

CHAPTER XI

JEHOVAH IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE; LET ALL THE EARTH KEEP SILENCE BEFORE HIM 2:7

2:7 “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes or by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love until He please.” Although the children of God are praying to be prepared for the Coming of Jesus Christ, few have entered into a realization of the importance of holding fast that which God has given them, lest any man take their crown.

When the Lord draws us through His dealing and His everlasting love and mercy, to go on with Him more closely than we have ever done; and we come into closer touch with Him than we have ever had before, we hardly know how to abide in that place; neither do we see the necessity of walking softly before Him. Thus, many times, we lose that which He has done for us; and if we would regain it, we must go over the same path again.

Although there are mountain peaks of revelation, which God gives us when we are brought into a closer relation with the Lord, He does not intend that this experience should be temporary, but permanent and increasing. How many times we have not walked softly and have lost that which He has given us; and which we could have kept if we had humbled ourselves and remained on the watchtower, with our hearts before Him in earnest prayer. Just a movement of the flesh will disturb the relation into which He has brought us.

How vividly and forcibly, does this warning of the bride express the care we must take not to grieve the Spirit, nor to stop the working of our Lord within us. The bride, because of her more intimate intercourse with her Lord, begins to realize how carefully she must walk if she would have that fellowship unbroken, and not hinder His dealing. As cautiously as the hunter follows the roe, so must she live and walk. Not only this; every relation must be brought into conformity to this careful walk.

No animal is as difficult to hunt as the roe or the hind. Only the hunter who has been trained, knows how quiet and careful he must be, how cautiously he must take every step, if he would capture one of these animals. Sounds, unheard by other ears, are quickly heard by the roe or the hind; and they will dart away so swiftly, that the hunter oftentimes does not see them go.

It is with greater care and quietness, that the bride must take each step if she would not disturb the quiet rest and abiding of her Beloved in the soul; which, if it were unbroken, would cause her to go on in leaps and bounds to the very best God has for her. How often has the presence of our Lord been so sweet, and we have been so melted down and ravished by the revelations of His love, that all else is less than refuse when beheld in the light of those moments we spend alone with Him whom our soul loveth. Then He is disturbed by a word, a careless moment, a heedless action, or because we are taken up with something else (though it be some necessary duty); and before we know how it happened, He has withdrawn or hidden Himself. We see His footsteps and know that He has really been with us, but He has faded from our spiritual vision, and we are left desolate.

What a wonderful showing forth of the only way in which we can walk with Christ, and so live that there shall be no ups and downs in our lives! How little have we entered into the meaning or realization of "a close walk with God." Very little have we comprehended how softly we must walk, if we would be conscious of the presence and working of the Holy Lamb of God, and of the Holy Dove with us all the time. We must lose sight of all else; we must refuse to hear or see anything or any one but Him; we must walk so carefully and obediently, and so put away all the noise and clatter of our own desires and flesh, that nothing will waken our Beloved.

Many times we seek for a deeper experience with our Lord; and when it is granted us in a measure, we immediately begin to rejoice over it with such self-elation, that, when we look, He is gone. All who approach as near to Him as is set forth in this portion of the Song of Solomon, have followed with much pain and longing, with long delay of the revelation. They should prayerfully ask God that they may apprehend how to walk, so that they may never be obliged to seek Him in contrition because they have been unfaithful or careless.

Perhaps the Lord will meet you in a most blessed way, and He will talk with you face to face. You hear His voice, and He talks with you and floods you with such glory and joy, and such a revelation of Himself, that it seems you can never get away from this place of privilege and revelation. But you do get away from it. God is going to bring us to the place where we shall not drift up and down, but shall live in His presence and walk in the Spirit all the time, and nothing shall be able to mar or disturb our relation with our Lord.

It is so easy for us to grieve the Spirit, to wound and grieve our Lord. If we were a small part as careful to please the Lord as we have been at some time in our lives to please some person whom we have loved, we should have been walking with Him in uninterrupted communion today, in the place of having so many ups and downs. When we really love anyone it is no bondage to please them; and it is a real sorrow when we are unable to do this.

There have been too many who have followed after Him like the steeds in Pharaoh's chariots, who have entered the Banqueting House; but when such entrance has been vouchsafed to them, they have become elated and uplifted. They have taken it as a permanent bestowment, and have not at all apprehended that it requires a more careful walk to abide in the place they have reached and more caution to keep their love still abiding with them, than was needed to arrive at this place of privilege.

Many of us have sought a deeper entrance into communion with our Lord; we have sought a deeper revelation of the pure truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ; we have asked for him to abide with us and manifest Himself more continuously. We have asked many things of Him and persevered in our petitions until He has given, or commenced to give us that for which we have prayed. But when we have sought hard and diligently and see the answer in sight, we begrudge the care and diligence that are essential to retaining that which He has given us.

"The slothful man roasted not that which he took in hunting" (Prov. 12:27). How slothful we are in even seeking for that which God is holding out to us; and then how slothful we are in roasting and partaking of the game we have taken in hunting. Game not roasted, not subjected to fire and partaken of, spoils on one's hands; the only purpose

of a conscientious hunter has in hunting, is to get something to eat that he may grow strong thereby.

It is the same with all that we seek and receive from our dear Lord. The supreme purpose God has in drawing us on, the supreme purpose we should have in striving to enter into a more intimate knowledge of the Lord and of the Truth, is not that such privileges may be unused and unroasted, but that we may roast and partake of them. It is that they may give us strength and life; that they may become flesh in us and be manifested to the glory of His name.

It is here, that each virgin of the bride of the Lamb must walk softly; here must she be clothed in humility; here must she fully apprehend that it is all of grace and not because of any worthiness or of anything in herself. She must realize that she is not a favorite with Christ, and what He has given her may be lost more easily than any earthly treasure. She must also realize that she can dwell in the constant enjoyment of this close, intimate relation if she will.

Charge all motives and movements of self, all idle, unworthy thoughts within you, not to move nor waken your Lord. Adjure every desire, purpose, feeling within you, demand of every one who touches your life (though you may not say it to them in so many words), that they shall be in your life, as the hunter who is following the roe or the hind in the field.

Why has not the Lord a greater place in your life and in mine? Because we have not walked softly, because we have grieved and driven Him away. It is not only the outbreaking sins that will stop His working, but the careless words and the little things will hinder Him just as effectually.

Many times we have gotten down before the Lord, and He has brought us into a place where it seemed that nothing could ever be the same, and that *we* could never be the same again. They never would have been the same if we had walked as softly as the bride beseeches everybody around her, and everything without and within her being, to walk. But we did not walk softly, and we lost that which we had received. *We became the same again.*

One of the most precious object lessons and most solemn warnings to be found in the Song of Solomon, is drawn from the Bridegroom's sudden disappearance from the vision and presence of the bride. He will be with her in such intimacy and preciousness, and almost immediately He is gone. Thus it is with our dear Lord in His dealings.

Not only should His presence be sweet, not only should we walk softly when He is blessing our souls, but we should walk softly, humbly, when He convicts and deals with us. The greatest blessing God can bestow upon us is to convict us when we need it. If He did not show us the places in our lives which are not pleasing to Him, how could we be made strong and put away that which is not like Him.

We have not valued God's dealings and the indwelling of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit as we should. We have taken it as something we are to enjoy, and we have let it become common. It is not a commonplace thing for God to deal with us; for Jesus Christ to dwell within us by faith; for the Holy Spirit to take up his abode in our bodies, revealing Jesus Christ, convicting, teaching, and working in your soul and in mine. However many blessings and dealings you have had, look back and remember that the God of Heaven and earth, the God who inhabits Eternity, was working upon you.

Remember that even a little sound of earth and of the flesh, a little getting out of the Spirit, will stop His working. As you feel the wooing of the Spirit and the moving of the Lord in your life, walk so softly that His working, His slumber, His dealings, His manifestations, shall in no way be disturbed. How do you know, if you are careless and grieve Him when he begins to deal with you, that He will ever begin that same dealing again in the same way?

Not only adjure, but watch your own heart, that no noise nor distraction shall enter in to disturb your Beloved; let no one nor anything come between you and Him. When one He has been grieved and withdraws, it is not so easy to beseech Him and to prevail upon him to return in the same way in which He was dwelling with you before. Do not stir nor waken Him. Put off *your* flesh and words, *your* action and desires. Put off all that would disturb Him. Put away every relation with those about you that would affect you and disturb Him in any way. There is a significance and a solemn warning in the fact, that this is the only place in the whole book where the bride is found in the Banqueting House.

All anxious are will disturb Him and attract your attention so that you eyes will wander with Him. All self-seeking and self-assertion or self-justification will arouse and grieve Him. All complainings, questionings, doubts and fears will disturb His rest. Sometimes your devotions themselves, because they are full of fleshy energy and fervor, will waken your Beloved; and He will withdraw leaving you dry and barren. Let Him move when He pleases. If He would seem to deepen your faith and confidence by withdrawing, let it be done of His own good pleasure, and not because He has been disturbed.

WHEN YOU ARE ALONE, WATCH YOUR THOUGHTS that they may be fixed upon Him, and that there shall be nothing to grieve or disturb Him. Keep in touch with Him; not with anxious strain and effort, but in rest and quiet, in repose and communion, in submission and meditation. Listen for His voice, and worship Him with your whole being. WHEN YOU ARE WITH OTHERS, WATCH YOUR WORDS AS WELL AS YOUR THOUGHTS and keep your mind stayed upon Him. Even when the conversation about you is not conducive to the quiet of His presence, you will find, as you are watchful and mindful of Him, that you can be shut up with Him; and that He will direct all your words so that they will not disturb nor dishonor Him.

Sometimes, when He would work a deeper faith within us, He hides Himself from us for a moment; but this is very different from having Him withdraw because of our carelessness and indifference. When He is working in this way and hides His face that He may teach you- whether in light or darkness- to always behold Him by faith; if you have done nothing to disturb Him, you may, "rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." And that word, "rest," means "to be quiet unto." If He withdrew of Himself not through any fault of yours, and you are quiet unto the Lord, waiting patiently for Him, you will find that He will return to you in fuller vision and revelation than ever before.

This is the end of the first Canticle, which began with the Bride's earnest longing and search for the Bridegroom, and closes with His presence, leaving the bride in the precious enjoyment of His love and favor.

Canticle Two. Ch. 2:8 to 3:5

CHAPTER XII

APPROACH OF THE BRIDEGROOM. 2:8, 9

2:8 “The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.” There is a deep warning and a precious meaning in here for the upbuilding of our own souls. Between the seventh and the eighth verses, the Bridegroom has withdrawn. We are not told whether He withdrew of Himself, or whether His withdrawal was caused by the carelessness and indifference of the bride. There are times when He withdraws or hides Himself that He may lead us into deeper depths of earnestness and abandonment. And there are times when we do not keep in touch with Him and are not quiet enough before Him, so that He can remain and work unhindered and undisturbed.

The closer we have approached to the Lord, the higher the place into which He has brought us, the more poignant is our grief when, through carelessness or inadvertence, we grieve Him so that He stops working. Whatever has caused His absence, the bride has been waiting and listening for His return. Some time has evidently elapsed between the seventh and eighth verses; and we can discern the weary moments of waiting through which she has passed, and the heartsickness, which has increased as she has watched for His appearing.

A veil has come between the Lord and the bride; there is a little less sweetness and realization of His presence, less prayer, and communion, and touch with Him. But again she hears the sound of His voice, which she has learned to know and to love. Her heart leaps forward as she exclaims with the joy of love after separation: “The voice of my Beloved!” It is as the sound of many waters to her ears, it is as music to her heart.

Though she may have been idle and even slumbering, she is aroused by that sound; and her heart goes out to Him, as she rejoices because of the Bridegroom’s voice. His sheep know His voice. Though they are lying down or are even indolent, His voice will arouse them if they are really His and belong to His flock. It is only when sheep are sick, that they will listen to the voice of strangers and follow them; and it is just as true of God’s flock. If the sheep are well, they cannot be deceived by the voice of a stranger, though he may come in the dress of the true Shepherd and appear as an angel of light. The word translated “voice” means “sound”. This takes us back to the description of God’s voice in I Kings 19:12, where the literal translation of “a still small voice,” is “a sound of gentle stillness.”

God’s voice also comes to us in dealings and chastenings. Again the bride hears the sound of His presence and discerns His working within her; and before she sees Him, she rejoices in His return. As yet she has not seen Him, but she has heard His voice, and knows that He is coming. Suddenly she sees Him leaping upon the mountains; those impassable obstacles, which would prove insurmountable to any one else, are stepping-places for His feet. He leaps from one to the other with the sure, swift feet of a roe or a young hart. It was thus in His first coming, that He came to do His Father’s will.

In the title of the 22nd Psalm, which is Messianic, the meaning of Aijelet hash-Shahar is, “The hind of the mourning.” And the word translated, “hind,” and the word

that is rendered, “hart,” in the Song of Solomon, is the same word in the Hebrew. Our Lord was the “Hind of the morning.” He who is the Light of the world, is the only One who could bring light to the world. As the first rays of the sun in a clear morning glance here and there over the landscape, so Jesus Christ, “The Hind of the morning,” came down to earth, leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills.

How beautiful are the first rays of the sun in the early morning, as its beams touch this mountain peak and the crest of yonder hill. In the valleys, the shades of night seem to linger; and in contrast to these dark shadows, the touches of the sunlight appear all the more beautiful as they glance from hill to hill. So does the “Sun of righteousness,” who has arisen with healing in His wings, appear, as He hastens to do the will of God. He leaps over every obstacle, He disperses every shadow; He appears and disappears, now in sight and then not seen, but ever drawing nearer and nearer.

With eagerness, with a zeal that ate Him up, with an abandonment that reached to death and beyond, He came to do the will of God. Our precious Lord, “the Hind of the morning,” was hunted to death, as many bulls compassed Him, strong bulls of Bashan which beset Him round (Ps. 22:12). He leaped over all the mountains of sin and condemnation, of God’s wrath and displeasure; and came down to bring peace and reconciliation, to bring redemption to a lost and sin-cursed race.

Upon the pages of God’s Word is He leaping from mountain peak to mountain peak of prophecy. In the distance, we catch the first glimpse of Him in Gen. 3:15; where God promises that He, the seed of the woman, shall bruise the serpent’s head. We see Him coming nearer and nearer. His appearance becomes more and more distant, until we behold His form which was marred more than the sons of men; we see the face of Him who had no beauty that any should desire Him; we see His visage that was so marred more than any man (Isa. 52:13-15).

He waited not, but came leaping upon the mountains of separation from God, crossing over from God to sinful humanity. He came that He might bring down the high mountains of God’s wrath, and build a Highway for the redeemed to pass over as they come rejoicing home. He leaped over the mountains of sin and condemnation to bring salvation to us.

Sometimes, as we see the difficulties in our lives and the hard things that seem impossible, we wonder if He can surmount them; for we know that we cannot. But He who could surmount the mountains of God’s broken law and wrath, and of man’s sin and separation from God’s presence, can surmount every mountain and hill that is in your life and mine.

At first, we only look for Him in the joy and blessings; but He comes much oftener and more precious as He leaps upon the mountains of difficulty. There are things so hard that none could undertake them but the Lord; but He will make these things stepping-places for His feet, and upon them He will reveal Himself to you in a deeper way than He has ever done before.

He will come to you upon the things that are so hard you do not see how you are going to go through them; and you wonder if even the Lord can lift you over them. He will come to you in the hard things in your life, in your disposition, in the testings of your body. He will come to you in the hardest surroundings and circumstances. He will leap over all the mountains of difficulty and skip along the hills of your fears and distress; and if your eyes are anointed, you will see Him revealing Himself through your window.

You cannot see Him unless your eyes are anointed, you cannot hear Him unless your ears are dug out. We are too satisfied with a shallow experience, and we do not apprehend that God always meets us most precious and manifestly in the hardest place in our lives.

It is upon the mountains of difficulty and over the chasms of despair, which almost crush out our lives and seem immovable and impassable, that the Lord comes to us as He never comes under any other conditions. Sometimes He leaves a hard thing in our lives, which is impossible to us, so that He may meet us there. As we are repeatedly brought up against the hard thing, we must lie down at His feet and seek His help and enabling. Thus does our Beloved build an altar with the stones of difficulty, which only He can move; and it is at this altar, built from the impossible, that we learn to meet Him.

The sheep always shrink close to the shepherd when he is whipping them; and it is through the hardest things in our lives, that the Great Shepherd chastens us; and it is through this chastening, that we are drawn close, close to His side. With most of us, if the path were smooth and easy, we would walk far from our dear Shepherd into forbidden fields. Truly, He comes to us upon the mountains.

How sweetly He comes to us when for any cause He has hidden His face! Though there are many obstacles, which appear to us like mountains, He treads them all down and leaps from one obstacle to another. He crosses precipices and ravines that, to any but Him, would be impassable. He comes skipping upon the hills as does the roe or the hind. All inaccessible heights, all bottomless chasms are nothing to Him; and He draws nearer and nearer until His stands behind our wall.

2:9 “My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, He standeth behind our wall; He looketh in at the windows; He glanceth through the lattice.” The first wall behind which Jesus Christ stood, was “The middle wall of partition,” which He broke down “that He might create in Himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross” (Eph. 2:12-18). It was He who took away the wall that stood between fallen humanity and God. It was He who took away the middle wall of partition that shut out the Gentiles from God and His promises; and in Himself, He made of both Jew and Gentile, one new man, through the peace an reconciliation that were wrought out upon His cross.

