Matt. ix. 15; xxv. 1: see also Rev. xxi. 2, 9; Eph. v. 27. There is no character in the church of Christ, and no situation in which the believer is placed, but what may be traced in this book, as humble inquirers will find, on comparing it with other Scriptures, by the assistance of God the Holy Spirit, in answer to their supplications. Much, however, of the language has been misunderstood by expositors and translators. The difference between the customs and manners of Europe, and those of the East, must especially be kept in view. The little acquaintance with eastern customs possessed by most of our early expositors and translators, has in many cases prevented a correct rendering. Also, the changes in our own language, during the last two or three centuries, affect the manner in which some expressions are viewed, and they must not be judged by modern notions. But the great outlines, rightly interpreted, fully accord with the affections and experience of the sincere Christian.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. *The title.* 2—6. *The church confesses her deformity.* 7, 8. *The church beseeches Christ to lead her to the resting-place of his people.* 9—17. *Christ's commendation of the church—Her esteem for Him.*

VER. 1. This is "the Song of songs," excellent above any others, for it is

wholly taken up with describing the excellences of Christ, and the love between him and his redeemed people.

2—6. The church, or rather the believer, speaks here in the character of the spouse of the King, the Messiah.—The kisses of his mouth mean those assurances of pardon with which believers are favoured, filling them with peace and joy in believing, and causing them to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost.—Gracious souls take most pleasure in loving Christ, and being loved of him. Christ's love is more valuable and desirable than the best this world can give. The name of Christ is not now like ointment sealed up, but like ointment poured forth; which denotes the freedom and fulness of the setting forth of his grace by the gospel.—Those whom he has redeemed and sanctified, are here the virgins that love Jesus Christ, and follow him whithersoever he goes, Rev. xiv. 4. They entreat him to draw them by the quickening influences of his Spirit. The more clearly we discern Christ's glory, the more sensible shall we be that we are unable to follow him suitably, and at the same time be more desirous of doing it.—Observe the speedy answer given to this prayer. Those who wait at Wisdom's gate, shall be led into truth and comfort. And being brought into this chamber, our griefs will vanish. We have no joy but in Christ, and for this we are indebted to him. We will remember to give thanks for thy love; it shall make more lasting impressions upon us than any thing in this world. Nor is any love acceptable to Christ but love in sincerity, Eph. vi. 24.—The daughters of Jerusalem may mean professors not yet established in the faith. The spouse was black as the tents of the wandering Arabs, but comely as the magnificent curtains in the palaces of Solomon. The believer is black, as being defiled and sinful by nature, but comely, as renewed by Divine grace to the holy image of God. He is still deformed with remains of sin, but comely as accepted in Christ. He is often base and contemptible in the esteem of men, but excellent in the sight of God. The blackness was owing to the hard usage that had been suffered. The children of the church, her mother, but not of God, her Father, were angry with her. They had made her suffer hardships, which caused her to neglect the care of her soul. Thus, under the emblem of a poor female, made the chosen partner of a prince, we are led to consider the circumstances in which the love of Christ is accustomed to find its objects. They were wretched slaves of sin, in toil, or in sorrow, weary and heavy laden, but how great the change when the love of Christ is manifested to their souls!

7, 8. Observe the title given to Christ, O Thou whom my soul loveth. Those that do so, may come to him boldly, and may humbly plead with him. Is it with God's people a noon-time of outward troubles, inward conflicts? Christ has rest for them. Those whose souls love Jesus Christ, earnestly desire to share in the privileges of his flock. Turning aside from Christ is what gracious souls dread more than any thing else.—God is ready to answer prayer. Follow the track, ask for the good old way, observe the footsteps of the flock, look what has been the practice of godly people. Sit under the direction of good ministers; beside the tents of the under shepherds. Bring thy charge with thee, they shall all be welcome. It will be the earnest desire and prayer of the Christian, that God would so direct him in his worldly business, and so order his situation and employment, that he may have his Lord and Saviour always before him.

9—17. The Bridegroom gives high praises of his spouse. In the sight of Christ believers are the excellent of the earth, fitted to be instruments for promoting his glory. The spiritual gifts and graces which Christ bestows on every true believer, are described by the ornaments then in use, ver. 10, 11.—The graces of the saints are many, but there is dependence upon each other.

