

Title: **“WINTER IS PAST”**

Text: Song of Solomon 2:8-15

Subject: *The Time and Means of True Revival*

Date: Sunday Morning — August 1, 2010

Tape # Z-93b

Readings: *Merle Hart & Larry Criss*

Introduction:

(Song of Songs 2:8-15) The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. (9) My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice. (10) My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. (11) For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; (12) The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; (13) The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. (14) O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy

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countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. (15) Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

The things which are seen are types of the things which are not seen. The works of creation are pictures to the children of God which represent the secret mysteries of grace. God’s truths are apples of gold, and the visible creatures are baskets of silver. In the verses before us, we have a picture of revival. It is a time of joy, refreshing, and singing. It is like springtime after a long, dreary winter. Here we see the Lord Jesus Christ coming to his church. By his word, by the manifestation of his presence, by his power, and by his grace, he brings a time of refreshing to his own beloved people. The title of my message is — **“WINTER IS PAST.”** O Lord, may it be true. Grant to us now a time of refreshing and increase.

PERILOUS TIMES

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I recognize that we are living in perilous times. **We are living in the midst of the greatest religious apostasy ever known.** It appears that the time has come when God has sent men a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, because they received not the love of the truth. The whole world is drunk with the wine of Babylon’s fornication. Freewill, works religion is the religion of Babylon; and it is the religion of this apostate generation.

This modern day, man centered, man exalting, man pleasing, God debasing, God hating religion, which seems to engulf the entire world and all religious sects, is the greatest religious deception this world has ever known. I do not know, but it seems to me that we are living in that period of time, just before the end of time, when Satan will be loosed for a little season to once again deceive the nations. It appears that the world, by-in-large, has accepted the doctrines of antichrist.

- Religious ritualism — Papists and Protestants
- Self-righteousness — Religious Moralisms
- Free-willism — Easy-believism

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- Legalism — Works Salvation

Any religion that is man-centered, any religion that has for its foundation man’s will, man’s works, or man’s rights, any religion that promotes the honor, dignity, and pride of man, any religion that pampers and cultivates self-righteousness, self-esteem, and self-worth is antichrist.

GREAT REVIVAL

I realize that we are living in terribly perilous times. But I also believe that we may be experiencing the greatest true revival in history. Right “smack-dab” in the middle of this worldwide apostasy, I see more men preaching the gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ than at any other time we know of in history. I am not talking about religious hirelings who discuss the doctrines of grace over coffee but dare not preach them in their pulpits. I am talking about men who boldly stand up on their hind legs and tell out God’s truth.

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It appears to me that Christ is again working mightily in Zion. I hope that I am not deceived, but so far as the church of Christ, in its universal aspect is concerned, I can almost hear the Savior’s voice — *“Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing birds is come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.”* I do not want to be presumptuous. Yet, I do not want to fail to recognize the hand of God’s providence and his grace upon us.

Proposition: In his wisdom and grace, the Lord sends upon his church some long, cold winters; but he also sends the springtime of revival to his beloved people.

Anyone who reads the history of Christ’s church, with half an eye open, will recognize that she does have her ebbs and flows, her winter times and her spring times. Often it seemed as if she would be frozen out of the earth. Ungodliness, heresy, and error have prevailed at times. At other times she has

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been fruitful, triumphant, and majestic under the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit.

- Pentecost
- The Dark Ages of Papacy
- The Reformation
- The cold winter of Rationalism
- Puritanism and the Great Awakening
- Free-willism, emotionalism, fundamentalism (Finney)
- In these days it seems that God has given us another time of refreshing

REVELATION 11

I do not know whether we are living in the end of the age. I know better than to make such a foolish, presumptuous statement. But I do know this: — **This is exactly what we are told in Revelation 11 God would do in the end of the world.**

(Revelation 11:1-19) “And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, **Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the**

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altar, and them that worship therein. 2 **But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not;** for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty [and] two months.”

“3 ¶ **I will give [power] unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy** a thousand two hundred [and] threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. 4 **These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.** 5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. 6 **These have power to shut heaven,** that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. 7 And **when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.** 8 And their dead bodies [shall lie] in the street of the

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great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 10 And **they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them**, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. 11 And **after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet**; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, **Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them**. 13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

“14 ¶The second woe is past; [and], behold, the third woe cometh quickly. 15 And the seventh

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angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, **The kingdoms of this world are become [the kingdoms] of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.** 16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. **19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament:** and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.” (Revelation 11:1-19)

I place no stock at all in the fantastic tales men tell about revivals of the past or the present, which

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appear to me to be nothing but fits of religious frenzy and emotionalism. There is a great distinction to be made between Satanic delusions and the works of God.

Divisions: In this message I want to show you how it is that our Lord brings revival to his church. — Revival is not always a sudden burst of divine power upon the church. It is much more than a temporary emotional stirring. **True revival is simply the communion and fellowship of Christ with his people. It comes by degrees, by the gradual manifestation of Christ himself by the preaching of the gospel.** Let’s look now at these verses and see what steps our Lord takes in coming to his people. — Let me show you **FOUR THINGS** in verses 8-15.