He not only came to “the middle wall of partition,” but He came to the wall that stood between Him and each individual. He not only came as far as the mountains and the hills, but He came to our very wall, to our window, and to our lattice. The first wall in our lives behind which He stood, was the wall of our sins, which separated us from the Lord who loved us and died for us. He stood so close to us, that we could have touched Him at any time if we had been willing to get the wall of our sins out of the way.

Finally, we got this wall out of the way by humbling our hearts and believing upon His Name, and we were born again and became new creatures in Him. Oh, how we praise God that we do not belong to the sin-stained multitudes that are hurrying on to darkness and eternal death! Oh, how our hearts rejoice that through His blood, the wall of sin and unbelief, which separated us from God, has been torn down.

You notice that it is not *His wall*, but it is *our wall* that hides Him. When anything comes between the Lord and us, it is always *our wall*, for it is always built from our sin, unbelief or incapacity. Even though we are saved, if there is a wall, it is *our wall*,

for He never builds walls between Himself and us. He may hide Himself away in order to quicken our faith, in order to make us want Him rather than His blessings; but when there is a real wall between the Lord and us it is *our wall* and *we* build it. How often our unbelief raises a wall so that we cannot see Him; though He is near, and we know that He is there, our eyes are holden.

If at any time you cannot get to the Lord, search diligently and see if you have built any walls between you and Him; and if so, hasten to get them out of the way. Do you ask how to get these walls out of the way? By humbling yourself and seeking God. Do you ever have a feeling that God is afar off, that you cannot reach out and bring down answers to prayer, that you cannot touch Him? There is something in your life that has built a wall. Although He hides Himself away from us sometimes, this is not the same, or is the feeling the same as the separation that comes from a wall which our actions have built. Every child of God who is deep in Him, easily discerns the difference.

When He hides Himself to quicken faith, it appears like a wall, but we know that it is not. But when we build any walls between the Lord and us, He is so good that He will let us see what they are made of. Generally, there is some infidelity, carelessness, or slackness; there is something we have failed to do, or a wrong course we have taken; and it is from this that we have gotten the material to build our wall.

“Standeth behind our wall.” He stands there waiting. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Do you see that the one who is inside must open the door? If we shut the Lord out, we alone can open the door and let Him in; for He never breaks down any doors. He knocks at the door, and if we open it He will come in and sup with us. He offers us something precious, and if we listen, He will come and give it to us; but He never forces His presence or His treasures upon us.

“He looketh in the windows; He glanceth in the lattice.” First, we see the Lord at a distance, then behind the wall, and now in front of the window and glancing through the lattice. The little squares of glass in a lattice window break the vision of all without, so that nothing is clearly discerned.

Sometimes He looks in at our window and glanceth through our lattice, and we do not know that it is the Lord. How many times He would woo us and draw us, but we know Him not. How many years were lost from our lives because we did not know Him when He glanced through our lattice from the pages of His Word, and in conviction. It is wonderful to be in the place where our eyes are anointed and our ears so opened, that we know the Lord whenever He shows Himself.

Are your eyes anointed so that you can see the Lord looking in at your window of afflictions? Are your eyes anointed so that you can see Him glancing through your lattice when He has taken away all your earthly possessions and left you stripped and desolate? Are your eyes anointed so that you have discerned Him standing behind your wall when He has taken away your loved one, perhaps your only one, and has left your heart torn and bleeding? Do you know why He did this? It was because you had let these things or friends whom you loved become a wall between you and Him. Only as He took away the material would the wall fall down.

If we let the Lord take every wall out of the way, we begin to see Him in greater revelation, until we behold Him in every circumstance and condition in our lives as we

never saw Him before. Even when He glances through the lattice, we see Him. We see Him through the lattice of His Word and when we come to His table and partake of the emblems of His broken body and shed blood.

When God sees us in danger of treasuring His gifts rather than Himself, or when He is preparing us for the walk of naked faith, into which very few of His children ever enter, He often withdraws from the open window, and we only see Him as he glances through the lattice. His apparent withdrawal brings great distress, for in such dealings there is nothing between Him and us that has made Him withdraw. As our faith increases, we comfort ourselves with the assurance of God's faithfulness and unchangeableness; and we begin to discern Him as clearly through the lattice as we had before seen Him through the window.

But the Lord finally withdraws behind an apparent wall, which our eyes cannot pierce, though His eyes are ever upon us. Again we are distressed and dismayed, but as faith disperses the clouds of doubt and fear, He gives us "Songs in the night." We are able to say; "I know Him whom I have believed." And the eye of faith is strengthened and purified, until we discern Him behind the wall more clearly than we have ever beheld Him before.

It is when faith has been thus strengthened, that He begins to reveal Himself to our chastened vision; and we catch glimpses of Him through the lattice – passing visions of His beauty which we have never before beheld. If He hides Himself, we press on with our eyes more and more toward Him, and we endure as beholding Him who is invisible. Finally, He reveals Himself in such vision as is beyond all that we can ask or think. So close does He draw and so intimately does He reveal Himself, that faith seems to merge into supernatural sight, as we set the Lord ever before us, and we walk ever before Him.

Let us behold Him through the lattice of His acts, of His providences, and most of all through the lattice of the Word. Let us behold Him clearer and most blessedly through the lattice of the ordinances, and through the windows of prayer and communion. Truly, now we see in a mirror darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know fully even as also we are fully known. Even here on earth, we have beheld our Lord in His beauty in only a small degree, as compared with the vision that He is waiting to give to the soul who is willing to pay the price.

O Glorious Bridegroom for whom we long! For whom we wait! Let us ever behold Thee with clearer vision as Thou dost look in through the windows of our hearts and lives. Let us discern Thee as Thou dost glance through the lattice of the trials and afflictions with which Thou dost chasten us. Anoint our eyes that we may behold Thee through the lattice of the precious Word of God. By faith, let us see Thee clearly, wondrously, as we are buried with Thee in baptism; and as we are raised to walk in newness of life through the power of Thy resurrection.

Let us behold Thee intimately as we come to Thy table and partake of the broken loaf and the wine, emblems of thy broken body and spilt blood. Let us behold Thee by faith, more and more clearly, until Thou shalt be as real and beautiful, as glorious to us while we are in the bodies of our humiliation as Thou wilt be when faith is lost in sight; and we see Thee face to face, and are changed into Thy glorious image as we behold Thee as Thou art!

CHAPTER XIII

THE VOICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AT HAND. 2:10-12

2:10 “My Beloved spake, and said unto me, rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.” In the tenth verse and those following, is the first mention of the “garden,” or “vineyard,” which always means the Kingdom of Heaven; and which was first preached by John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Messiah at His first advent. It is the beginning of spring in the Vineyard of the Lord, and we see that there is not ripe fruit, only flowers which give promise of abundant fruitage. The birds are singing, the green figs are beginning to ripen, and the voice of the turtledove is heard proclaiming that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

The Bridegroom has not only come to the bride, but He is calling her to shake off every touch of slumber, to put away all indolence and procrastination, all vain confidence in her past experiences. Whether she has become slothful or whether He has withdrawn to increase her faith, she has been reclining or resting, for He tells her to rise up. She has not followed Him as she did once, for if she had, there would be no necessity for Him to call her to arise and come away.

At the time Jesus was born on earth, the Jews had fallen into such slumber and inertia, that they did not know the Word of God when He was made flesh and came and dwelt among them. When their Messiah came, for whom they had been looking for centuries, they neither knew Him nor received Him. Because He was born in a manger, and His body, the tent in which He tabernacled when upon earth, was poor and without comeliness; because He did not come in pomp and glory, the Jews knew Him not.

He who came to His own, was the One who had led them through the wilderness, and who had revealed God to them; He had gone before them in the cloud by day and in the pillar of fire by night. It was He who had dwelt in unutterable and unapproachable glory in their Holiest of all; it was He who had defeated their enemies for them, and he had spread His pavilion over them, so that all nations were afraid before them. He it was, who came to His own and they knew Him not.

Dear child of God, how many times has He come to you in a different way than you were expecting, and you knew Him not? How many times, in answer to your prayers, He came to you in some humble or mean thing, and you knew Him not. How many times you asked great things of Him, and He commenced to answer your prayers through low, mean channels, He hid behind the wall, He came to you, and you knew Him not.

When we become spiritually lazy or stubborn or willful, when we become indifferent or fall asleep, when we walk along the path of our own will and flesh, we will hear the voice of the Lord saying: “Rise up, My love, and come away.” Have you ever come before the Lord, thinking that you were going on with Him, and He convinced you that you had not been true to Him? Has He made you know that you have not been going as fast as He would have you, or as you thought you were going? Has He made you know that you have not been walking in the light that He has given you?

There is no experience so distressing as to have the Lord show us, not only that we are not where we should be or where we thought we were, but that we are not where

we have once been. There is no standing still in this race that we have entered. It is like pulling a load up a hill; if we try to stand still, we immediately begin to slip down toward the bottom; and thus we leave the advance light and place, into which, by His grace, we are entering. When we loosen the girdle of Truth a little, and do not go on as fast as He would have us, His voice is ever calling us to put aside all indolence and come away to meet Him. His voice would stir us to leave all that is hindering, and come out to behold the blossoms and the beauty of the Garden of the Lord.

He does not call the bride to come away with Him, but to come away and meet Him. Leave everything, especially your self-life behind, and come away to that which He has for you. We hardly realize that every time Christ calls you and we refuse Him, whether we say it with our lips or with our actions, we really say: "I choose this person or thing. I choose myself, instead of Christ." If we choose to walk with those who are not walking with the Lord, we really choose them in the place of choosing Him; for we cannot walk with both.

There are times when He offers something, and in the place of rising up and leaving everything so that we can enter in and possess that which He shows us, we fail to enter in; we choose our own ease and our own will sin the place of His. It is when we first hear His voice, that we must rise up and come away to meet Him. God does not stand still, He is ever moving on; and if we delay, His voice will grow fainter and fainter, so that when we do arise to go with Him, we may not find Him.

Do you know that every drawing you feel in your heart, is the voice of Jesus calling you to "rise up and come away"? Every moving and yearning in your heart, is the voice of your Beloved urging you to hasten? There are many who have heard the Lord's voice calling them to arise, and they have arisen a little; but they have not "come away" to meet Him, and have fallen down again in slumber. It is easier to settle down and rest upon the experiences we have had, than to run harder that we may enter into a higher experience. When we hear His voice, let us drop everything and everybody, no matter what becomes of them or of the relation that has been between us; and let us hasten to the place where the Lord can meet us. Then He will show us the blossoms and flowers in the Kingdom of the Lord; He will let us see the promise of fruit and harvest; He will let us hear the singing of the bride.

2:11, 12 "For, lo, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land." Historically, the beginning of this book refers to the period just before at the time of the first advent of Christ. The Bridegroom spoke through John the Baptist, who was His messenger and came to prepare the way before Him. John proclaimed the coming of the Messiah and preached the baptism of repentance.

It sets forth the doing away of the old dispensation and law of the covenant, which had no power to bring life to dead souls and is symbolized by Winter; and the ushering in of the new dispensation of grace, which is symbolized by Spring. The law of God has never been fulfilled excepting in Jesus Christ. That which man could not do, Christ came and did when He died upon Calvary. The darkness and winter of God's wrath of the condemnation which rested upon man, were done away by the Lord Jesus Christ, who satisfied every demand of the law. The rain from the doing away of the law and of the wrath of God softened the ground and prepared it for the bringing in of a better covenant.

The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to God. As condemned sinners, we could come to Him only through the grace and mercy that were brought to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. The fierceness of God's wrath stuck our Lord as He hung upon Calvary, and as He died, we died in Him there. Now the warmth and sunshine of God's grace, which is in Christ in all fullness, and through Him alone is brought to us, is flowing out to humanity like waves of the ocean. Whosoever will, may plunge into the Fountain and prove that the grace of God is sufficient.

As we think of the faint light that the people of God had under the old dispensation, we see that it truly was winter. It was like the warmth of the sun in midwinter, when its rays can scarcely penetrate and disperse the frost in the air. There was no more power in the law to give life to one soul, than there is power and warmth in the midwinter sun and atmosphere, to bring out the flowers of spring and the fruits of summer and autumn.

There was not life nor power in the law; all was dead and could only prepare the way for Him who could give life. All the law could do, was to show man his utter helplessness, his undone condition, and his exceeding sinfulness. Even when he would do good, there was no power in man's fallen, sinful nature to obey God's commands; He could not work out his own salvation until God had put something in him to work out. Not through works of the law, nor of himself, is man saved; but it is a gift of God. He has given unto us eternal life, and the life is in His Son. He that hath the Son, hath the life; and he that hath not the Son hath not the life.

In the individual, this is a picture of the soul who is dead in unbelief; full of deadness and darkness, full of fruitlessness; whose life is bleak, cold, dead, like midwinter. When the breaking up comes, and the rays of the sun begin to fall upon the winter of death and unbelief, the rains and mists of doubts and fears begin to roll away; and the warmth of the "Sun of righteousness" brings life and warmth to the soul.

It is the rain that comes when winter begins to break up that prepares the ground for the seed of fruitfulness. It is the breaking up, in the consciousness of the condemnation of God, and the godly sorrow that comes to the repentant sinner, that prepares the heart for the seed and the fruit-bearing. The rain cannot bring forth fruit any more than can the snow and winter; but it prepares the ground for the seed, which has life in it, and has life more abundant; and conviction and repentance do not save a man, but prepare him to receive Jesus Christ.

2:12 "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in the land." "The flowers," which are a token of Winter of divine anger passed, and of the Spring of divine grace extended, have appeared on the earth in the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only perfect flower, He is the only perfect fruit, He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys. Because He is all this, those who are redeemed by Him are the eternal lilies, which are being prepared and cultivated in God's Garden. He is the only true Vine; and as His life flows through the branches that have been grafted into Him, they begin to send forth buds and blossoms.

It not only means this, but the flowers have appeared upon the trees and upon the vines of the heritage of the Lord. As yet there is no fruit, but the flowers give promise of a rich harvest from every shrub and plant, from every vine that the Father has planted in

His vineyard. This is the beginning of the setting up of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth.

Everything is either in blossom or in flower; upon the olive tree and upon the vine appear the bud, the blossom, the green fruit. Though the fruit has not yet ripened, the fragrance and beauty of the first days of spring cover the Lord's vineyard; the sunshine of God's approval is over His heritage. The warmth of His grace is wooing the buds to burst forth into flowers, the flowers to give place to the tiny fruit, the immature fruit to go on unto perfection.

“The time of the singing of birds is come,” is historically a figure of the rejoicing that went forth over the first advent of the Messiah. It was His coming that heralded the springing into life of that which was dead through the fall of man. None can tell the joy, which, at His first advent, filled the hearts of those Jews who received Jesus Christ as their Messiah, and as the “Hope of Israel.”

This is also symbolic of the music that should fill the heart of every believer, for truly has the Lord put a new song in our mouths, even as praise unto our God; and the mouth of every one who has been redeemed, should be filled with praises. It is emblematic of the song of the Lamb, which begins as soon as a soul passes out of death into life; of the joy of Jehovah, which is our strength; of counting it all joy when we fall into manifold temptations; of rejoicing in our infirmities and weaknesses, that the strength of our Lord may be manifested. It is continually singing and making melody in our hearts unto God; it is rejoicing in the Lord always and having His praise continually in our mouths.

This clause is also translated: “The time of the pruning of the vines is come.” This is likewise the time of pruning of the vines that the Master, when He comes, shall find fruit and not leaves only. As His hand prunes and cuts away that which will hinder us and keep us from getting His best, our hearts must give forth music and singing. We must praise Him with love and abandonment because He takes such care of us. The husbandman never prunes a dead branch. In Heb. 12:8, we are told that if we are without chastening, we are not sons, but bastards. The dead branches are burned, but where a little fruit has appeared, the vine is pruned that the branches may bear more fruit. For herein is our Father glorified, that we bear *much* fruit.

“The voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.” Among the Jewish expositors, this is applied to the voice of Elias; by most other expositors, it is applied to the voice of John the Baptist, the forerunner. When we remember that John came in the spirit of Elias, we see how wonderfully these expositions harmonize. The turtledove is an emblem of peace and we know that John the Baptist came as a forerunner of the One who is our Peace, even the Heavenly Solomon, the Prince of Peace.

The turtledove is an emblem of love, and especially of the Holy Spirit, and he is the first of the migratory birds to return in the springtime; the first to come back to the warmth and to the brightness of the returning sun. John the Baptist was the first to proclaim the approach of the Spring of grace, the Summer of God's presence, the dispensation of the grace of God, which our Lord ushered in at His first advent. In Jeremiah, God uses the turtledove to reprove His people, because the dove knows the

time of his coming, but God's people knew not the law of Jehovah. The dove is a still greater reproach to the Jews, because they knew not their Messiah when He came.

The turtledove is also the emblem of repentance and of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, and came preaching repentance. Truly did the sound of the turtledove go forth in the land at the time our Lord was upon the earth. And this sound is going forth over the earth in these days.

The second Coming of the Lord is drawing near, and over the whole earth is heard the voice of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming the near coming of the Lord. It was the Holy Spirit who proclaimed the first advent of Christ through John, and who called men to repentance because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.