He who is the Author, will be the Finisher of the good work. The grace received from Christ's fulness, springs forth into lively exercises of faith, affection, and gratitude. Yet Christ, not his gifts, is most precious to them. The word translated "camphire," signifies "atonement or propitiation." Christ is dear to all believers, because he is the propitiation for their sins. No pretender must have his place in the soul. They resolved to lodge him in their hearts all the night; during the continuance of the troubles of life.—Christ takes delight in the good work which his grace has wrought on the souls of believers. This should engage all who are made holy, to be very thankful for that grace which has made those fair, who by nature were deformed. The spouse (the believer) has a humble, modest eye, discovering simplicity and godly sincerity; eyes enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit, that blessed Dove. The church expresses her value for Christ. Thou art the great Original, but I am but a faint and imperfect copy. Many are fair to look at, yet their temper renders them unpleasant: but Christ is fair, yet pleasant. The believer, ver. 16, speaks with praise of those holy ordinances in which true believers have fellowship with Christ. Whether the believer is in the courts of the Lord, or in retirement; whether following his daily labours, or confined on the bed of sickness, or even in a dungeon, a sense of the Divine presence will turn the place into a paradise. Thus the soul, daily having fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, enjoys a lively hope of an incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance above.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1—7. *The mutual love of Christ and his church.* 8—13. *The hope and calling of the church.* 14—17. *Christ's care of the church—Her faith and hope.*

Ver. 1—7. Believers are beautiful, as clothed in the righteousness of Christ; and fragrant, as adorned with the graces of his Spirit; and they thrive under the refreshing beams of the Sun of righteousness.—The lily is a very noble plant in the East; it grows to a considerable height, but has a weak stem. The church is weak in herself, yet is strong in Him that supports her. The wicked, the daughters of this world, who have no love to Christ, are as thorns, worthless and useless, noxious and hurtful. Corruptions are thorns in the flesh; but the lily now among thorns, shall be transplanted into that paradise where there is no brier or thorn.—The world is a barren tree to the soul; but Christ is a fruitful one. And when poor souls are parched with convictions of sin, with the terrors of the law, or the troubles of this world, weary and heavy laden, they may find rest in Christ. It is not enough to pass by this shadow, but we must sit down under it. Believers have tasted that the Lord Jesus is gracious; his fruits are all the precious privileges of the new covenant, purchased by his blood, and communicated by his Spirit; promises are sweet to a believer, and precepts also. Pardons are sweet, and peace of conscience sweet. If our mouths are out of taste for the pleasures of sin, Divine consolations will be sweet to us.—Christ brings the soul to seek and to find comforts through his ordinances, which are as a banqueting-house where his saints feast with him. The love of Christ, manifested by his death, and by his word, is the banner he displays, and believers resort to it.—How much better is it with the soul when sick from love to Christ, than when surfeited with the love of this world! And though Christ seemed to have withdrawn, yet he was even then a very present help. All his saints are in his hand, which tenderly holds their aching heads. Finding Christ thus nigh to her, the soul is in great care that her communion with him is not interrupted. We easily grieve the Spirit by wrong tempers. Let those who have comfort, fear sinning it away.

8—13. The church pleases herself with thoughts of further communion with Christ. None besides can speak to the heart. She sees him come. This may be applied to the prospect the Old Testament saints had of Christ's coming in the flesh. He comes as pleased with his own undertaking. He comes speedily. Even when Christ seems to forsake it, it is but for a moment; he will soon return with everlasting loving-kindness.—The saints of old saw him, appearing through the sacrifices and ceremonial institutions. We see him through a glass darkly, as he manifests himself through the lattices.—Christ invites the new convert to arise from sloth and despondency, and to leave sin and worldly vanities, for union and communion with him. The winter may mean years passed in ignorance and sin, unfruitful and miserable, or storms and tempests that accompanied his conviction of guilt and danger.—Even the unripe fruits of holiness are pleasant unto Him whose grace has produced them. All these encouraging tokens and evidences of Divine favour, are motives to the soul to follow Christ more fully. Arise then, and come away from the world and the flesh, come into fellowship with Christ. This blessed change is owing wholly to the approaches and influences of the Sun of righteousness.

14—17. The church is Christ's dove; she returns to him, as her Noah. Christ is the Rock, in whom alone she can think herself safe, and find herself easy, as a dove in the hole of a rock, when struck at by the birds of prey. Christ calls her to come boldly to the throne of grace, having a great High Priest there, to tell what her request is. Speak freely, fear not a slight or a repulse. The voice of prayer is sweet and acceptable to God; those who are sanctified have the best comeliness.—The first risings of sinful thoughts and desires, the beginnings of trifling pursuits which waste the time, trifling visits, small departures from truth, whatever would admit some conformity to the world; all these, and many more, are little foxes which must be removed. This is a charge to believers to mortify their sinful appetites and passions, which are as little foxes, that destroy their graces and comforts, and crush good beginnings. Whatever we find a hinderance to us in that which is good, we must put away.—He feedeth among the lilies; this shows Christ's gracious presence among believers. He is kind to all his people. It becomes them to believe this, when under desertion and absence, and so to ward off temptations.—The shadows of the Jewish dispensation were dispelled by the dawning of the gospel day. And a day of comfort will come after a night of desertion. Come over the mountains of Bether, "the mountains that divide," looking forward to that day of light and love. Christ will come over every separating mountain to take us home to himself.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1—5. *The trials of the church by the withdrawing of Christ.* 6—11. *The excellences of the church—The care of Christ for her*

Ver. 1—5. It was hard to the Old Testament church to find Christ in the ceremonial law; the watchmen of that church gave little assistance to those who sought after him. The night is a time of coldness, darkness, and drowsiness, and of dim apprehensions concerning spiritual things. At first, when uneasy, some feeble efforts are made to obtain the comfort of communion with Christ. This proves in vain; the believer is then roused to increased diligence. The streets and broad-ways seem to imply the means of grace in which the Lord is to be sought. Application is made to those who watch for men's souls. Immediate satisfaction is not found. We must not rest in any means, but by faith apply directly to Christ.—The holding of Christ, and not letting him go, denotes earnest cleaving to him. What prevails is a humble, ardent suing by prayer, with a lively exercise of faith on his

promises. So long as the faith of believers keeps hold of Christ, he will not be offended at their earnest asking, yea, he is well pleased with it. The believer desires to make others acquainted with his Saviour. Wherever we find Christ, we must take him home with us to our houses, especially to our hearts; and we should call upon ourselves and each other, to beware of grieving our holy Comforter, and provoking the departure of the Beloved.

6—11. A wilderness is an emblem of the world; the believer comes out of it when he is delivered from the love of its sinful pleasures and pursuits, and refuses to comply with its customs and fashions, to seek happiness in communion with the Saviour. A poor soul shall come up, at last, under the conduct of the Comforter; like a cloud of incense ascending from the altar, or the smoke of the burnt-offerings. This signifies pious and devout affections, and the mounting of the soul heaven-ward. The believer is filled with the graces of God's Spirit; his devotions now are very lively. These graces and comforts are from the heavenly Canaan.—He, who is the Peace of his people, the King of the heavenly Zion, has provided for the safe conveyance of his redeemed through the wilderness of this world. The bed, or palanquin, was contrived for rest and easy conveyance, but its beauty and magnificence showed the quality of its owner. The church is well guarded; more are with her than are against her: believers, when they repose in Christ, and with him, though they have their fears in the night, are yet safe.—The chariot here denotes the covenant of redemption, the way of our salvation. This is that work of Christ, which makes him loved and admired in the eyes of believers. It is framed and contrived, both for the glory of Christ, and for the comfort of believers; it is well ordered in all things and sure. The blood of the covenant, that rich purple, is the cover of this chariot, by which believers are sheltered from the wind and storms of Divine wrath, and the troubles of this world; but the midst of it is that love of Christ which passes knowledge, this is for believers to repose upon.—Christ, in his gospel, manifests himself. Take special notice of his crown. Applying this to Christ, it speaks the honour put upon him, and his power and dominion.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1—7. *Christ sets forth the graces of the church.* 8—15. *Christ's love to the church.* 16. *The church desires further influences of Divine grace.*