In these last days, and with mighty power during the last decade, the same Holy Spirit, that called men to repentance through John, and prepared the way for the first coming of the Lord, is proclaiming the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. The voice of the Holy Dove is heard in the land. Now, it is not only through one, (as it was then through John alone,) but the Holy Spirit is speaking through thousands of God's children, proclaiming the near Coming of Christ, and calling upon Christians everywhere to prepare to meet Him. The sound has gone forth over the whole earth that "Jesus is coming soon."

Those who know the signs of the times, as set forth in the Word of Prophecy, are astir as they recognize that the midnight cry is indeed going forth. "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth and meet Him!" Most of the Jews were asleep at the time of Christ's first coming, and most of God's people are sleeping in these days. Very few believe from their hearts that the Coming of the Lord draweth near; but the Holy Dove, who knows the time of His return, of His Coming, is heard in the land; and He is warning us, calling us to arouse from slumber, urging every child of God to prepare for the Great Day.

Never since the time of the early Church, has there be such singing of birds, such pruning of branches, such separating, as God has been doing in His vineyard during these last ten years. There is a different note of praise, which as never been heard in the same way before; and this is the sounding forth of praise to Jesus in the phrase, "Glory to Jesus!" It seems to well up in the hearts of thousands of God's children over the face of the earth. It is as though our precious Lord has been robbed of glory so long, that the Holy Spirit would literally bring back to Him the glory which, during many centuries, has largely been turned aside to man.

Not only do we hear this note of praise, but there has been wonderful music, which has gone forth in the power of the Holy Spirit; music that is an echo from the heavenly choir. As the virgins of the bride go on unto perfection, it is not when everything is going smoothly, that this singing is going to be heard with the most sweetness and power. God is going to bring us to the place where we shall sing with the most abandonment and melody when the pruning of vines is going on.

When God reaches down His hand and begins to cut the suckers from the vines, when He begins to separate us and to deal with us, then shall be heard the singing of birds over the whole domain of our beings. We shall not go about, moaning and ripening if we have really set our faces to go through with Jesus.

Our precious Lord wants us to have "Songs in the night" of sorrow and trial, of affliction and persecution. In the night of His dealing and purifying processes, He wants

us to have songs that will ring out upon the air and in the ears of all who are near us; that will float upward until they resound through the courts of heaven, and mingle with the music of heavenly hosts around the throne of God.

After the husbandman has gone through the vineyards are pruned vines, they look like fields of unsightly sticks stuck in the ground. No one would believe that they could ever bear a leaf, much less any fruit, so unpromising do they appear. But when the rain and sun minister to them, abundant fruit and harvest is brought forth in its time. So is it with us. We are not nearly stripped yet, but He would have us sing all the time He is working upon us, so that it will be a real time of joy in our souls and to every one around us.

He would have us anoint our heads and praise Him when we are going through hard things, so that it would be a veritable singing of birds. How often when we are in this pruning process, we put on sackcloth and ashes and say with every action, if not in words: "The Lord is dealing with me, I am going through very hard things." Let us rejoice and send forth melody from our lips, let us make melody in our hearts unto our Lord. Though we pass through continual valleys of Weeping, let us make them Places of Springs, until every spot is covered with the blessings of the early rain.

CHAPTER XIV

The Clefts of the Rock. 2:13, 14

2:13 “The fig tree ripeneth her green figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.” For the fig tree, upon which abundant fruitage has been preparing during the winter, has begun to “make red” her green figs. We read in Matthew 24:32 ff: “From the fig tree learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that He is nigh, even at the doors.” Already do we see these signs upon the earth. However thick may be the darkness, however hard are the testings and afflictions we are in, let us lift up our heads because our redemption draweth nigh. The Coming of the Lord is so near, we know not at what moment we shall hear the shout of our Lord, with the voice of the archangel with the trump of God, and be caught up out of all darkness and testings to meet the Lord in the air, and thus be forever with Him.

“The vines,” symbolic of the true Vine, are laden with fragrant blossoms. This symbolizes the birth and pure, fragrant life of our dear Lord when He was on the earth. The flowers on the vine have their place, and Christ’s holy, spotless life had its place; but if there were only blossoms on the grapevine, with no fruit, the blossoms, however fragrant and beautiful they might be, would profit nothing. Even so with the true Vine. If the pure, fragrant life of our Lord upon the earth were all, then there would be no fruit; and His life would have profited nothing in the redemption of the human race.

But our Lord’s life on earth was perfected, the fruit was perfected and was gathered, and the juice of the fruit flowed out when He hung upon Calvary. It was only as He died, that He led many souls to Glory. It was only as He died that fruit appeared upon the true Vine. Those who do not accept the Atonement and the Blood of Jesus Christ, or pervert their real meaning, really exalt the flowers of His perfect human life above the eternal fruit, which comes forth and is perfected through His death alone.

There must be the blossoms and the flowers before the fruit appears; and without the pure, spotless human life of our Lord, there could have been no death, hence no efficacy of His work upon Calvary. But we must remember that we are saved through His death, and not through the life He lived on earth. It is only through our union with Him in His death and resurrection, that we die and are raised up to walk in the newness of life. There is such preciousness and power in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that our hearts rejoice as our faith lays hold of the power in His work, and it becomes operative in our lives.

As with our Lord who is the true Vine, so with the believers who are the branches; the blossoms, however beautiful and fragrant, profit nothing if they wither away and fall off, and there is no fruit. We are warned that those that have no fruit shall be taken away; but the great Husbandman prunes those that show signs of life, and have even a little fruitfulness. He purges and cuts off all suckers and fruitless wood that may bear more fruit; and if they abide in the Vine, Christ, they shall bear much fruit.

Already the Kingdom of Heaven is beginning to show promise of a great and eternal harvest. Already the warmth and light from the “Sun of righteousness,” who has arisen with healing in His wings, has moved upon that which was dead and dormant, and

in the place of dry, dead branches, tender shoots are springing forth. Out of the dry ground has a "Root-sprout come forth" (Isa. 53:2). Out of the stock of Jesse, a Shoot has come forth, and a Branch out of his roots which shall bear fruit (Isa. 11:1). This fruitful Branch is Jesus the Christ, who is leading many sons to glory. The fragrance that fills the air from the blossoms upon the vine, is the sweet savor before God in the "beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." This sweet savor also ascends from every branch that abides in Christ, and from those heavenly blossoms, which shall become fruit for Eternity unto the glory of God.

Again the Bridegroom calls her to arise that she may run more patiently the race that is set before her, and follow more closely her Lord who goes before. Again His voice warns her that she must shake off all indolence and hesitation, all "taking of a little rest;" for the Garden of the Lord is in blossom, and the trees already give promise of putting forth fruit; the time of harvest is approaching. He would not have her come empty-handed before the Lord of the harvest; He would not have her sleeping while the vineyard of her life is neglected and untended. All is ready, all is prepared; there is no time to lose if she would keep close by His side and be ready when the fruit and vintage are gathered.

Only a little while remains before our Lord will come again, and there is not time to lose if we would be ready to go out and meet Him. Suddenly shall He come for His own, and there will be many who are not watching; many who have not put on the wedding garment; many will not know He has come until they miss the familiar faces of those who have been caught away to meet Him.

Even with those who have set their hearts to be ready for the Coming of Jesus, untiring watchfulness alone will keep them from being lulled into a false tranquility, a deceptive confidence, which subtly steals over a soul before it is recognized. If we are in close touch with our precious Lord and have our hearts attuned to His faintest whisper, over and over shall we hear His voice calling us: "Arise, My love, and come away."

He does not let us easily lie down and slumber. Neither can we be overcome with deadly, spiritual lethargy and sleep, without again and again hearing His voice calling us to arise and come away. With patience and longsuffering, He seeks to protect us from every touch of slumber and indifference. With tender voice, He speaks to our hearts when they would be over-charged with surfeiting and the cares of this life; and we hear Him say: "Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away! Shake off all lethargy and indolence; gird thy loins more securely with the girdle of Truth, which is Faith once for all delivered unto the saints. Look carefully that there is not one thread of error in this girdle which I have given thee, lest in the hottest and hardest place in the race, thy girdle break; and by stumbling thou lose the prize.

"Arise, My love! Gird up thy garments more firmly about thy loins that thou mayest run more swiftly. The goal is in sight, and thou hast run well. Arise! Arise! My love, My fair one, and come away!" Our hearts cry out, "Where, Lord?" Then comes the answer. "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." "He that doth not take his cross and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me."

2:14 "O My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the covert (or "secret places") of the stairs" (or the "inaccessible places"). How tenderly He reminds us of what our hiding-place meant to Him, and at what untold cost it was provided for us in the

clefts of the Rock of Ages. What suffering and ignominy were His, as, though the veil, that is to say His flesh, He opened to us a new and living way into the Holiest of all; into these eternal abiding-places in the clefts of the Rock. When He cried: "It is finished!" was the Rock rent; then were those hiding-places opened up, in which we are invented to hide away from the enemy.

It is in this Rock that was cleft at Calvary, that the bride is hidden away "from the plottings of man." It is in this hiding-place, that she is kept secretly "from the strife of tongues." No enemy can reach her in this precious retreat; neither can any enemy get her out of it if by faith she abides in Christ. Is the enemy tormenting you with fears or forebodings? Hide away in the clefts of the Rock. Is there something that is disturbing and distressing you, do you feel that you must say or do something in order to make it right and prevent harm and reproach? Hide away in Jesus; commit your way unto Him and He will bring it to pass. Are you misunderstood and unjustly accused or maligned? Find a cleft in the Rock, Christ, and hide away; for this Rock was cleft for you and me that our lives might be hid with Christ in God.

People who see us do not know that we are hiding away in the clefts of the Rock. They see only a heavenly, supernatural calm, which abides through every storm and hurricane; but God knows we are hiding away in the Rock; and the devil knows whence comes this victorious quiet. If we abide in Christ, we are as much hidden away as God can hide us. Those about us see our bodies walking around on earth; but they do not know that we, who live in these frail tents, are hidden away so that neither man nor devil can find nor touch us.

We must believe that we are in the Rock because God has told us that He has put us there. If we take this place and there abide, at every step we shall prove that Jehovah is a wall of fire round about us and that He is the glory within. It is here, that the bride finds security from every foe and from every storm. Though the storm is fierce, it cannot dismay her. Though the wind blows and the hurricane sweeps down upon her hiding – place, they cannot come near her. Though the enemy sends out all his power against her, Jesus is between her and the enemy, He has given her power over all the power of the enemy, and no power of his can overcome her because she is hidden away in the Rock. Her Beloved keeps her in perfect peace because her mind is stayed on Him, and she has taken refuge in Him.

In this hiding-place, the bride does not fear though a host encamps against her; though war and conflict, though battles and persecution arise against her, her heart is confident. Though the earth do change, no fear comes nigh her. The mountains may be shaken into the heart of the seas,"howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His." Though the waters of the sea roar and are troubled, her heart is fixed trusting in her God; though the mountains tremble with the swelling thereof, she has set the Lord always before her; because He is at her right hand, she shall not be moved.

The bride of the Lamb, hidden and protected, journeys upward, walking in Christ as she received Him. He is the retreat and path that no enemy can approach, and no bird of prey knoweth, nor can the vulture's eye see it; over this path, the proud bests cannot go, neither can the fierce lion pass by it nor lurk in those precious clefts. Here is found the hidden stair, which was built in the clefts of the Rock; the stair that reaches from earth

to Heaven, from sinful humanity to God through the finished work of Jesus Christ upon Calvary. Over this stair, the bride travels upward to the land of Eternal Day.

It is here, she finds security from every foe; it is here, she finds sweet and uninterrupted communion with her Beloved. None but the redeemed shall ever see this stairway, none but the redeemed shall ever walk upon it. It is this stair that leads to the throne of God; and all how are upon it, if they endure to the end, not stopping nor turning aside on the way, shall reach this goal and sit down with Christ upon His throne. This stair is the same as the wonderful ladder that Jacob saw; it was set up on earth when Christ came down and died upon the cross, and it reached to Heaven when He was raised from the dead and ascended to His Father. Not only is this stair inaccessible to the enemy; but only by endurance, and though the grace of God can the bride climb up, into all that God has provided for her.

It is not an easy way, this stair that our Lord set up on earth, whose top reaches into Glory. But all hardness and suffering are forgotten if we retreat deeper and deeper into Him, if we hide away in Him. As we look up that shining, living way, and begin to see faintly that which has been provided for us, we cling to the Rock in abandonment, in closer fellowship and communion. As our eyes look upward and are ever fixed upon the recompense of the reward, unseen arms bear us over the hardest places and plant our feet upon the next higher step, which to us appeared so inaccessible. We feel the everlasting arms carrying us upward, upward, while we can only cling to the Rock, hide away in His pierced side, love and adore Him for the "Exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think."

Not only are we protected, but there are rivers of water flowing out of the Rock, and the Rock follows us. All through our journeyings in the wilderness here below, the Rock, Christ Jesus, follows us and we drink abundantly of living waters. In Him is all we need, and if by faith, we take that place and abide there, we shall have everything that God has for us, and we can have it in no other way. It is not easy to go up that shining way, but it is blessed. It is not an easy path, but it is wonderful; and it becomes more wonderful as we more fully understand that we are upon the stairway, which will bring us from earth to Heaven, from weakness and humiliation to strength and glorification.

O precious clefts, O wondrous secret stair, which can only be found when new vision is given at the new birth! O blessed hiding-place where no one but God is with us, and no eye but His beholds us if we perfectly abide there! O smitten Rock, of which we drink, and which continually follows us through our wilderness wanderings. What strength and power, what refreshing and holy swiftness are to those who ever abide in the clefts of the Rock, and hasten upward upon that hidden stair, which their Beloved has set up for them through the shedding of His own blood.

"Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely" (or "beautiful"). The Lord would have the bride's face ever turned Heaven ward, her eyes looking "right on and her eyelids straight before her." He would have her "turn neither to the right hand nor to the left," for her face is beautiful only when it is turned toward Him. He whispers in her heart: "If any man putteth his hand to the plow and looketh, he is not worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven." He entreats her that He may see her countenance, for it is only when the bride's face is turned toward her Lord, that He ever beholds it. If her face is turned toward Him, she shall never walk

in darkness, but she shall walk in the light as He is in the light; she shall never stumble, for she will walk in Him who is the light.

It is when we are in the hardest, steepest places, when it seems that our very life will go out, and we are tempted to sit down and bemoan ourselves, that God draws us closer to our Beloved. Many times so that , the next higher step is so far up and appears so inaccessible, that we are almost in despair; but if we faint not, and if our faith does not fail, God will lift us up and prove that all things are possible to Him, though with us they are impossible. It is in these hard places, that the Bridegroom would have the bride's face turned Heavenward so that He may always behold it; and it is in the hardest places, that she goes on faster than when she is without testings and is walking about in a large place.

If our faces were turned Heavenward more persistently when we are climbing the steepest stair, they would be more beautiful to Him who is watching us and holding us fast. Not only does He rejoice in our beauty, as we look away from all else to Him, and refuse to look at the difficulties; but as we, with unveiled faces, behold as in a mirror His glory, we are transfigured into the same image from glory to glory.

The Bridegroom knows the need there is for the bride to be changed into His image, if she would attain unto the high calling wherewith she has been called. He alone knows the work that must be done before she is like Him and ready to go in to the marriage supper of the Lamb. He knows that it is only by beholding His beauty and glory, that she is changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. He calls her to see her face steadfastly toward Him, to run with patience the race set before her, looking away to Jesus who alone is the Author and Finisher of her faith. As she steadfastly obeys, she hears His voice speaking to her. "Thy countenance is beautiful, thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee."

Not only would He see her countenance ever turned Heavenward, not only when He behold it forever unveiled before him, but He would hear her voice in communion, in prayer, in worship and in praise. He would have all her words for himself and to His glory. He would not have her speak unworthy, trifling words; He is grieved when she speaks unkind, untrue, gossiping words; words tainted with insincerity and guile, bitterness, envy and jealousy. We can hardly understand how the voice of the bride can be sweet to Jesus Christ, but though His voice is sweet to us, a thousand fold sweeter is the bride's voice to Him.

He would bear her voice pouring out her love to continual communion; He would hear her voice Him and have her voice going to Him in thanksgiving and rejoicing in Him and what He has done for her. It is when her voice is kept for Him alone, when it is going out to Him in love and worship, in communion and prayer that her steps become more firm and she goes on with increasing speed. If her voice is continually directed to Him, all the unworthy words which she would speak to others, will be cut off; and the words of her mouth and the meditations (or "soft utterances") of her heart will be acceptable in the sight of Him, who is her Rock and her Redeemer.

As she abides in this place of sweet converse, as she talks with Him face to face, she hears His voice saying: "Sweet is thy voice." How precious are these hiding-places in the clefts of the Rock. How little have we entered in and hidden away from the strife of tongues and from the birds of prey. How little have we apprehended and treasured this place of security, to which He has brought us.

Are we traveling swiftly, steadily upward? Are we singing deeper and deeper into this secret place of His presence? Are our faces ever turned toward Him, that the reflection of His light and beauty may shine upon us, and thus be changed into the same image from glory to glory? Is our voice kept for His use and glory alone? Is it only used in testimony and prayer, in communion and adoration toward Him? Then shall we hear Him say: "O My dove, that art in the clefts of the Rock, in the secret places of the stair, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is beautiful."

CHAPTER XV

Care of the Vineyard. The Love and Devotion of the Bride. 2:15-17

2:15 “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vineyards are in blossom.” The Bridegroom warns the bride that it is not enough to sit in the garden and admire the beauty of the flowers and smell their fragrance. It is not enough to listen to the singing of the birds and look forward to the harvest. It is not enough to rejoice that she has been made to become partaker of the inheritance of all the saints in light, that she has been delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love. She must be up and doing; she must keep the vineyard of her own life and soul. She must take every fox, especially the young foxes that hide away and eat the vines, stripping them of the bark and destroying them.

The word, “take,” means “to seize and hold fast; to catch;” and the adjective, “little,” has a most significant meaning, which contains a solemn warning and revelation concerning the cause of much of the fruitlessness in our lives. It not only means small because they are young and weak, but it means the very smallest and least important; those that we look upon as hardly worthy of notice because we consider that they are too insignificant to cause any harm or trouble. Let us notice that nothing is said of the large foxes. We are solemnly warned to hunt out and take those little foxes which we have been overlooking, and which we have allowed to remain unmolested among our vines.

At pruning time, if the dead twigs or branches, the rubbish that is cut from the vines, are left upon the ground, the old fox will hide away her young at the roots of the vine, and the little foxes will eat the tender shoots and the bark until the vine is girdled and spoiled; and a vine or tree that is girdled, loses its sap and dies. The old foxes eat the grapes, and the young foxes spoil the vines; but they also become full-grown and multiply.

It is not the great things in our lives that cause us to fail God the most. When we are faced with something formidable, we know that it must be overcome; and we draw upon the grace and the power, which are in the Lord, to do this. It is the little things that we do not think amount to anything which are going to stop us going through with Jesus. It may be along the lines of habits, words, or our old natural ways, which have been with us for years; and which are so a part of ourselves that we are hardly conscious they are there.

It is these neglected things that have eaten into, and around our lives until the spiritual life has ebbed away; and we are left weak, dry, barren. It is the little things that will keep us from going up when Jesus comes; the things that are not noticed, and which hid away in the rubbish that has been left under the vines. All that has fallen and withered away, all the flesh and the unfruitful, must not only be cut off, but must be carried outside the vineyard. We must keep ourselves “far from a false matter” (Ex. 23:6), and also far from all that is barren and unworthy.

God warns us to catch every fox. We must not leave the old ones alive to eat the fruit, which the Holy Spirit is working in our lives; but above all, we must catch the smallest foxes lest they destroy the vines themselves. We are to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us. The characteristics of the “fox,” reveal that it is not so easy to be faithful in this, as might appear. No animal is more deceitful and cute,

more treacherous and sly, than the fox. And nothing in our lives is more deceiving and treacherous than those little habits, words, weaknesses, which appear as nothing in themselves; but it is they that are literally sapping away our spiritual life and strength. We cannot pity one of these little foxes, no matter how harmless or even attractive it may appear. It always happens, that as soon as we get any little fox out of our vineyard, God lets us see the havoc it has wrought; and it no longer appears small and unimportant to us.

Although the foxes are hidden away in the vineyard during the winter, it is not when everything is frozen up, that they work. It is when spring comes with its gracious showers and warm sunshine, when the vines begin to send forth tender sprouts, that the foxes come out of their hiding-places. Thus it is in the Vineyard of the Lord. When God begins to work, whether in a community, in a company, or in an individual, many little foxes appear, running to and fro, and hiding here and there. Unless they are caught and destroyed, they will undo all of God's gracious working, and will spoil the vines.

Errors in doctrine and lack of firmness in standing for the Truth as it is in Jesus, are among the first foxes that appear in the vineyard when the sun grows warmer, and the blossoms beginning to come out. How many times God's children do not indorse error, but they compromise and ignore it; they affiliate with those who have embraced error, and before they realize it, their own vines are nearly destroyed by their lax attitude toward the Truth of God.

Indifference concerning a close walk with God; compromising with those who are not walking in the straight and narrow path, and who are not standing for the Truth of the Gospel, will lay waste a vineyard that is in blossom; destroying not only the fruit, but the vines themselves. Wasted time and foolish talking, lack of diligence, neglect of prayer and of the Word, will strip the bark from the vines; so that the sap, in which is the life, will run out; and the vines will die

We must watch every root and branch, and take every little fox hidden away among them. Many lives have shown blossoms of promise. The sun has risen, the warmth has caused the leaves to come forth, and the flowers have appeared with their fragrance and beauty. But the owner of the vineyard did not keep it. He was neglectful; he let the fences of God's Word and of obedience fall down, and error came and ate the vines. He did not watch it, and the weeds, the nettles, the thistles, which represent sharp unChristlike words and actions, have overrun and ground; and the little foxes have hidden away among them. The vines are choked and spoiled; the blossoms are withered, and all promise of fruit has faded away. Only leaves and weeds remain.

2:16 "My Beloved is mine, and I am His; He feedeth His flock among the lilies." He has warned her that she must put away those things that seem small to her, but which will eat the vines in her vineyard and destroy all promise of fruit. The word "spoil" has the meaning of "strangle." While this thought is not applicable to the damage the foxes do in a grape vineyard; it is a vivid expression of the way in which the little sins and neglect strangle the vines in our lives, preventing the power of the life of Jesus from flowing to the highest branch and to the tiniest twig; preventing His life from being manifested to the glory of God; preventing the fruit from maturing.

Although the bride has not seen the Bridegroom, He has spoken to her in love and assurance, in gentle warning and encouragement. She is assured of her union with Him, which is eternal and indissoluble. Her heart is filled with rest because He is hers; she is

apprehending that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate her from the One who died for her, and from His love.

In deep settled peace, she rests in the assurance that, though she is unworthy and many times unfaithful, He abideth faithful for He cannot deny Himself. As she recalls as He has done for her, she comforts and strengthens herself in Him and in His undying love. She rejoices that, whether together or separated, whether seen or unseen, her Beloved is hers and she is His. Literally: "My Beloved is for me and I am for Him."

There is nothing so precious as to apprehend that our Beloved is ours and we are His. There is such joy and sense of holy possessions in the thought that our Beloved is ours. Although the redeemed are: "A great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues," Christ belongs to every redeemed soul. Although there are many members in His body, and many virgins in the bride, He belongs as wholly to each virgin as though only she had been redeemed. His love and care for each of us is as perfect and undivided as though there were not thousands of others calling upon His Name, and drawing upon His care and love. His sweetness is not lessened.

Oh, wondrous thought, that, as far as our relation to Him, and His love and care to us are concerned, our Lord is ours as fully, as precious, as though He loved and died for each one of us alone! There can be no jealousy among the virgins of the bride, for every virgin of the Blood-washed throng is essential to complete the one bride.

He is ours to love and worship, to adore and obey; He is ours that we may let Him fill our lives and hearts, that we may draw upon His strength at every step. His beauty and attributes are for us that we may put them on. He is our High Priest and Sacrifice; He is all we need for He is our precious Storehouse, and in Him are hidden all God's riches in glory.

Do we need wisdom and knowledge? All the riches of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him, and He is ours! Do we need peace? He is our peace, and He is ours. He is our righteousness and sanctification, He is our refuge and strong tower, He is ours! When we are left alone, and those who have been near and dear to us are taken away, let us rejoice that He is ours. When we are left desolate through bereavement or affliction, let us remember that "He is ours." And that in Him we find all we need.

The bride rejoices not only that her Beloved is hers, but that she is His. She is His because He created her, because He has redeemed her, because He has loved her with an everlasting love. She is His love slave, by free and joyful choice. She is His to protect and defend. No harm can befall her, no evil can come nigh her when His banner, "Love," is over her, and marks her out as His own possession. She is His that He may fight her battles; she is His to correct and chasten, to mold and shape; she is His that He may perfect that which concerneth her and make her more than conqueror. She is His to feed and nourish; and He alone can bring her home to Glory, and seat her upon His throne as His spotless spouse. She is for Him alone.

Let us lay our wills down at His feet, that His will may more closely encompass us. Let us yield that He may purify and fashion us into His own glorious image. Only as we abandon ourselves to Him without reserve, can we enter into the relation that is here described; and go on to all that is set forth in the rest of this revelation of Christ and His

bride. Every power and every faculty- all, all must be His and for Him alone; for Him to use as He pleases.

The half-hearted Christian never knows the joy of the abandonment that is ours when we say: "I am for my Beloved." Our only sorrow is that there is so little to pour out at His feet. Our only regret is that all we can bring is so mean and contemptible, compared to that which He is to us, and which is expressed in the preceding clause: "My Beloved is mine."

Not alone is the bride His to nourish and love, but God laid upon His Son Jesus Christ all the stains and sins that were upon her. She has been "redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver and gold... but with the precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the Blood of Christ." He has provided her a shining robe, even His own righteousness; He has brought her peace, He has given her access to the Holy of holies and to the Mercy seat, Christ; for He is her Mercy seat.

Beloved reader, have we realized that we are "for Him"? Are we keeping our robes spotless, are we walking as pure virgins who belong to a spotless, Heavenly Bridegroom? We are His that He may love us and make us worthy to sit with Him upon His throne, we are His by free and joyful consent. To our amazement and joy, He has bespoken us for Himself; and we have given ourselves to be His through time and Eternity, to be His and His alone.

Time is rapidly fading away, the things of the earth and of the natural are sinking out of sight and becoming as shadows. There is a glory falling upon our union with our Lord, which is shining brightly as the days go by. It seems that there are only a few more mileposts to pass, only a little more of the earthly to be taken off, only a little more time in which to perfect our relation to Him and our separation from all else, and then shall we rise to meet Him in the clouds; and thus shall we be forever with the Lord.

"He feedeth among the lilies." The Lord is always found among His people, and it is the pure in heart that shall see God. The "lilies" are the pure in heart, those who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, the virgins who are following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Among them, He pastures and takes His rest; He is in their midst and leads them. The Bridegroom Himself has said: "As a lily among thorns so is my love among the daughters." The Forty-fifth Psalm, which describes the bride of the Lamb, is entitled "The Lilies." He is not only among the lilies now, but He is coming back and will be among the lilies throughout eternal ages.

2:17 "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." "Bether" means "separation." The mountains over which our Lord passed at His first coming, were the mountains of separation from God, because of His divine law being broken, and the sentence of condemnation and death resting upon mankind. These mountains of Bether are divided by deep chasms, symbolic of the gulf of separation, which sin has made between fallen humanity and a holy God. Over these mountains and chasms only Christ could pass (see notes on ch. 1:8).

When He brought salvation to the world, He came over the mountains of separation, He spanned the chasms of God's wrath; He was like a roe or a young hart as He overcame all difficulties, He came to His own and His own received Him not. Not

only did Israel long for the first advent of the Messiah, but for centuries, the Church of Jesus Christ has been longing for His Second Advent.

It is not across the mountains of separation that Christ will come the second time; but it is from the "Mountain of Spices." Which is symbolic of His finished work upon Calvary that He will come in the clouds for His bride. She is longing for Him to come down from the Mount of Spices (ch. 8:14); she is loving and looking for His appearing, she is watching for the glorious day of His presence to break, when she will be forever with the Lord.

With deep yearning, she cries: "Until the day break and the shadows flee away." As we have said before, night in the Song always means the absence of the Beloved, and day is always His presence. Sometimes, through a little carelessness or walking softly before Him, He seems to be separated from her, and she strains her eyes to catch the first glimpse of Him as He returns to her over any separation. Do you know what paves the way for the Lord to return? It is deep humility and repentance. Even as our Lord humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, so must we humble ourselves and become obedient to the death of the cross. Wherever there is anything lifted up between us and God, there must be real humility before the Lord comes down and spans this separation.

Why have we not had a clearer revelation of our Beloved? Mountains of Separation, many times by indifference or unfaithfulness. Why do we not hear His voice oftener and more clearly? Mountains of Separation made by our own thoughts and opinions, by the vice of man. Why do we not get guidance more easily and perfectly? Mountains of Separation built up from the desire to have our own will and go our own way. Why have we not entered into deeper communion and fellowship with Him? Mountains of Separation built out of our love for flesh and the natural, rather than love for Christ and the spiritual.

Truly, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Already we begin to see faint signs of the dawn. As the shadows and darkness of the sin and iniquity of this world increase about us, we are homesick for our Father's house; we are heartsick for the presence of our Beloved. As it is always darkest just before dawn, so the perilous times in which we are living, proclaim the near coming of Christ.

Our souls cry out: "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." It is His inshining into our hearts that has given to us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and which is preparing us for the full day. It is the outshining of His glorious presence at His Second coming that shall make every shadow flee away, and will usher in Eternal Day.

"Dear Lord, bring down every mountain and hill that separates us from Thee. Hasten and come down over every obstacle, over all our weakness and shortcomings over our unbelief and slothfulness. Prepare us for the day of Thy Coming, lest it break, and we are found unclothed, and not ready to go in to the marriage supper. Precious Lord, draw us nearer Thy bleeding side; lift us higher, ever higher into the atmosphere of Thy presence and the revelation of Thyself and Thy love, until faith is lost in sight, and Time merges into Heaven and Eternity. Then shall we praise Thee throughout endless ages that Thou art ours and we are Thine."

CHAPTER XVI

Her Bridegroom Sought and Found 3:1-5

3:1 “By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not.” This is a repetition of the cry found in the last verse of chapter two. She has been waiting through the darkness for the first rays of the dawn, which represent the Bridegroom’s presence; but the night of His absence is still around her; and the cry that she sent out to Him in ch. 2:17 has not been granted.

Figuratively, this sets forth the hungry soul seeking a nearer approach to the Lord in assembly (symbolized by “the city”), and by mingling with the saints who come together for mutual edification, and to seek the Lord. She begins to seek Him among those who are following Him. We are commanded not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; but there are times, when we need more help than we can glean from the fellowship and touch with the saints. We are edified and encouraged by mingling with those who love the Lord, but we need a personal lift and help, which can only come from those whom God has chosen and uses in this way, whether ministers or tenders of the flock.

She has longed that the shadows shall flee away that the dawn shall break, How our souls go out toward our Beloved, as we see the shadows of the close of this dispensation settling in around us; as the days glide by, and the darkness deepens we see on every side the signs of the Coming of the Lord. We are truly like strangers in a far country; we are traveling through the world as those who are in it but not of it.

Sometimes, we almost catch the reflection of the light from the Celestial City, and our hearts are often refreshed by echoes of music from the heavenly hosts; but we are not satisfied with these passing glimpses of our home-country. We long for the breaking of the day; we long for our home-coming; we are hungry to enter into our building from God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The more we hear His voice, the greater is our longing to see Him face to face, with no veil of time nor of human limitations between.

The love of the bride is burning brightly, she is longing and seeking Him whom her soul loveth; her hunger is manifest, though she has been seeking Him upon her bed. While this is a sign of indolence, it does not indicate indifference for she has been seeking Him earnestly and crying for His presence. It is not, however, when we are indolent and seek our Lord while lying at rest in our beds, that we find Him; it is not when we are too unconcerned to arise and gird up our loins and hasten after Him, that we overtake Him.

If we would find our Beloved in deeper revelation than we have ever known Him before, if we would be watching, waiting, ready, when the Son of Man cometh, we cannot take things easy. We shall not get anything if we only seek Him a little when we have nothing else to do; when we have done everything else and have a few moments leisure. It is those who seek with increasing determination, that receive the “exceeding abundantly above all” they ask or think. It is those that hold on and endure unto the end, it is those that pray through, that see the glory of God. Do you wonder why you have not entered into possession of that which God has shown you? Search diligently and see if, with more or less indolence, you have been seeking Him upon your bed.

There is also a literal interpretation, which applies to this verse. When God is drawing us to a closer walk with Himself, there is such hunger in our hearts that even in the night watches, we are seeking our Beloved and crying unto our God. God awakens us in the night seasons and draws our hearts out in longing for our Beloved. The glory of God shines down upon us, and His presence is sweeter, brighter, more blessed in the darkness, than we have ever experienced it in the daytime.

“When I remember thee upon my bed and meditate on thee in the night watches.” When all is still around us, when earth and time fade away, our spirits make diligent search; and we draw near to God and eternal things as we commune with our own hearts upon our beds and are still before Him. It is at such moments, alone with God, that He draws very near in communion, dealing, revelation. It is when we cannot take our natural rest because of our love and hunger for Him, that He reveals Himself. And at the darkest hours, He gives us “Songs in the night.”

3:2 “I will arise now, and go about the city, in the streets and in the broad ways, I will seek Him whom my soul loveth.” When she finds that He does not come to her, she shakes off her indolence and determines to go out into the streets and the broad ways to seek Him. She remembers how He once told her to take her way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and to feed her kids by the shepherds’ tents. Although the symbolism is different in this place, the meaning is the same. She also remembers that it was through obedience, she found Him when He brought her to sit with Him at His own table.

When we are longing for a greater manifestation of the presence of our Beloved and find that we make no progress in seeking Him alone, He will lead us to those who have gone along the way; those who can guide us into a closer relation to Him and into a clearer revelation of His beauty and grace. None of us live to ourselves; if we had no need of teaching and instruction through God’s chosen instruments, He would not have appointed different offices and ministries of the building up of the body of Christ.