Ver. 1—7. If each of these comparisons has a meaning applicable to the graces of the church, or of the faithful Christian, they are not clearly known; and great mistakes are made by fanciful guesses. The mountain of myrrh appears to mean the mountain Moriah, on which the temple was built, where the incense was burned, and the people worshipped the Lord. This was his residence till the shadows of the law given to Moses were dispersed by the breaking of the gospel day, and the rising of the Sun of righteousness. And though, in respect of his human nature, Christ is absent from his church on earth, and will continue to be so till the heavenly day break, yet he is spiritually present in his ordinances, and with his people. How fair and comely are believers, when justified in Christ's righteousness, and adorned with spiritual graces! when their thoughts, words, and deeds, though imperfect, are pure, manifesting a heart nourished by the gospel!

8—15. Observe the gracious call Christ gives to the church. It is, 1. A precept; so this is Christ's call to his church to come off from the world. These hills seem pleasant, but there are in them lions' dens; they are mountains of the leopards. 2. As a promise; many shall be brought as members of the church, from every point. The church shall be delivered from her persecutors in due time, though now she dwells among lions, *Psa. lvii. 4.*—Christ's heart is upon his church; his treasure is therein; and he delights in

the affection she has for him; its working in the heart, and its works in the life. The odours wherewith the spouse is perfumed, are as the gifts and graces of the Spirit. Love and obedience to God are more pleasing to Christ than sacrifice or incense. Christ having put upon his spouse the white raiment of his own righteousness, and the righteousness of saints, and perfumed it with holy joy and comfort, he is well pleased with it.—And Christ walks in his garden unseen. A hedge of protection is made around, which all the powers of darkness cannot break through. The souls of believers are as gardens enclosed, where is a well of living water, John iv. 14; vii. 38, the influences of the Holy Spirit. The world knows not these wells of salvation, nor can any opposer corrupt this fountain.—Saints in the church, and graces in the saints, are fitly compared to fruits and spices. They are planted, and do not grow of themselves. They are precious; they are the blessings of this earth. They will be kept to good purpose when flowers are withered. Grace, when ended in glory, will last for ever. Christ is the source which makes these gardens fruitful; even a well of living waters.

16. The church prays for the influences of the blessed Spirit, to make this garden fruitful. Graces in the soul are as spices in these gardens, that in them which is valuable and useful. The blessed Spirit, in his work upon the soul, is as the wind. There is the north wind of conviction, and the south wind of comfort. He stirs up good affections, and works in us both to will and to do that which is good.—The church invites Christ. Let him have the honour of all the garden produces, and let us have the comfort of his acceptance of it. We can invite him to nothing but what is his own already. The believer can have no joy of the fruits, unless they redound some way or other to the glory of Christ. Let us then seek to keep separate from the world, as a garden enclosed, and to avoid conformity thereto.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1. *Christ's answer.* 2—8. *The disappointments of the church from her own folly.* 9—16. *The excellences of Christ.*

Ver. 1. See how ready Christ is to accept the invitations of his people. What little good there is in us would be lost, if he did not preserve it to himself. He also invites his beloved people to eat and drink abundantly. The ordinances in which they honour him, are means of grace.

2—8. Churches and believers, by carelessness and security, provoke Christ to withdraw. We ought to notice our spiritual slumbers and distempers.—Christ knocks to awaken us, knocks by his word and Spirit, knocks by afflictions and by our consciences; thus, Rev. iii. 20. When we are unmindful of Christ, still he thinks of us. Christ's love to us should engage ours to him, even in the most self-denying instances; and we only can be gainers by it. Careless souls put slights on Jesus Christ.—Another could not be sent to open the door. Christ calls to us, but we have no mind, or pretend we have no strength, or we have no time, and think we may be excused. Making excuses is making light of Christ. Those put contempt upon Christ, who cannot find in their hearts to bear a cold blast, or to leave a warm bed for him. See the powerful influences of Divine grace. He put in his hand to unbolt the door, as one weary of waiting. This betokens a work of the Spirit upon the soul.—The believer's rising above self-indulgence, seeking by prayer for the consolations of Christ, and to remove every hinderance to communion with him; these actings of the soul are represented by the hands dropping sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the locks.—But the Beloved was gone! By absenting himself, Christ will teach his people to value his gracious visits more highly. Observe, the soul still calls Christ her Beloved. Every desertion is not despair. Lord, I believe, though I must say,