The bride arises to go about the city, and to seek Him whom her soul loveth in the broad ways. Literally, this refers to the city of Jerusalem and the broad places at the gates of the city, where the citizens gathered to transact business. Figurative, it is the assembly, or the spacious places of blessing and vision. It is not only in the broad ways that she seeks Him, but she seeks Him in the paths or, literally: “Alleys.” In every likely and unlikely place does she seek Him.

Many times we find Him in the most unthinkable places, and under the most unpropitious circumstances. In places and ways where we least expected to find the Lord, He will meet us face to face. There are times when we are faced with a mountain in circumstances, testings in our bodies along other lines, which appears insurmountable and immoveable, though we get to the Lord for everything else. This is often the very place where we find Him waiting for us. All the mountains in our lives are raised up through our lack of unbelief, but there are no mountains of difficulty with God. Everything is an even, flat plain to Him.

Many times we are looking along the avenue or boulevard (which “broad way” could signify; as it means, “avenue or spacious place”) for our Lord, but we forget to look in the hidden paths, the narrow land, the despised alley. The bride has determined to seek her Beloved not only upon the broad ways, but to leave no path nor alley unexplored in

her search after Him. Not only in the desirable and lofty places, where many have testified to finding Him, but in the undesirable places will she search.

Our Lord meets us the most often and precious in the things that humble us, and which we shrink from going through. He brings us down step by step, until we care not what the testing or humiliation, what the suffering or trial may be through which we must pass, if we only find Him there in greater revelation. Truly, the wide places, the avenues, the mounts of transfiguration, are much more desirable and lovely. We would rather meet our Lord there, and many times He does meet us in these wide, lofty places. But with what glory and preciousness did He meet us in the alleys and byways, into which we were constrained to go and meet Him as the darkness of night enshrouded us; in the places where nobody could go with us, and which no one could understand!

How dark and despised have been the paths and alleys through which my precious Lord has led me that I might find and know Him more fully. How I praise Him for every one, though nobody but the Lord knew what I was passing through. As I entered them, all was dark, and I seemed to be walking and groping about alone; but it was only a short time before I discerned the light of His presence at my right hand, and I was not moved. I set Him ever before me, and I saw Him leading on. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee." If I had not gone through these despised places, I could not have known Him and had the vision of Him which I have today.

The Lord will not let us set our minds upon any certain way or place in which He must meet us. If we only look for Him in the broad ways. He will meet us more often in the despised places. If we look for Him only in the bypaths and lanes, He will constrain us to go to the broad way or up into the mount of transfiguration, and there do we find Him waiting for us.

3:3, 4 "The watchmen that go about the city found me; to whom I said, saw ye Him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from the, when I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." The "watchmen" and "shepherds," are synonymous in the Word of God. It was not she who found the watchmen, but they found her. They were faithful ministers of the gospel or tenders of the sheep; they were looking after the flock and searching for those who were bewildered and in need, and they found her and discovered her condition, as she was seeking her Lord.

In going about the streets, she was doing that which her Beloved told her to do when He commanded her to follow the footsteps of the flock. It was not only that she must take heed to the path in which she found the sheep traveling, but she must feed beside the shepherds' tents. If the watchmen are true and walking close to the Lord, if they can direct her aright, she must have regard to the watchmen. It was but a little while after finding and passing the watchmen, who in this chapter were faithful shepherds and able to help her in difficulty, that she found her Lord. Although they were near enough to direct her aright, it was not until she had passed them, that she found her Beloved.

Truly the most faithful shepherd is not the Great Shepherd of the sheep. The brightest reflection of His beauty that is seen upon a servant, is not the revelation of Himself. Those who are the closest to the Lord, who know Him best, can only direct the

inquiring soul to the Lord. They can never satisfy the hunger of the heart that is going out for Him. How we praise God for all the help we have received through every chosen vessel that He has used to draw us on toward Him, and into a deeper relation to Himself. With what gratitude to God, do we remember those whom He has used to point out to us a nearer approach to our dear Lord.

How tenderly do we look back upon every faithful servant and child of His, who brought us new light, who stirred within us a deeper hunger for God, who provoked us to holy jealousy and emulation through their godly lives. How we praise God for those who warned and instructed us through the exhortation and admonition that they gave in the hour of need, or in times of weakness. How our hunger for God, and abandonment to do His will and follow Him all the way, have been increased as we have seen that mysterious light, which shines upon the faces of those who habitually walk and talk with God.

While we thank God for every instrument He uses in our lives, how little one or all of these dear ones can be, compared with our Beloved, if in any way, they take His place and draw us to themselves rather than to Himself. When the watchmen found the bride, if she had rejoiced and sat down content; if she had admired and been drawn to the watchmen and been satisfied, she would never have found her Lord. We must esteem every servant and instrument of God “exceeding highly in love for their work’s sake;” but we must never permit them to usurp the Lord’s place in our lives and affections.

Only a little after the watchmen found her, she found the One whom her soul loved. Four times in these four verses, she calls the Bridegroom, “Him whom my soul loveth.” Can my soul loveth, and Thou alone”? What has not the love of Jesus Christ enabled His followers to do and to endure down through the ages? “We love because He first loved us.” It is His love for us that puts strength, endurance, and fidelity, into our poor, faltering hearts.

Do you think those precious martyrs saw and feared the fire as the flames enveloped and consumed them at the stake? NO! Their eyes were fixed upon their Lord, they endured as beholding Him who is invisible. Their hearts cried; “O Thou, whom my heart loveth!” Do you think Peter shrank from the cross when the time of his departure came? NO! Before his Lord went to the Father, He had asked Peter thrice if he loved Him. And as another girded him and carried him whithersoever he would not, as he literally followed his Lord to the cross in crucifixion, his heart excellently cried: “O Thou, whom my soul loveth!” As Paul, the aged, stood in the judgment hall, all forsook him; and the only One who stood by him was He whom his soul loved, even his Lord.

From the beginning of the book, the Bridegroom has been enshrined in the heart of the bride, that she does not mention His name. Whether she speaks to the daughters of Jerusalem or to the watchmen, whether she speaks to the Bridegroom or about Him, He so fills her heart that she imagines all others must know of whom she is speaking, and who it is whom her soul loveth. How many of the followers of Christ could speak of “Him whom my soul loveth,” and have those addressed know whom they meant? Is our love for our Lord so apparent and manifest to those about us that they know there is only One who is filling our hearts and thoughts?

“I held Him and would not let Him go.” How her heart rejoices as she finds Him, and she throws her arms about Him as she runs clinging to Him. She has been

seeking Him through the night, in the darkness; she has sought Him alone. She has sought Him in the concourse of people and inquired for Him in the watchmen who go about the city. She has wandered here and there through the streets and broad ways, and at last she finds Him. With a tempest of love and worship, she holds Him fast, lest again He disappears and she is left alone.

The thought is implied that He makes as though He would go further, as though He is only willing to be held by that soul who will not take a refusal from Him. By faith and prayer, the trembling child of God can hold the King of Glory, so that He will not leave her; she can drive back the enemy, and move the mighty arm of God in her behalf; she can constrain Him to come in and abide with her, and sup with her. How wonderful it is that in ourselves we are so weak, but in Him we are strong; and through His gentleness we are made great.

How much more continuously would our Beloved abide with us if, through diligent search, we find Him in greater revelation; and then through prayer communion and obedience we held Him fast and would not let Him go. If our hearts were as hungry for Him and clung to Him as tenaciously as if here pictured, He would never vanish from our spiritual vision. He would not withdraw, but His glory and presence would overshadow us all the time.

She brings Him into the chamber of her mother. The unsaved soul has but one mother, and that is Humanity, represented by Eve, who is the mother of all mankind. The bride remembers when she was keeping the vineyards of the world; when the sons of her mother, "Humanity," set her to do this lowly task, and she neglected her own vineyard. She would bring her Beloved to these kinsmen after the flesh; she longs that they too, may leave the vineyards of the world, and keep the vineyards of their own souls. Her heart goes out that her Beloved may become their Beloved.

She is not satisfied to have Him only for herself, but she would have Him brought into the house of her mother, Humanity; she would have those of her mother's house receive Him also. She cannot see how they could fail to love Him if she can only bring Him near enough to them. She has been taken up with her own joy and fellowship theretofore but now the time has come when she would see others accept Him as their Savior, as their Beloved.

The saved soul has another mother, the Jerusalem that is above which is our mother (Gal. 4:26). Not only does her desire go out to bring Him to her kinsmen after the flesh that they may be saved, but also to her spiritual kinsmen. The time comes when there is such joy in each revelation of Jesus Christ, that the bride longs to see others drawing closer to Him; she longs that others may behold Him in new light and beauty. She eagerly brings Him to those that already know Him; and with such love and devotion, that their hearts are filled with hunger to taste the love and joy, which they see she has.

Every child of God has two natures, the natural and spiritual; two births, the natural and spiritual; two mothers, Eve, the mother of all after the flesh, and the Jerusalem, which is above, the mother of us all in the Spirit.

3:5 "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, or by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until He please." This is the same warning which she brought to the daughters of Jerusalem in the second chapter. We have

already considered it, but there is a difference in motive, which makes the charge different. In the first passage (ch. 2:7), the bride is concerned that her own joy and repose shall not be interrupted; that nothing shall break the fellowship that she is having with her Beloved in His Banqueting House. Here she is concerned that nothing shall grieve her Beloved and drive Him away before He is received by her kinsmen after the flesh, or after the Spirit.

How often when God is working and bringing conviction into our hearts, just a strain of carelessness or frivolity, a little strife or jealousy, a show of unworthiness or of indifference, will stop His working and turn aside the gracious acts, which He is about to perform. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption." With humble yielding to the Spirit of God, with a careful walk, with patience and longsuffering, must the husbandman wait for the precious fruit, and the ripening of the seed that he has sowed.

When we have brought Christ to those who know Him not, we must patiently and tenderly wait for the decision to be made; neither hurrying the result, or neglecting the seed but watching and waiting for God to give the increase. When we bring Christ to those who already know Him, presenting Him in new beauty and testifying to the deeper revelations that He has give us, we must be humble and prayerful. We must earnestly pray that God will create in the hearts of His children a hunger to know Him better; that they will pay the price to enter into a closer relation with Him than they have had.

It is not only the daughters of Jerusalem who can hinder the growth of the seed, but the one who brings Christ to a soul can also hinder the work of the Holy Spirit, by inconsistent living, by neglect and indifference. We must not only sow the seed, but by prayer, example, and with encouraging words, we must watch and tend it until the work is established, and the fruit begins to appear.

Canticle Three. Ch. 3:6 to 5:1

CHAPTER XVII

“A BODY DIDST THOU PREPARE FOR ME.”

SOLOMON’S CHARIOT, OR CHRIST OUR SALVATION. 3:6-10

With chapter 3:6, begins the third Canticle; the historical setting of which is the life of Christ and His ministry while upon earth. This is the interpretation given by those who believe the book is an allegory of Christ and the Church exclusively. The Jews see in the chariot of Solomon a perfect figurative description of the Jewish Tabernacle. Inasmuch as every part of the tabernacle, from the smallest to the largest detail, was symbolic of Jesus Christ and His work, our hearts are made to rejoice in all of the interpretation that bring glory to our Lord, and help to set Him forth.

The first Canticle ends with the entreaty of the bride, that the daughters of Jerusalem shall “stir not up nor awaken” her Beloved until He please; and the second Canticle closes with the same entreaty, although as we have noted, with a different motive.

3:6-8 “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? Behold, it is the litter of Solomon; threescore mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel. They all handle the sword, and are expert in war; every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night.” This is an exclamation of wonder and admiration, voiced by those who behold the procession coming up through the wilderness. Such glory and magnificence! Such incense and fragrance! Such glittering procession it appears in the distance, so unearthly and strange!

To the Jew, the beginning of this Canticle (ch. 3:6 ff) is description of the hosts of Israel, coming up through the wilderness and journeying toward the Promised Land. The Ark of the Covenant is in their midst, surrounded by the thousands of their mighty men; and moving on before His chosen people in this stately, mysterious presence of Jehovah in the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. As the nations saw God’s Ancient People marching on, following that supernatural cloud and fire and the Ark of the Covenant, which went before, they were filled with fear and awe. And they inquired: “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?”

It must have been wonderful and awe-inspiring to see between three and four millions of the hosts of Israel, coming up through the wilderness; an mighty multitude of people, marching, moving along throughout the trackless waste of wilderness, led by the unearthly cloud and fire, which concealed their God. Following this multitude when marching, and hovering over their encampments, arose the smoke from the continual burnt offering and the smoke from the continual, peculiar incense, which was unlike any other incense, and was a symbol of the fragrance of Jesus Christ.

The “Litter” is a symbol of the first Jewish Tabernacle, which as built in the wilderness; in which Jehovah, the great “I AM,” dwelt in the midst of the hosts of Israel

as they journeyed to the Promised Land. The “Chariot” is a figure of the permanent glorious temple of cedar wood, which Solomon built after their journeyings were over.

The meaning is most precious, according to the other two interpretations, which make it a description of Christ in His relation to the Church, and to the individual believer. The bride has found and brought the Bridegroom home to her mother’s house, and now is see the Litter in which He came to her. A little later is seen the palanquin, or the “Chariot” of the King, which is the Bridal Chariot in which He brings her to His home.

The “Litter,” as applied to Jesus, is a symbol of His human body, which was the tent, or tabernacle, in which He walked when upon the earth and ministered among men. It was in this despised tent, that He came to His people; it was in this human “Litter” that He dwelt and learned obedience through the things that He suffered. Through the Veil, that is to say His flesh, He opened a new and living way into the Holiest of all; through His death upon Calvary, He is bringing the redeemed home to Glory.

Not only did those who looked upon the hosts of Israel, ask the question: “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?” but this question was again asked concerning out Lord at the beginning of His ministry. And from time to time afterward did they question as to who He was, and whence He came. Though this question is asked by saint and sinner upon earth, and by the angelic hosts in Heaven, none but God can ever know all the precious spices and perfumes that Christ gathered while walking alone upon the earth.

Truly, He was a root out of a dry ground. Though the scribes and Pharisees, the elders and chief priests, jeered at a prophet coming from Nazareth, they could but know that He was “full of grace and truth.” They could but wonder “at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth;” and they questioned Him desiring to know who He was and whence He came. When He came up out of the River Jordan, and the Holy Spirit fell upon Him, God bearing witness from Heaven to His Sonship, the question was again asked; and John bore witness: “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”

Then did the Spirit “drive” Him forth into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil for forty days; the same number of days, as the number of years during which the Jews wandered in the wilderness. When all the temptations were finished, and “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and a fame went out concerning Him throughout al the region around,” again did they question: “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchantman?”

All who loved God and recognized Jesus as the Messiah, discerned the pillars of smoke and the perfumes, which were resident in Him, and which continually emanated from Him. They know that never man spoke as this Man; and they questioned as to who He was and whence He came.

We can almost hear the question asked in Heaven by the angels, who desire to look into these things: “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?” And from the redeemed throng down through the ages, comes the answer: “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the well-beloved and only-begotten Son of God. This is the Lamb of God that hath been slain from the

foundation of the world and is carrying away the sin of the world. This is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.”

When Christ was upon earth in His human body, there were legions of angels surrounding and ministering to Him. Ever since He was crucified, He has been dwelling upon earth in His spiritual body, which is made up of redeemed souls that are vitally one with Him. They are members of His body, bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh; and through them, His life is continually flowing. They are traveling up through the wilderness with their Solomon in their midst. His glory is overshadowing them, and legions of angels surround and protect His spiritual body, the Church.

Since the departure of our Lord to the courts of Heaven, the same questions are asked concerning His bride as were asked concerning the hosts of Israel, as were asked concerning the Christ of God. The presence and glory of God are discerned, resting upon “the general assembly and the church of the first-born;” and many are questioning: “Who are these people that are so peculiar? Whence do they come, and whither are they going?” The closer we walk with God, the more do those who know not God, misunderstand and question concerning us.

The bride is not alone. He is with her and is bringing her home in the bridal Chariot, which He Himself made, and which is described in verses nine and ten. She causes wonder and astonishment in all who behold her, for she seems so weak, and yet she is so strong. She is despised by the world, but the incense and the pillars of smoke are ever with and above her. As her Beloved came up to the Father from the wilderness of this world, with all powders of merchantman, so in His love coming up, gathering these priceless perfumes as she journeys homeward.

She appears neither glorious nor protected to those who behold her, but He is a wall of fire round about her, and He is the glory within. He guides her with the cloud of His presence, which covers her by day and protects her from the heat of the sun. In the darkest hours, He is a pillar of fire that reveals ever danger, and illumines her path so that she walks not in darkness; neither shall she stumble or fall. Through all the weary journey, when the way is rough, and the darkness of evil is settling down around her, He sheds upon her the glory of His smile and presence. She looks unto Him and is radiant, and her face shall never be confounded.

Not only is she traveling home in this wonderful Chariot, but He has given her a commission to fulfill upon the journey. As He is, so is she in the world. As He brought home to His Father’s mountains of spices and fragrance, so has He appointed her to bring home a precious cargo of spices and incense, of perfumes, which, as a merchantman in a far country, she must gather in the wilderness of this world.

The most precious and inspiring feature of this wilderness journey, is that it is only in the desert, the costly spices and gums are found. The spices and gums used in the Jewish worship, were found in the desert of Arabia and in the mountains of Palestine. With much labor were they gathered in far regions; and through many dangers did the merchantman bring them home. It was a long, arduous, dangerous undertaking, but there was great wealth in even one cargo of those spices and powders.

Not even upon the heavenly terraces do these precious perfumes grow, and the bride will never gather any after her earthly journey is over, for it is only in this wilderness, that she can gather sweet spices and perfumes to bring home to her Lord. She cannot gather them in Egypt, nor in the easy places; but it is in the hard places, that the

most precious are found. The drier and more barren the wilderness, the hotter the testings and harder the path over which she goes, the more precious are the spices she gathers and brings away with her.

Do you ask what these spices are that the bride of the Lamb is to bring up to her Beloved, and how she is to gather them? It is as she takes up her cross daily, yielding to every nail God drives in, that she begins to gather spices and perfumes to take home. And when they are gathered, they must be prepared by being beaten small before they can be offered to God acceptably.

Are we willing to go through the piercing and crushing process in order to bring home a precious cargo of heavenly fragrance and incense? Are our hearts crying out for a deeper revelation of the gospel, and for it to be operative in our lives? Do not look for the answer in a bed of roses, but at the foot of the daily cross, outside the city walls. Look of Heaven's perfumes in a wilderness place that no one sees nor understands, excepting Jesus who took the first cargo of spices to Heaven.

Not only must God bring you into the places where these precious spices grow, but you must gather all you find there. We have not brought up the opportunities that God has given us, and many times we have left the spices hanging upon the trees and bushes of Opportunity. We are so distressed by the desert, that our eyes behold not its precious perfumes. These spices, which we gather as we journey along, are the graces and fruit of the Spirit, and the beauties of our Beloved, which are perfected within us only through the things we suffer.

The sweetest perfumes are brought out of the hardest suffering and testings. The pure gums do not come forth from the tree until it is pierced; so with the saints of God, only as they are pierced and bruised, are the precious attributes of Jesus Christ manifested to the glory of God, and to the edification of those about thee. As the spices are not found in the fertile plains, neither are the graces and fruit of the Spirit perfected in the smooth places, but in the rough places.

We are told in I Pet. 4:12-14 that we are to rejoice with exceeding joy when we come into fiery trials and are partakers of Christ's sufferings. We are to count it all joy that, while here in the wilderness, we can suffer for Christ's sake. As we do this, we begin to gather from the bitter shrub, "Suffering," the fragrant incense, "Joy," to take up and present to our Lord.

How we gather the precious Spice of "Faith"? God brings us to a desert place where everybody and everything fails us; where we must stand upon the air, as it were, with nothing under our feet. We can look nowhere but up to God, and He leaves us hanging there upon the thread of faith, clinging and looking to Him, believing Him. If we do this without wavering, we begin to add to our cargo the faith that calls the things that are not as though they were, and removes mountains.

How do you get the precious Spikenard of Humility? God lets you be despised and pushed down a little lower by each one around you, until you appear to be misunderstood and deserted by all. In this way, He leads you into the deepest valleys of the wilderness, and keeps you there until you have gathered all of this costly perfume that your Lord intended you to have.

This gum is found in the lowest, most barren places, and if we go far enough to gather it, on our way back to the Mount of God, we shall find all other spices and gums. The desert will not appear so grievous after having perfectly gathered Humility, for it is

the foundation of all the attributes that our Lord would have us bring up to Him. Let us not be deceived by gathering human love, human humility, human faith and patience, which are only imitations of the heavenly spices and perfumes. No natural, nor human attributes will ever cross over with us into the Glory-land.

It is through many tribulations that we enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and the word tribulation means “affliction, threshing, beating out.” It is not joy alone that our precious Lord tells us to gather, but peace; peace when everything is in a tumult about us. Jesus can guard our hearts, even when the threshing is going on.

All these spices and perfumes are found in the desert sands or upon the Mount of God, and they are gathered only as we are traveling home to our Father’s house. The wilderness of this world yields for the bride of the Lamb, rich, fragrant cargoes of perfume; and as she journeys along through the trackless wilderness, guided by the presence of her Beloved, all who behold her exclaim: “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?”

“Threescore mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel. They all handle the sword, and are expert in war; every man hath his sword, and are expert in war; every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night.” As the angelic hosts guarded our Lord while He was on earth, so the mountains round about the bride of Christ, are filled with the army of God. The angels of the Lord encamp round about them that fear Him and delivereth them; and many battles are fought between the hosts of God and the hosts of the enemy, for the sake of the elect. The angels, who behold us as we are traveling up through the wilderness, are looking down and desiring to look into this wonderful thing that God is doing’ but they can never know the joy of this salvation, for they are only ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them who shall inherit salvation.

How precious it is to our hearts to know that our Lord will not only be at the end of the journey to receive us, but He is traveling with us. He, who is our glorious Head, is journeying along with His Church, which is His body; and together they are going home. He is ever near to support His bride and to encourage her. He is ever near to protect her with His shadow, and to feed her upon hidden manna. She does not need to fear for round about her, there are legions of angels, who are servants in her Father’s house; and they handle the sword and are expert in war. And she has her Beloved traveling with her.

He is ever near to direct and to reprove, to chasten and comfort her. The battle is not hers, but God’s, and she knows He will always be victorious; but she must know how to wield the sword of the Spirit. She must not let it rust through neglect, but have it ever bright and shining, and ready to be used in every time of attack and testing. She must be ready to meet the foe, in whatever way he comes during the dark night of this dispensation; and only “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,” can put to flight every foe, and bring her out more than conqueror through Him that loved her.

3:9 “King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom (or “seat”) thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for (or “from”) the daughters of Jerusalem.” He did not plan it and then trust others to carry out His plans; but He

planned it, and He built it Himself. Before the foundation of the world, God made the design according to His own purpose, after the counsel of His will which He purposed in Christ Jesus unto the dispensation of the fullness of times. And when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law.

It was Christ who made the Chariot in which to bring His bride home to His Father's house of many mansions. With care, He selected the materials; and in due time, they came together into this indestructible Chariot of State. Christ dwelt on earth in the human body that God prepared for Him, which is symbolized by the "Litter." He gave His human life upon the cross of Calvary, that He might build this Chariot in which to bring many sons home to Glory, and proved the living stones for the habitation, which God has planned and is building for Himself in the Spirit.

It is only when a man is in Christ Jesus, that He is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17), "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). There fore we see that the Chariot is symbolic of Christ, and the salvation that is in Him alone. The members of His body, who through this salvation, are in Him, and in whom He is still dwelling upon earth, are also seen in this Chariot. Every material mentioned, shows forth Jesus Christ and when it is brought together, it is Christ, the Chariot of Salvation.

The "Wood of Lebanon" is the cedar; the choicest wood of the forest, the most durable and fragrant; a symbol of the pure, spotless manhood of Jesus Christ. Only as He partook of flesh and blood and became like unto His brethren, could He redeem humanity; hence are we told that the foundation of this chariot is built of the cedar of Lebanon, or the sinless manhood of Jesus Christ. The divine Cedar, of which this chariot of Salvation is built, was being prepared when Christ came down and took the form of man, walking among men and ministering unto them (see notes on ch. 1:17).

But before aught can be built from the cedar, it must be cut down. So with our precious Lord, who is the divine Cedar; before this Chariot of Salvation could be built, the divine Cedar must be cut down; and it was cut down when the Man, Christ Jesus, hung upon the cross of Calvary (Isa. 53:8).

3:10 "He made the pillars thereof of silver." Pillars are a symbol of strength and steadfastness. Four pillars supported the veil, which concealed the Holy of holies; and four pillars are described as being at each corner and supporting the "Covering" of this chariot. "Silver" sometimes means the Word of God, and also purity; but the most important meaning of "silver" in the Jewish worship, is "atonement." It was through giving the silver half shekel that the Jews made atonement for their souls, and the money was used in building the tabernacle (Exod. 30:11-16).

This great salvation, which covers all sin and iniquity, is upheld by the mighty atonement of Jesus Christ through His finished work upon the Cross of Calvary. The cover of this Chariot of Salvation is upheld by the silver pillars, which are the symbol of the strength and power in Christ's atoning work. Silver abides though it is tried in the hottest fire, and the work of Jesus Christ will abide forever. This salvation has been brought into effect through the fulfillment of God's Word, which is pure as silver and will never pass away. Jesus Christ upholds all things by the Word of His power.

Oh, that we would let our faith go out of Jesus Christ and to His finished work! Oh, that we would apprehend that these silver pillars of His atoning work can sustain a million worlds like this, and atone for all the sin that could be in them, and then there would be sufficient power and atonement in His Blood for millions of other worlds. Only by the silver pillars of the atonement, can the covering of the Chariot of Salvation be sustained; for there is no covering for sin excepting through the death of Christ on Calvary.

We hid away beneath the covering. Though the tempests blow and the storms beat upon this Chariot, not one part of it can be moved for it is upheld by the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Though all hell oppose the progress of this wonderful Chariot that the King of Glory has built for Himself and His bride, it moves on untouched and mighty, majestic and beautiful, to the accomplishment of the will of Him who planned and built it. Though heaven and earth pass away, these pillars, representing the Word and the plan of God that were fulfilled through Christ's finished work upon Calvary, shall abide forever.

It matters not how trackless the desert through which we travel; in vision, we see the redeemed of the Lord traveling home in this Chariot that Christ has been made through His own finished work. How we praise God that the One who is leading us, knows the way home. He will guide us all the way if we let Him search out the path and choose our resting places, as Jehovah went before His Ancient People in the cloud and the fire and in the Ark of the Covenant. He alone has gone over the path, and He alone knows the way. Though He does not always guide His people by visible fire and manifestations, neither does He guide us all in the same way and through the same experiences, He ever leads us on. And we are all in the same Chariot and the same procession, which is coming up out of the wilderness.

“Bottom,” or literally, the “seat,” is a figure of the mercy seat in the Jewish Tabernacle, which covered the Ark of the Covenant and upon which the presence of Jehovah rested. The mercy seat was a symbol of Jesus Christ, our Mercy Seat, and it was made of pure gold, symbolic of His divine nature. Only once a year at the mercy seat in the Jewish Tabernacle, did the high priest make atonement for the sins of the people. But we can come to Jesus Christ our Mercy Seat and there abide, and through Him we can continually have access to God.

As the mercy seat in the Jewish Tabernacle covered and preserved the Word of God, so our Mercy Seat covers and fulfills the Word of God; preserving all His covenants and promises, giving access to God, and making atonement for those who are not able to keep the commandments of God perfectly. “For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea; wherefore also through Him is the Amen, through Him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18).

We find communion and fellowship with God only from above and through our Mercy Seat, Christ, even as He promised to commune with His Ancient People from above the mercy seat in the Jewish Tabernacle (I John 2:2). “He is the propitiation (or “mercy seat”) for our sins;” in the Greek, the word translated “propitiation” really means “mercy seat.” The meaning brought out by this rendition is most precious, and seems to draw us to Him in a more intimate relation and love.

How wonderful is this mighty, living Mercy Seat, through whom we have access to God! This Mercy Seat that is also the High Priest who ministers in our behalf, and

ever lives to make intercession for us. This Mercy Seat and High Priest is also the Sacrifice of God. As we come to Him, we find access to the throne of grace and receive mercy, and grace to help in time of need.

“The covering of it of purple.” This typifies the veil, which separated the Holies of all from the Holy place, and concealed from sight the Ark of the Covenant, with the golden mercy seat and the golden cherubim overshadowing it. Above the mercy and between the two cherubim, the presence of Jehovah dwelt. When Israel journeyed, the veil was taken down and the Ark was covered with ht, therefore it was called “The covering veil” (Numbers 4:5). It was made of fine twined linen, which is symbolic of Christ’s pure, spotless manhood; and it was a perfect symbol of Jesus Christ in His perfect character and work as the Son of Man and the Son of God.

Upon the linen appeared the blue, which showed Christ’s heavenly character; the scarlet, which showed Him as the suffering Savior; the purple, which showed Him as the royal One, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. Only the purple –the royal- is spoken of here, being emphasized because it is a description more particularly from the kingly viewpoint, and is looking forward to His reign. But the other two colors are not left out, for the color purple is made by combining blue and scarlet.

This is true not only of earthly colors, but is also true in the symbols used in God’s Word to portray Jesus Christ and our relation to Him. The bride must be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, which is the heavenly, or the blue. “If we suffer with Him (which is the scarlet) we shall reign with Him” (which is the royal, or the purple).

These colors and the distinguishing characteristics of Jesus Christ, which they symbolize, will also be the peculiar characteristics and colors of the overcomers. And the overcomers are they who shall make up the bride of Christ. None shall wear the purple until they are without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; and thus the heavenly blue is put on. None shall sit with Him upon His throne until fellowship with His sufferings brings forth the scarlet.

Upon the veil of the temple were wrought the Cherubim, which are symbolic of God’s majesty and power. As Jehovah dwelt between the Cherubim of old, so does Solomon, our Prince of Peace, dwell in the Mercy Seat; and upon this golden seat in the Chariot, He travels up with us through the wilderness. Upon this golden seat, His bride is also traveling home to her Father’s house of many mansions. She is covered and protected by the purple Veil of Covering, even her Lord, and this covering is upheld by the silver pillars of His atoning work upon the cross of Calvary.

“The midst thereof being paved with love, from (or “for”) the daughters of Jerusalem.” The midst of the Chariot of Salvation is paved, or inlaid, with the love of God, which planned this uttermost salvation, and constrained Him to give His only – begotten Son, that all who believed upon Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The Chariot is inlaid with the many acts and words, with all the promises and plans of God; which come from, and reveal His everlasting love wherewith He hath loved us.

Eternal ages can never exhaust nor reveal the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, the love that planned the building of this wonderful Chariot of Salvation. Eternity will not suffice to reveal the fathomless love of Christ, which moved Him to come down to this sin-cursed earth and take the form

of earthborn man; becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross; that, through death, He might build a Chariot in which to bring the ransomed home.

In this Chariot does the bride come up through the wilderness of earth where no water is found; through “the great and terrible wilderness” with its fiery serpent, the devil, and its scorpions of evil spirits, and heat of sin and iniquity. But He brings her water out of the Rock, and that Rock is Christ; He feeds her upon the Manna which the fathers knew not, and that Hidden Manna is Christ.

The midst of the Chariot is inlaid not only with God’s love for us, but it is inlaid with the love of the Redeemed to Him; “For the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us.”

CHAPTER XVIII

The Crown of Espousal. 3:11

3:11 “Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon, with the crown wherewith His mother hath crowned Him in the day of His espousals, in the day of the gladness of His heart.” The “Daughters of Zion” in this verse are a figure, not only of those who are closest to the King, but also of those who have longings to behold Him, those who would gladly hear His voice. Whether it is the sinner who is seeking Him that He may speak peace to his soul, or the Christian who is longing to go deeper into Him and to follow faster after Him, all are commanded to go forth and behold Him. The voice of the Spirit comes to every human creature in command and in entreaty, to go forth and behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

As the Lamb of God that was slain for their sins must the sinner first behold Him hanging upon the Cross of Calvary. Their eyes cannot see the many crowns with which He is crowned in Revelation, until they have first seen upon Him the crown in which His mother, Humanity, crowned Him that day when the earth quaked, and darkness covered the earth as the veil of the temple was rent in two. They must first see upon Him the crown of thorns and suffering, which He wore that day when the heavenly hosts beheld the King of Glory, the Prince of Peace who was bringing peace to earth, hanging upon the cross; and saw Him dying there.

Christ never spoke of Himself as the Son of Mary, but always called Himself “The Son of Man.” His mother was Humanity through the seed of David, but His Father was God. It was His mother, Humanity, who placed upon His brow the crown of suffering, the crown of thorns and shame. It was the sin of the human race that brought Christ down to become a man, to wear the crown that pressed His brow when He poured out His life a ransom for many. The crown of thorns that He wore, was but the outward shadow of the crown of suffering which could be seen by no eye save the eye of God; and will never be understood save by the Father.

The day of His crucifixion was the day of His betrothal to those who would prepare themselves to go in to the marriage supper of the Lamb. All humanity could be in that blest company, but though “many are called (invited), few are chosen” (selected). When He saw Judas go out to betray Him, He said: “Now is the Son of Man glorified;” when He said this, He was looking forward to the day of His death, which was the day of His betrothal.

It was because He was looking forward to the day of His betrothal to His bride, that He longed to eat that last Passover with His disciples and said: “With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” This was not as other Passovers for this was the fulfillment of all others, the time had come for the dispensation of grace to be ushered in through the offering up of the Lamb of God, whom the Jewish Passover lamb prefigured. Thus, were the types and shadows of the old dispensation done away through the substance; namely, Christ in His redemptive work, and through the bringing in of a better covenant.

It was also the instituting of the betrothal supper, which He ate with those first disciples, who had been with Him in His sufferings and ministry upon earth. They were the first fruit of the bride for whom he was about to pour out His life; and He left this

supper as a sacred memorial, not only to them, but to all who would believe upon His Name; commanding them to observe it, and to eat and drink it in remembrance of Him.