Lord, help my unbelief. His words melted me, yet, wretch that I was, I made excuses. The smothering and stifling of convictions will be very bitter to think of, when God opens our eyes. The soul went in pursuit of him; not only prayed, but used means, sought him in the ways wherein he used to be found. The watchmen wounded me. Some refer it to those who misapply the word to awakened consciences. The charge to the daughters of Jerusalem, seems to mean the distressed believer's desire of the prayers of the feeblest Christian. Awakened souls are more sensible of Christ's withdrawals than of any other trouble.

9—16. Even those who have little acquaintance with Christ, cannot but see amiable beauty in others who bear his image. There are hopes of those who begin to inquire concerning Christ and his perfections. Christians, who are well acquainted with Christ themselves, should do all they can to make others know something of him.—Divine glory makes him truly lovely in the eyes of all who are enlightened to discern spiritual things. He is white in the spotless innocence of his life, ruddy in the bleeding sufferings he went through at his death. This description of the person of the Beloved, would form, in the figurative language of those times, a portrait of beauty of person and of grace of manners; but the aptness of some of the allusions may not appear to us. He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all that believe. May his love constrain us to live to his glory.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1. *Inquiry where Christ must be sought.* 2, 3. *Where Christ may be found.* 4—10. *Christ's commendations of the church.* 11—13. *The work of grace in the believer.*

Ver. 1. Those made acquainted with the excellences of Christ, and the comfort of an interest in him, desire to know where they may meet him. Those who would find Christ, must seek him early and diligently.

2, 3. Christ's church is a garden, enclosed, and separated from the world; he takes care of it, delights in it, and visits it. Those who would find Christ, must attend him in his ordinances, the word, sacraments, and prayer. When Christ comes to his church, it is to entertain his friends. And to take believers to himself: he picks the lilies one by one; and at the great day he will send forth his angels to gather all his lilies, that he may be for ever admired in them. The death of a believer is not more than the owner of a garden plucking a favourite flower; and He will preserve it from withering, yea, cause it to flourish for ever, with increasing beauty. If our own hearts can witness for us that we are Christ's, question not his being ours, for the covenant never breaks on his side. It is the comfort of the church, that he feeds among the lilies, that he takes delight in his people.

4—10. All the real excellence and holiness on earth centre in the church. Christ goes forth subduing his enemies, while his followers gain victories over the world, the flesh, and the devil. He shows the tenderness of a compassionate Redeemer, the delight he takes in his redeemed people, and the workings of his own grace in them.—True believers alone can possess the beauty of holiness. And when their real character is known, it will be commended. Both the church and believers, at their first conversion, look forth as the morning, their light being small, but increasing. As to their sanctification, they are fair as the moon, deriving all their light, grace, and holiness from Christ; and as to justification, clear as the sun, clothed with Christ, the Sun of righteousness, and fighting the good fight of faith, under the banners of Christ, against all spiritual enemies.

11—13. In retirement and in meditation the Christian character is formed and perfected. But not in the retirement of the idle, the self-indulgent, or the trifler. When the Christian is released from the discharge of his duties

in life, the world has no attractions for him. His prayer is, that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow within him, and around him. Such are the interesting cares and employments of him whom the world wrongly deems unhappy, and lost to his true interests. In humility and self-abasement, the humble Christian would turn away from the sight of all; but the Lord delights to honour him. Chiefly, however, may the reference be to the ministering angels who shall be sent for the soul of the Christian. Their approach may startle, but the departing soul shall find the Lord its strength and its portion for ever.—The church is called the Shulamite: the word signifies perfection and peace; not in herself, but in Christ, in whom she is complete, through his righteousness; and has peace, which he made for her through his blood, and gives unto her by his Spirit.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1—9. *The graces of the church.* 10—13. *The delight of the church in Christ.*