Upon this day, He wore the crown of thorns and of shame, which His mother, Humanity, pressed upon His brow; the crown of suffering and agony caused by the Father's face being turned from Him. It was a day of awful anguish, but it was the day of the gladness of His heart for He could say: "I have accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do... now I come to Thee." He had finished that which the Father had given Him to do. He had betrothed to Himself His bride, who is made up of the Blood-washed company that take up their cross daily and follow in His footsteps, counting all that the world can give as refuse, that they may know Him. When we first hear the voice of God calling us to go forth and look upon our King, we hardly know what it will mean. To "go forth," is to leave the place where we now are, and those with whom we are associated, and to go outside the city walls if we would behold Him. It is not only to behold Him in His glory sitting upon a throne; not only to see all that shall be ours if we follow on to know Him as God would have us know Him, and as we must know Him if we are to reign with Him; it is not only to see Him thus, but it is first to see Him hanging upon the cross and to apprehend that we were in Him as He hung and suffered there.

It is to see Him despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It is to see Him deserted by all, not only by those who were half-hearted, but by those who were nearest Him and who walked with Him day by day, by those who had left father and mother, children and lands, giving up much for His sake. As we behold Him in this light, we hear Him say: "If any man would come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

When we come to Him for salvation and first behold Him, as far as we know, we leave all for Him; but at every onward step, He shows us that there are other things that we have not seen, which must be left if we go forth and behold Him more intimately. If we are to behold Him, we cannot stay where we are for we are told to "go forth;" to get up and hasten away, leaving all behind that would hide Him from our spiritual vision.

At first, when we hear the voice of God telling us to go forth and behold Jesus Christ, we have much in our hearts and before our eyes that will obscure the vision of our Lord. We must leave all this behind and "go forth;" leaving the flesh and self-life behind, the desires and plans, the opinions and thoughts that were not of Him. And as we leave all and go forth, as we abide with Him outside the city wall, He will give us His desires, plans, beliefs and thoughts in the place of ours.

It is a continual leaving, leaving, and the nearer and dearer He becomes to us, the more rejoiced we are to leave everybody and everything for Him. At every step of the way, we must look up and behold Him on the cross; and when we see Him there, God will let us see ourselves crucified in Him.

But where are we go to? Outside the gate, outside the city wall. Do you think that we shall see Him if we stay inside the city? Inside with all those who do not love Him enough to go out to Him? If we stay with those who hate Him and are half-hearted? If we do not behold the Savior in His agony, do you think that He will anoint our eyes to behold the King in His beauty? No! It is as we "go forth" that we behold Him. And we must first behold Him as our suffering Savior, before we can behold Him as our King, and discern His beauty as He sits upon the throne of our lives. It is as we leave

everybody and everything that stands between Him and us, between us and God's best that we behold Him.

It is when we seem to be deserted by all, and evil is spoken of us because we have left all and gone forth to Him, that our vision of Him becomes more distinct and grows sweeter. It is when we have gone forth and are alone with Him, that all other sounds are hushed; and His voice becomes precious in our ears and in our hearts. When we have left all and gone out to Him, how small and insignificant does all else appear; the people and things, the desires and plans, which have seemed precious to us before, but which have hindered us from going with our Lord alone and becoming like Him.

God has put us here that we should know Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and that we may be prepared to live in His presence throughout Eternity. The multitudes are swinging on toward those endless ages, and they will never get ready to live. They think they are living here on earth, they are taken up with unworthy, trivial things, the things of Time; and Eternity is just before them. Not only the world, but many of God's people, in the place of being taken up with Christ alone, are taken up with trivial things, with unworthy desires and non-essentials. God has given us this little breath, called "Time," in which to prepare and prove us; in which to teach us to see no man save Jesus only; and to behold Him so perfectly by faith, that He will not be more real when we behold Him face to face. All this life is for, is to prepare for those millions of years of Eternity, in which every human creature shall have a never-ending existence, whether they are saved or lost, whether they spend it in Heaven or in Hell.

Reader, do you know that if we are saved, we shall live as long as He will live? That we shall be with Him in never-ending joy and glory? It is wonderful to know that you have eternal life, and are saved because you are in Jesus and His Spirit is within you (2 Cor. 5:17); to apprehend that you are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. It is wonderful to know that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in you.

How our hearts rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory when we think of our Lord and what He is to us even here on earth. How He leads us on and talks to us of the wonderful calling with which God has called us! How He reveals to us that we are bespoken to be His bride! Only those who overcome will be His bride and sit with Him upon His throne. If we are in that company, we must go forth outside the city wall; out of the enclosure in which is all that has been dear to our old lives; all that we have hitherto grasped with eager hands.

If He is the One and the only One whom our soul loveth, and we apprehend that we are bespoken by Him to be His wife, our eyes will eagerly watching for His appearing. If our hearts are hungry for His tokens of love, and our ears are ever open Heavenward to catch every sound of His voice and hear the first hind concerning that which He would have us do our leave, oh, how our hearts will rejoice as we hasten to obey, as we "go forth" to behold Him more clearly and walk with Him alone!

With every deeper vision God gives us of our Lord, we will leave something behind, and we shall suffer something the higher the step and the more precious the vision, the harder will be suffering. But this is the joy of it all, that when we make a choice and choose Jesus Christ, He leads us up higher, and we behold Him there; and as we look at Him, there is nothing else that counts. Never do we hear Him calling us to go forth and behold Him, that we do not have a more ravishing revelation of Him when we obey. As we obey, it is always to leave someone or something, it is always to walk more

alone with Him; but it is also to behold Him more clearly and intimately as bleeding, dying, risen, and glorified. It is to know more fully the depth of His love; it is to have a greater hunger for Him to be all and in all to us; it is to make Him more and more our only consolation and confidant.

All who are saved have gone forth and beheld Him, but God is calling us to go forth in a still deeper way. We cannot see Him through the wall, it is too thick; and while we are on the inner side of it, there are too many hands and bands holding us back. But as we go forth to Him without the gate, bearing His reproach, bearing our cross along each line as God shows it to us; as we choose Christ every time a choice is presented; though the suffering increases, no tongue can express the joy there is in the suffering. We have a deeper longing to leave everything and everybody that we may hasten our and behold our Lord in greater separation and in clearer revelation. All to which we would cling, all that God shows us is hedging us in, all, all, is but dust to that soul that goes without the city will every time the voice of his Beloved calls him.

Let us never forget that it was our sins that pressed the crown of thorns and anguish upon His head. Let us ever see Him thus, for only as we behold Him on the cross and see His work that He did there, can our vision be purified and prepared to see Him in His beauty. He will not come inside the gate that we may see Him. He will not trust Himself to us and give us His confidence before He can trust us. He will not take us into the Banqueting House and reveal Himself to us until He has prepared and proved us. It does not take a great sin or disobedience to hide His face, to raise a wall between Him and us. Even a cobweb will keep the dew from falling on the grass; and even a cobweb will hide His precious face, and keep the dew of His presence and dealing from falling upon our souls.

Let us go outside the city wall that we may behold Him; let us leave everything which is in the city that our eyes may be anointed to behold Him who is altogether lovely. Let us go forth unto Him bearing His reproach. When the earth is in our eyes, we cannot behold Jesus; when anything else is before our eyes, we cannot behold Him. It matters not what has come before our vision, everything must be cleared away if we would see and hear Him.

Do we desire visions of the Lord? The only way in which we can see the Lord or have visions of Him, is to go forth alone to Him and leave all behind; is to separate ourselves unto Him and get alone with Him. If we are willing, God will bring us up to each thing, and He will not only give us grace to take every step, but will make us see how little and vile everything that we have left is when compared with our precious Lord.

Oh, how He is speaking to His bride about the cross! Wherever we turn in the Word of God, we see only Jesus and the cross; not only *his cross*, but our cross, Every sign points to the near Coming of the Lord, and there is so much to be done in each of us before we are ready for that day of days. I believe that only the bride will see Him when He comes for her, but if it were possible for others to see Him, many of His people would scarcely know their Lord; for since the time they saw Him hanging on the cross as their Savior, they have caught only passing glimpses of Him.

Our eyes must be anointed and strained here on hearth to behold Him. More and more must we behold Him who is invisible and lose sight of all else that would hide His face; He must fill our vision here if we would behold Him when he comes for His bride. We must go forth from all else, and look upon Him with so much love and abandonment,

with such oneness of heart and determination of seeing Jesus only, that the vision of our Lord will grow brighter and brighter every day. And all the world and all within the walls, will sink into oblivion because of the glory of that revelation.

If we could see how little of the time we have His face before our eyes, how little of the time we are in touch and communion with Him, how much of the time we forget Him and have not gone forth to behold Him, how much of the time cobwebs and walls are between us and Him, it would spur us on to go out to seek Him. Nothing counts if we fail to behold Him, fail to see what He has done for us, fail to see the suffering the crown of thorns that the sin of humanity put upon His head.

If we hearken to the call of God and go forth and behold Him, as we obey, we shall hear His tender voice clearer, clearer at every step: "Go forth, My bride, My spouse, and behold thy Bridegroom! Behold My head pierced with the cruel crown of My espousal to thee. Behold My hands and My feet pierced and bleeding for thee. Behold the love in My pierced heart for thee. Go forth, My bride, in ever-increasing separation, and behold Me! Then shall thine eyes behold Me when I come for thee, and thou shalt sit with Me upon My throne. Then shalt thou behold Me crowned with many crowns. But to thee, My bride, My spouse, the most beautiful crown of all, will be that crown of thorns and agony, which I wore for thee on the day of the gladness of My heart, when I betrothed thee to Myself and sealed the betrothal with My own precious blood."

O wondrous love that could love us while we were yet sinners! O unknown agony that is forever hidden from human understanding, which caused Him to sweat drops of blood for you and me! O precious Lamb of God, who was led to the slaughter and opened not His mouth! This was the day of His betrothal, even this day of days when He finished that eternal work of Redemption, and bespoke unto Himself those dust-born creatures, whom He redeemed from the fall and from the hand of the enemy and from the power of sin and death.

CHAPTER XIX

The Beauty and Separation of the Bride. 4:1

4:1 “Behold, Thou art fair, My love; behold, thou art fair; thine eyes are as doves behind thy veil” (or “locks”). The bride of Jesus Christ is beautiful in the eyes of her Beloved, and in the eyes of God the Father. Through the working and operation of the Holy Spirit, she is all glorious within and without. He rejoices in the white, shining robe of His own righteousness, in which He sees her arrayed; and which is becoming more and more manifested as she follows on to “know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death.”

In the Beloved is she accepted by the Father; all unworthiness has been put away, and His worthiness alone appears before God. In Him, she has had her redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of her trespasses according to the riches of His grace. It is through this grace, which, like waves of a mighty, eternal ocean, has flowed from the Father through Jesus Christ, that all the blackness that sin and the world have left upon her, has been put away; and she has become white and fair through His blood.

There are times when we are going through hard things, that we are crushed and feel so black and unworthy of our dear Lord, that we almost long to be wiped out of existence because it seems that we can never measure up or be to His glory. As we lie down at His feet pouring out before Him our live and feeling of unworthiness, we hear Him say: “Behold, thou art fair, My love; behold, thou art fair.” If He looked upon us and judged us by our weakness and failures, by our willfulness and stumbling around, He could never say this; but He is looking at his own robe of righteousness, which is beginning to cover us.

Though He encourages us, He is expecting that we shall put on His attributes and beauty, until from our mouths and lives, and from every step we take, His image and glory shall shine out before all eyes that behold us. We have walked in our own ways and used our lips and our members for ourselves instead of letting Him use them; and we forget that there is nothing small in our lives, but everything is important and tells for Eternity.

When we see ourselves as we are before Him, so unworthy, so black and unpromising, we are nearly in despair; and if it were not for His encouragement in our souls, we could not go on. It is remarkable, that not once in this precious book does He tell the bride that she is black. Only once, when she is nearing the end of the journey and is coming up out of the wilderness leaning upon Him, does He remind her of where He found her as a sinner. He only tells her of this, in order that she may “remember all the way” which He led her to prove and humble her; and in order that she may love Him more.

When the Lord speaks of the bride, it is always as she is in Him, and He never discourages the honest soul that is following hard after Him and wants to count everything but loss and lose everything for His sake. Are you willing to give up all for Him? To those whose hearts are toward Him, and who really are willing to lose everything for Him, though they have stumble a little at times, He takes them on and does not continually tell them how black they are. And yet our Lord shows us our shortage

and what must be done; and when we are disobedient, He does not let one thing pass, for which we thank Him.

It is through this fathomless grace, that the bride has been separated from the world and has become the “Love” of Him whom she once hated and despised, whom she reviled and persecuted, whom she spit upon and crucified afresh each time the Holy Spirit dealt with, and convicted her. She is engraven upon the palms of His hands and upon His heart. She, and she alone is His “Love,” the one who is the fairest of all others in His eyes. She is the one lily among all the daughters, who are but thorns compared to her. She is the one for whom He has suffered such grief and agony that He might present her to Himself as glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or blemish or any such thing.

He has provided the garment that she must wear; it is the robe of righteousness, which was prepared when the Lamb of God was slain on the cross. As the covering for Adam and Eve was made through the slain victim, so the covering for the bride of the Second Adam was made through the slain Lamb of God. It is through Him, the bride is made beautiful and glorious.

“The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as WE are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and lovedst them even as Thou lovedst Me. Father, I desire that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.” “I am glorified in them.” It is beyond the human apprehension that Christ could be glorified in us. His love is beyond our comprehension, but we can rest down upon the Word of God and rejoice, that, though we do not apprehend the love of Christ for His bride, we can rest in that love in peace and joy; for it is an everlasting love.

The beauties of the bride of Christ are described by seven features of feminine beauty and seven comparisons drawn from nature. The perfect figure, “seven,” symbolizes the perfections of the comeliness of the bride. This perfect beauty can only come from transfiguration in to the image of Christ, and this comeliness of feature and form is perfected by the work of the Holy Spirit within.

When our Lord praises us, it does not uplift and harm us as do the praise and flattery of man. He does not go beyond the truth in His commendations, and He points out to us those places where we are not yet partaking of His image; in this way, He applies the oil and the wine. He often gives the wounds of a “friend,” but He also heals us. He must “smite” us that we may be chastened, but it is always His loving hand that “binds us up.”

We have already commented upon the bride’s eyes being “as doves” (ch. 1:15), but there are many precious meanings in the Bridegroom comparing the bride’s eyes to doves. The dove was “clean,” and was offered in sacrifice by those who were too poor to bring up the larger animals that were set apart to be used as sacrifices in the temple worship. After the birth of Jesus, Mary, His mother, because “her means sufficed not for a lamb” (Lev. 12:8), brought two doves up to the temple as a sacrifice for cleansing. This moves our hearts the more, when we remember that the bride is called His “dove.”

Steadfastly does the dove watch for the first rays of dawn; faithfully does she return at her appointed times for she “knows her seasons.” Thus the bride can see the approach of the dawn, when to others all is dark; and she is looking and longing for the

return of her Heavenly Bridegroom. She has a single eye, and there are no double motives nor selfish designs with her, but she has her eyes fixed steadfastly upon her Beloved. In the Scriptures, the “eye” is the figure of light and illumination, and it is as we know the Truth and walk in it, that we are purified and see God; for only the pure in heart shall see God.

“Thine eyes are as doves behind thy locks. Thy hair is as a flock of goats, that lie along the side of Mount Gilead.” Mount Gilead was shaped like the head and shoulders of a man; and a large flocks of goats with long, fine, silken hair, could be seen grazing and lying down upon its steep sides, until it appeared to be crowned with hair.

In the Word of God, long hair is the symbol of separation and subjection. How precious is this consecration and desperation set forth in the Nazarite of the old dispensation. Samuel, Samson, with many others in the Old Testament, and John the Baptist in the New Testament, were set apart unto God from their mother’s womb. The latter was in the desert until his ministry began, and who knows the relations what he received while there alone with God, and the communion that he had with Him. Jesus said that none greater than he, had been born of woman.

One of the most notable Nazarites of the Old Testament times, was Samson. Upon his head grew seen locks of hair which had never been cut. The long hair was a token of separation, and the number of locks, “seven,” a symbol of perfection. It was not in the hair of Samson, that his strength lay; his hair was only the outward sign of the secret relation and a vow that bound him to God.

What power there was in the holy relation between Samson and God! A covenant that God ever honored, as long as Samson honored it, and kept it a secret between Jehovah and himself. Though his life, many times, appears inconsistent to us; as long as he had regard to that which his long hair signified, and held it sacred between himself With God, God was with him, and his strength was unabated.

Thus flows down over the bride’s shoulders the beautiful, unshorn hair, which is the sign of her separation and subjection to her Lord and Master. She is pictured here with her hair of separation hanging down and covering her from every gaze that would contaminate her. This separation begins in the heart, first working mightily within.

It is not the outward separation, that the power lies; many, down through the ages, have separated themselves from man, hiding in caves and cells, but it profited nothing if God were not in it. The power is in the inward separation, which does not require isolation, but is oftentimes perfected in great stress of circumstances and in a full, busy life. Some are perfected when mingling with sinners along the lines of duty or business.

We must cut off every object of love and affection that usurps Christ’s place; we must pour out our love to Him more fervently and exclusively as the days go by. As we do this, we shall be cut off from those who are not filled with the same devotion toward Him, and our separation unto Him will be perfected.