Ver. 1—9. The similitudes here are different from what they were before, and in the original refer to glorious and splendid clothing. Such honour have all his saints; and having put on Christ, they are distinguished by their beautiful and glorious apparel. They adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. Consistent believers honour Christ, recommend the gospel, and convince and awaken sinners.—The church resembles the stately and spreading palm; while her love for Christ, and the obedience resulting therefrom, are precious fruit of the true Vine.—The King is held in the galleries. Christ takes delight in the assemblies and ordinances of his people; and admires the fruit of his grace in them. When applied to the church and to each faithful Christian, all this denotes that beauty of holiness, in which they shall be presented to their heavenly Bridegroom.

10—13. The church, the believing soul, triumphs in its relation to Christ, and interest in him. She humbly desires communion with him. Let us walk together, that I may receive counsel, instruction, and comfort from thee; and may make known my wants and my grievances to thee, with freedom, and without interruption. Communion with Christ is what all that are made holy earnestly breathe after. And those who would converse with Christ, must go forth from the world.—Wherever we are, we may keep up communion with God. Nor should we go where we cannot in faith ask him to go with us. Those who would go abroad with Christ, must begin early in the morning of their days; must begin every day with him, seek him early, seek him diligently. A gracious soul can reconcile itself to the poorest places, if it may have communion with God in them; but the most delightful fields will not satisfy, unless the Beloved is there. Let us not think to be satisfied with any earthly object.—Our own souls are our vineyards; they should be planted with useful trees. We should often search whether we are fruitful in righteousness. Christ's presence will make the vine flourish, and the tender grapes appear, as the returning sun revives the gardens. If we can appeal to him, Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee; if his Spirit witness with our spirit, that our souls prosper, it is enough. And we must beg of him to search and try us, to discover us to ourselves.—The fruits and exercises of graces are pleasant to the Lord Jesus. These must be laid up, and always ready; that by our bringing forth much fruit, he may be glorified. It is all *from* him, therefore it is fit it should be all *for* him.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1—4. *Desire for communion with Christ.* 5—7. *The vehemence of this desire.* 8—12. *The church pleads for others.* 13, 14. *And prays for Christ's coming.*

Ver. 1—4. The church wishes for the constant intimacy and freedom with

the Lord Jesus that a sister has with a brother. That they might be as his brethren, which they are, when by grace they are made partakers of a Divine nature. Christ is become as our Brother; wherever we find him, let us be ready to own our relation to him, and affection for him, and not fear being despised for it. Is there in us an ardent wish to serve Christ more and better? What then have we laid up in store, to show our affection to the Beloved of our souls? What fruit unto holiness?—The church charges all her children that they never provoke Christ to withdraw. We should reason with ourselves, when tempted to do what would grieve the Spirit.

5—7. The Jewish church came up from the wilderness, supported by Divine power and favour. The Christian church was raised from a low, desolate condition, by the grace of Christ relied on. Believers, by the power of grace, are brought up from the wilderness. A sinful state is a wilderness in which there is no true comfort; it is a wandering, wanting state: there is no coming out of this wilderness, but leaning on Christ as our Beloved, by faith; not leaning to our own understanding, nor trusting in any righteousness of our own; but in the strength of him, who is the Lord our Righteousness.—The words of the church to Christ which follow, entreat an abiding place in his love, and protection by his power. Set me as a seal upon thine heart; let me always have a place in thine heart; let me have an impression of love upon thine heart. Of this the soul would be assured, and without a sense thereof no rest is to be found. Those who truly love Christ, are jealous of every thing that would draw them from him; especially of themselves, lest they should do any thing to provoke him to withdraw from them. If we love Christ, the fear of coming short of his love, or the temptations to forsake him, will be most painful to us. No waters can quench Christ's love to us, nor any floods drown it. Let nothing abate our love to him. Nor will life, and all its comforts, entice a believer from loving Christ. Love of Christ, will enable us to repel and triumph over temptations from the smiles of the world, as well as from its frowns.