When God first puts the cry within us that we may be separated unto Him, we do not realize what it will mean. To have this prayer unanswered, all we need to do is to look to Him, to follow Him, to stand for the Truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to refuse to compromise in any way, or to follow error. As we take this path of fidelity to Him, our locks will grow, and we shall be beautiful in His eyes.

Have you thought that when you know the gospel, and it is operating in our life, it will attract people to you, and that they will rejoice with you? Paul said he was separated unto the gospel; and it is not only being separated unto the gospel, but the gospel separates. Those who are not following on with the Lord have no locks of separation, and they will never admire the bride's long hair, which makes her appear peculiar and unlike themselves. The world and worldly Christians do not know the meaning of this separation.

The longer and thicker the bride's hair grows, the more the world and those who are not going on with the Lord, criticize her appearance. They see no beauty in this crown of separation; to them, it is only a sign of peculiarity, and an evidence that she feels herself better than they are. Though the world mocks at the soul who is separated unto God' deep in their hearts, they despise the Christian who is inconsistent, professing and preaching one thing, and living like the world of sinners.

There is a secret betrothal binding the bride of Christ to Himself, which separates her from all others and from everything that is not of Him. He came and died for her, He shed His blood that she might be cleansed and separated unto Himself.

As this mysterious relation between her and the Lord goes on to perfection, and is entered into with increasing abandonment, the locks of separation become thicker, longer, and more beautiful. And the hair of the bride appears as a flock of goats that lie along the sides and hang on the crags of Mount Gilead. In all things her Lord has the preeminence and reigns supreme in her life. She submits herself to Him at all times, she is pure and separated from all others, she is keeping her robes spotless.

How many times, we have yielded to the flesh and failed to live in the Spirit. How many times, the children of God have compromised out of regard for the feelings of friends and relatives, for someone who is in error; or in order to retain the friendship of those who do not love the Lord. The transgression of this law of separation has taken many a child of God out of the race; they wanted to be kind to somebody, and it was in the "natural." They not only hindered themselves, but they confirmed others in the error they were embracing. There is nothing that will confirm a person in the wrong stand he is taking, like going and standing with him.

Those about the bride do not know of fidelity that keeps her eyes ever upon her Lord, watching through the darkest hours for the signs of His return. They do not know of the secret meetings that she has with her Beloved, of the hidden table, of the reproofs and encouragements. They do not know of the work that He is doing within her, and how the robe, which He died that she might put on, is little by little appearing in His sight. They cannot see the great love wherewith He loved her, and which binds her to Him; they cannot see that His shadow is over her, and that she is engraven upon His hands. They cannot see that He has commenced to ornament her with the adorning that will fit her to be His wife, and to sit with Him upon His throne.

All this and manifold more, none can see whose eyes are not anointed to behold the supernatural. Only as the spiritual vision is protected by the locks of separation does it become strong and clear. As the bride is separated unto Him and unto His Truth, her eyes are protected, her vision is perfected, and she beholds "great and mighty things" which she knew not; she beholds "wondrous things" out of His law; she looks upon the unseen and eternal things; she endures as she beholds Him who is invisible. The more separation is perfected, the more clearly she sees the spiritual and unseen.

Just as the glare and heat of the sun will weaken and impair a man's natural eyesight if it is not protected, causing pain and weakness and sometimes resulting in sunstroke and death; so, without the shelter and protection of separation unto God, the spiritual vision will be weakened, resulting in spiritual blindness and sometimes in death. Such a man can see nothing, or if he is able to see aught, he does not see it as it is.

Though the world and half-hearted, compromising Christians may scorn and not understand the long hair of the bride, they are silenced when the power and presence, when the approval of God shines upon those who are counting all things but refuse for the excellency of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Heavenly Bridegroom will never have anybody in the bride that is not true to Him; and this is going to mean more than we have apprehended. His eyes detect every infidelity and spot; He knows where each of us has not been true to Him; He knows all that is within us, He cannot be deceived, for everything is naked and laid upon before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Would the favor of anybody or the pleasure of mingling with all others, outweigh His favor and communion? Would it pay us if we gained the whole world, and had our own way, but lost that which our Lord has for us?

Those who go through with Jesus are going to be very peculiar, for the separation itself will be a stumblingblock to others. Let us remember that every separation that is of God will bring persecution and misunderstanding. Many of God's people, who were once in the race and had the glory of God resting upon them, went back or fell by the wayside because somebody could not understand why they should be peculiar and separated. They went back to people, but not to God.

We are encouraged as we remember that Samson's hair grew again, and he killed more in his death than he had killed in his life. All of us have our locks shorn at one time or another by the blandishments of the world and the flesh. We have had our strength sapped away through infidelity to our Lord, through giving away to our own flesh or that of somebody else. Let us turn unto our Lord with greater zeal and fidelity, and our locks will grow until all their beauty and strength are restored.

Oh, that we may go forward with those seven locks of separation uncut! With not one strand uneven and disfigured through being cut and haggled by the shears of the world! Let us seek our Beloved and yield to Him, that this token of consecration may be beautiful, long, shining, and crown us like a flock of goats upon Mount Gilead.

As we fully partake in the death of Jesus Christ, the enemy will be destroyed with such slaughter and victory as we have never known before. God will be glorified as the power of our identification with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection operates within us, and we become more than conquerors through Him that loved us. The impossible will become possible as we go from strength to strength. Mountains will be removed, doors of brass and bars of iron will be broken in pieces. The walls of every walled city shall fall down as we march around them, and God will get all the glory!

CHAPTER XX

The Bride's Graces in Faith, Speech, and Humility. 4:2-3

4:2 “Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes that are newly shorn, which are come up from the washing, whereof every one hath twins, and none is bereaved among them.” A flock of ewes newly shorn are symmetrical and perfect in form. One translation gives it: “A flock of ewes of one size,” Whether we accept the one or the other translation, the meaning is the same; namely, that the bride's teeth are perfect and even, with none missing. They are not only like a flock of symmetrical, newly shorn sheep, but like the ewes that come up from the water after they have been washed. They are white, pure, beautiful; no blemishes, no uncleanness, and none lacking.

When we remember that food must be masticated and prepared by our teeth before it can be swallowed and assimilate to the nourishment of our bodies, we can see the place teeth of the bride have, and their relation to the spiritual health in progress. We are commanded to feed upon Christ, to eat His flesh and drink His blood. The prophet said: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by thy name.” Jesus said: “I am the bread of life; he that cometh unto Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” He is the Bread of life, and it is only by faith that we can feed upon Him, it is only by faith that we can drink of the water of life.

This faith of the bride, through which she continually feeds upon the Hidden Manna, Jesus Christ, through which she feeds upon the written Word until it becomes nutriment to the whole being, is represented by a flock of strong, perfect ewes, newly shorn, which have come up from the washing. It is this faith that guides and draws the soul to that portion of the Word of God, which, when applied, will cleanse away every spot. It is the setting forth of that operative faith that appropriates the Word of God, and masticates the spiritual food which God provides, until it becomes flesh in the life.

Every touch of unbelief has been cut away. All effort of human faith, which profits no more than any other operation of the flesh, has been shorn, leaving only the perfectly shaped teeth. Every one is mated that the mastication may be perfectly done; all decay and uncleanness have been washed away, and the bride stands forth, provided with the faith of the Son of God.

Many of the children of God have such irregular faith, such broken and decayed faith; many have lost some of their teeth of faith, and those remaining are so sensitive and loose, that they are of little use. When they come to the Word of God, they have no way of appropriating that which He has provided and they are unable to claim His precious and exceeding great promises. They cannot understand, or masticate the Word of God and receive nourishment.

They do not have life more abundant because they are not able to feed upon the Bread of life abundantly. If they swallow the Word of God intellectually and without mastication, it does not nourish them; and they have spiritual indigestion and become spiritually sick. Not comprehending the real Truth, and the Word not being rightly divided and apprehended, they become discouraged and fall into error or fanaticism.

Only through the perfect faith, which is set forth under the description of perfect natural teeth, can there be spiritual health. Such teeth can feed in the green pastures,

which is also implied by the figure that that Holy Spirit takes to describe the teeth; that is, a flock of newly shown ewes. We can almost see them, white, shapely, and all of one size, as they feed here and there in the pasture of the Great Shepherd. They move on together through the dew-laden grass, pure white against its green velvet; they eat and meditate, they lie down and rest in the pasture provided for them. Thus does the faith of the bride follow the leading of her Lord, as He reveals Himself to her more and more, and calls us upon her to feed upon the Bread of life more continuously and abundantly.

Why is it that our spiritual teeth are in such a sad condition? Many times we have hardly faith for a little thing; we have only a few teeth, and most of them have lost their mates, so that they are all but useless. This faith, as we have before implied, refers especially to feeding upon the Son of God and taking things from Him. It is a faith that increases and grows, and in the bride, we see that it has grown mightily and is perfected into that faith to which nothing is impossible.

When we get down in simple confidence, God meets the faith that we have; and if we maintain this attitude, there is nothing that grows so rapidly as faith, for God ever waters it by meeting and encouraging us along the way. If we press through into His presence, our faith operates and He meets us, and our faith grows in a wonderful way, becoming stronger for the next test. In the natural, babies do not have teeth, neither do babes in the Lord have mighty faith to feed upon His deep truths; but God metes out to them milk, the food that is prepared for babes. He sends them His word and promises, presented in such a way that they are able to take them; and He gives more than they can ask or think, not according to their faith, but according to His grace and mercy.

With the babe, cutting teeth is a painful, natural process for they come through with pain and inflammation; so it is with the teeth of faith in the Christian. The only way in which faith can be perfected, is through pain and suffering; it is when the impossible faces us, that the pressure brings our teeth of faith through, and they are perfected by using them. There is a fact in connection with this, of which we may well take notice for our edification and a warning. Those things that God allows to face the babe in the Lord, are just as great mountains in his babyhood, as the great and impossible things with which the full-grown Christian is faced.

As the child of God goes on, believing and stepping out as God leads, his faith appears and grows. It is perfected and becomes like the perfect natural teeth in the mouth of a full-grown man. He finds that the things that seemed hard at the beginning of a life of faith, look small to a retrospective examination. If he is faithful and obedient, his strength and confidence increase and are perfected at every onward step. He finds that the testings of the full-grown Christian, which would have been impossible for him to face victoriously in his early Christian life, are no harder to overcome than those testings and trials that appeared so grave and important to his babyhood.

But there is another precious symbolism in here. We are told that it is a flock of *sheep*, but a "flock of ewes;" that is, a flock of female sheep. This is a symbol of fruitfulness. None is bereaved, all are twin-bearing, and in this way this beautiful flock is increasing and multiplying continually. Every ewe becomes stronger and more beautiful as she feeds upon the green grass and drinks of the hidden springs.

As the ewes become stronger and bring forth twins, so each virgin in the bride of the Lamb, is made stronger and more beautiful by the teeth of faith, which God has provided for her. There is not only abundant faith in her own life, as she uses her faith

and feeds upon the Bread from Heaven; but through her faith, she in travail for other souls, which are born into the Kingdom of Heaven through her ministry and prayers of faith. Thus the company of virgins that make up the bride, goes on to the perfect number, and unto individual perfection.

The very fact that the flock is composed of “ewes,” also points to the bride of Christ being made up of virgins, who are always spoken of in the feminine; a bride is always a woman. Although the bride is made up of redeemed and perfected men and women, they all bear the marks of submission and subjection to their unseen Head, which is expressed by the feminine. We can hardly despise the weaker sex, when all must come under this designation in their relation to the Lord; and we are told that in Him there is no male nor female, but all are spoken of as “Lamb’s wife.”

4:3 “Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy mouth is comely.” The bride’s lips are like a delicate thread of scarlet showing forth perfect health. It is instructive and interesting to notice the perfect symbolism of the figures that the Holy Spirit uses throughout the Scriptures. Leprosy is always the symbol of sin with the leper, there is no feature that is so disfigured as the lips, which become thick, white, and scurfy. At all times must the leper keep his mouth covered; and as soon as he hears the approach of footsteps, he must cry: “Unclean! Unclean!” The leper was looked upon as unclean and dangerous, and was isolated from among his people lest they too might contract this dread disease.

Not only are the lips of the sinners unclean, not only do their lips bear the signs of sin and uncleanness, but the lips of those who are called by the Name of Christ, often the lack of pure, holy setting aside for the service of the Lord, which should ever be upon them. Some one has said that we should take heed to our words, in that God has graciously provided a white fence to hold in the tongue, and doors to keep closed and locked. “Set a watch, O God, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3).

The bride’s lips being described as a thread of scarlet, is a symbol of the blood, which must ever be over the door of our lives and upon the door of our lips, so that not a word shall come forth that is not acceptable to God. “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one;” every word spoken, edifying and building up those around us; all coming from God and being to His glory so that HE can own and use them.

“Let no corrupt (rotten) speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear.” The word translated “corrupt” is literally “worthless;” but this is taken from a word which means “to putrify.” Hence, the final condition of worthless words is described in the original word; namely, “putrid.” They are words that have no salt in them, though they may have seemed harmless when spoken. Because they were not with grace and well seasoned with salt, in the end they became putrid and ill-smelling.

We little realize how careless words, when repeated, can be misunderstood and perverted. Truly, it is dangerous to speak excepting in the Spirit; for though God takes care of all He causes us to speak, He will not protect and care for that which *we* speak. It is not only that the words should be with grace and seasoned with salt, they must be spoken at the right time; they must be unto edification as the need may be.

When unworthy, worthless, idle words come forth, if we had spiritual vision, we would see upon each other's lips the sign of leprosy more or less marked. But the lips of the bride shall not have the least appearance of leprosy upon them. They shall not be thick and white; they shall be like a thread of scarlet which shows for the blood of cleansing and the color of health. Her speech shall be beautiful. Such treasures will Jesus put within her heart, and so wonderfully will the Holy Spirit bring forth the words from the fullness within, that all who come in touch with her and hear the words of grace and wisdom that she speaks, will be edified thereby.

We are told that, "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer." If, before we answered, our hearts studied and were lifted up to our precious Lord as to what we should say; if we weighed and examined every answer before we spoke, how many times we would keep silent when we speak unadvisedly. If our hearts prayerfully studied to see whether every answer was from God or from ourselves; whether it could come through our lips and neither mar their scarlet beauty, nor leave a trace of leprosy behind, how many words would be cut off, and how many would be changed.

How wonderful would it be to ourselves and to those about us if God touched our lips with a live coal from His own altar, and forever made our words pure. How beautiful would we appear before our Beloved if He could always behold upon our lips the cleansing of His blood. It is only as our hearts are abandoned in love to Him, and He pours into them the treasures of His wisdom and grace, that we can bring forth this beautiful speech. "For out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh."

In James, we are told that we must be "quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath." "But many, even of the children of God, are quick to speak and teach others; quick to strive and defend themselves, even when they are in the wrong; quick to wrath or irritability. They are slow only when it comes to being taught and hearing instruction (Prov. 1:7)

There is much more in the words of our mouths than we have ever apprehended. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." We must take heed that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts are acceptable in the sight of our Beloved, and do not bring reproach upon His Name.

It is when the blood of the Lamb has been applied to the heart, out of which are the issues of life, that the lips and speech are also cleansed. There is no fear of any unclean, unwise or foolish words coming out of a heart thus cleansed, and from lips that ever bear the restraining power and cleansing of the blood upon them. As the Blood of Jesus Christ is trusted step by step, the lips become scarlet, delicate, and to the glory of God; they are not defiled by unworthy speech. It is then, that the speech of the bride is well seasoned, and is always in season.

"Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate behind thy veil." In Scripture, the temples, or forehead, are always spoken of as the seat of boldness or modesty. This comparison to a piece of pomegranate, refers to the red and white center of the fruit after it is cut; the seeds of which, when broken, give forth a red liquid, which is a symbol of the blood; the pulp shows red mixed with white. It is a precious emblem of the modesty of the bride tingeing or covering her spotlessness, which is represented by the white.

As the red tinged seeds of the pomegranate lie hidden with the fruit, so with the bride of the Lamb; it is the hidden man of the heart that is clothed with the incorruptible

apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of her Lord of great price. The work must begin within, and go on until she is adorned with all shame-facedness and modesty, with all humility. As the red of the pomegranate is hidden away inside the rind of the fruit, so must our union with the Lord in His death, work within before it can appear without. It is as we die to pride and self in the heart that the incorruptible hidden apparel is put on. As we put on Christ within, His humility will appear without; but it always appears before the face of God before it is seen by man.

The pure, blushing face of the bride is rendered more beautiful by being shaded and protected by the locks of her separation unto God. It is through this deep separation and fidelity to her Beloved, that she is clothed within with the incorruptible apparel, which is so rare and beautiful in the eyes of the Bridegroom. She does not flaunt her beauty abroad to be admired by His enemies; she does not try to please that world, neither is she gratified with the admiration and praises of those who hate her Beloved. The colors, which are a sign of her modesty and chastity, have their source within, and are not the artificial counterfeit that is put on without, which may deceive man, but can never deceive God.

Only submission to God and living union with Jesus Christ, can bring real humility. Though a man is timid and conscious of his lack before his fellow men, as soon as any one speaks to him about God and his soul's salvation, he becomes resentful and full of rebellion. Sinners are always stiff-necked and insolent toward God.

The humility here described is the holy fear and reverence toward God that every child of His should have. It is the reverence that causes him to walk softly before the Lord in holy submission and subjection, which befits the bride of Christ.