8—12. The church pleads for the Gentiles, who then had not the word of God, nor the means of grace. Those who are brought to Christ themselves, should contrive what they may do to help others to him. Babes in Christ are always seen among Christians, and the welfare of their weak brethren is an object of continual prayer with the stronger believers. If the beginning of this work were likened to a wall built upon Him the precious Foundation and Corner-stone, then the Gentile church would become as a palace for the great King, built of solid silver. If the first preaching of the gospel were as the making a door through the wall of partition, that door should be lasting, as cased with boards of durable cedar. She shall be carefully and effectually protected, enclosed so as to receive no damage. The church is full of care for those yet uncalled. Christ says, I will do all that is necessary to be done for them.—See with what satisfaction we should look back upon the times and seasons, when we were in his eyes as those that find favour. Our hearts are our vineyards, which we must keep with all diligence. To Christ, and to his praise, all our fruits must be dedicated. All that work for Christ, work for themselves, and shall be unspeakable gainers by it.

13, 14. These verses close the conference between Christ and his church. He first addresses her as dwelling in the gardens, the assemblies and ordinances of his saints. He exhorts her to be constant and frequent in prayers, supplications, and praises, in which he delights. She replies, craving his speedy return to take her to be wholly with Him. The heavens, those high mountains of sweet spices, must contain Christ, till the times come, when every eye shall see him, in all the glory of the better world. True believers

as they are looking for, so they are hastening to the coming of that day of the Lord. Let every Christian endeavour to perform the duties of his station, that men may see his good works, and glorify his heavenly Father. Continuing earnest in prayer for what we want, our thanksgivings will abound, and our joy will be full; our souls will be enriched, and our labours prospered. We shall be enabled to look forward to death and judgment without fear. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

ISAIAH.

Isaiah prophesied in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He has been well called the *evangelical prophet*, on account of his numerous and full prophecies concerning the coming and character, the ministry and preaching, the sufferings and death of the Messiah, and the extent and continuance of his kingdom. Under the veil of the deliverance from Babylon, Isaiah points to a much greater deliverance, which was to be effected by the Messiah; and seldom does he mention the one, without alluding at the same time to the other; nay, he is often so much enraptured with the prospect of the more distant deliverance, as to lose sight of that which was nearer, and to dwell on the Messiah's person, office, character, and kingdom.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1—9. The corruptions prevailing among the Jews. 10—15. Severe censures. 16—20. Exhortations to repentance. 21—31. The state of Judah is lamented; with gracious promises of the gospel times.

VER. 1—9. Isaiah signifies, "The salvation of the Lord;" a very suitable name for this prophet, who prophesies so much of Jesus the Saviour, and his salvation.—God's professing people did not know or consider that they owed their lives and comforts to God's fatherly care and kindness. How many are very careless in the affairs of their souls! Not considering what we do know in religion, does us as much harm, as ignorance of what we should know.—The wickedness was universal. Here is a comparison taken from a sick and diseased body. The distemper threatens to be mortal. From the sole of the foot even to the head; from the meanest peasant to the greatest peer, there is no soundness, no good principle, no religion, for that is the health of the soul. Nothing but guilt and corruption; the sad effects of Adam's fall. This passage declares the total depravity of human nature. While sin remains unrepented, nothing is done toward healing these wounds, and preventing fatal effects.—Jerusalem was exposed and unprotected, like the huts or sheds built up to guard ripening fruits. These are still to be seen in the East, where fruits form a large part of the summer food of the people.—But the Lord had a small remnant of pious servants at Jerusalem. It is of the Lord's mercies that *we* are not consumed. The evil nature is in every one of us; only Jesus and his sanctifying Spirit can restore us to spiritual health.

10—15. Judea was desolate, and their cities burned. This awakened them to bring sacrifices and offerings, as if they would bribe God to remove the punishment, and give them leave to go on in their sin. Many who will readily part with their sacrifices, will not be persuaded to part with their sins. They relied on the mere form as a service deserving a reward. The most costly devotions of wicked people, without thorough reformation of heart and life, cannot be acceptable to God. He not only did not accept them, but he abhorred them. All this shows that sin is very hateful to God. If we allow ourselves in secret sin, or forbidden indulgences; if we reject the salvation of Christ, our very prayers will become abomination.

16—20. Not only feel sorrow for the sin committed, but break off the practice. We must be doing, not stand idle. We must be doing the good