1. The Lord himself comes to his people (vv. 8-9).
2. Christ Jesus calls us to himself (vv. 10-13).
3. The Lord communes with his believing people (v. 14).
4. The Lord gives us a loving admonition (v. 15).

CHRIST COMES

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First, when the Lord God visits his people in revival, the Lord Jesus graciously comes to his own (vv. 8-9).

(Song of Songs 2:8-9) The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. (9) My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice.

It is our responsibility to seek the Lord and call upon him. But revival comes when he comes to us. **The fact is we will never truly seek him and call upon him until he first seeks us and calls us.** If he turns us, we shall be turned. If he draws us, we will run after him. Here we see the Bride rejoicing in the approach of her Beloved (Psalm 80).

(Psalms 80:1-19) **“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,** thou that ledest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest [between] the cherubims, **shine forth.** 2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh **stir up thy strength, and come [and] save us.** 3 **Turn us again, O God, and cause**

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thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. 4 O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? 5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure. 6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves. 7 **Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.**”

“8 ¶Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. 9 Thou preparedst [room] before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. 10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof [were like] the goodly cedars. 11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. 12 Why hast thou [then] broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? 13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. 14 **Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine;** 15 And the

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vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch [that] thou madest strong for thyself. 16 [It is] burned with fire, [it is] cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. **17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man [whom] thou madest strong for thyself.** 18 **So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.** 19 **Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.**”

Go back to the Song of Solomon 2:8. — **The Church, the Bride, hears the Lord Jesus speak.** — *“It is the voice of my Beloved.”* — It is Christ calling to his church to tell us that he is coming.

- No one but Christ can speak to the heart; and no voice but his can make it burn.
- We are his sheep. We know his voice.
- He speaks to us through the preaching of the gospel.
- He speaks to us by his Spirit.
- He speaks to us personally.

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Next we see the Savior coming. — “Behold, he cometh.” The eye of faith looks for Christ, anticipating him.

This may very well be taken as a prophecy of our Lord’s first coming in the flesh. The incarnation of Christ, to suffer and die as our Substitute, was the hope and expectation of the Old Testament believers. Abraham rejoiced to see his day, and was glad. The nearer the time came the more clearly they saw. **Those who waited for the consolation of Israel with an eye of faith saw him coming and rejoiced in God’s salvation.** They had heard him say, “Lo, I come.” And faith responded, “Behold, he cometh!” (Psalm 40:7-8). **Look at how our Lord came to redeem us.**

He came cheerfully and with great speed. — He came leaping and skipping over the mountains like a deer, as one who was pleased with the work before him. Our Lord’s heart was in the work of redemption (Isaiah 50:5-7; Luke 12:50).

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(Isaiah 50:5-7) The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. (6) I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. (7) For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

(Luke 12:50) But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

Our dear Savior came to remove the difficulties that lay in the way of our salvation and to triumph over our enemies as our mighty Joshua, the Captain of our Salvation. — He came “leaping over the mountains!” The powers of darkness, our own sins, and the terrible curse of God’s law had to be overcome. But before the determination of his love, these mountains were brought low.

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Christ came suddenly and soon after the promise was given. — God’s people thought that the time between the promise and the fulfillment of the promise was very long. But it was not. One day the promise was given, and four days later the time came. At the appointed time Christ came. The due time was the best time.

(Romans 5:6) For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

(Galatians 4:4-5) But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

This is true regarding our Lord’s visitation with his people today. — His time is the best time. He has withdrawn himself, but for a small moment. At the appointed time, he will return to us in everlasting lovingkindness (Isaiah 54:7-10).

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(Isaiah 54:7-10) For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. (8) In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. (9) For this *is as* the waters of Noah unto me: for *as* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. (10) For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

This is also true regarding his glorious second advent. — He says, “Behold, I come quickly.” Faith responds, “Behold, he cometh!”

When Christ comes to revive and refresh his people, he graciously reveals himself to our hearts.
— “He standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice.”

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This was the condition of the Church in the Old Testament. Christ was with them, but they did not clearly see him.

- He stood behind the wall of the law.
- He showed himself through the windows and lattices of their sacrifices and ceremonies.

In a sense, this is the condition we are in as long as we are here upon the earth. — Now we see him through a glass darkly. This body of flesh is a wall which stands between us and him. But soon we shall see him face to face.

Particularly, these words describe our condition as believers when we are under a cloud. Christ is always near; but sometimes he is out of sight; he does not reveal himself to our hearts. But the wall that stands between us is a wall which we have erected. The wall which separates us from Christ is “our wall,” our sins (Isaiah 59:1-2).

(Isaiah 59:1-2) Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear

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heavy, that it cannot hear: (2) But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.

Christ stands behind our wall as One who is waiting to be gracious, ready to be reconciled, willing to forgive (Revelation 3:20). See Hosea 14:1-4.

(Revelation 3:20) 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.

(Hosea 14:1-4) O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. (2) Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive *us* graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. (3) Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. (4) I will heal

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their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

Our Lord graciously looks in at the windows and shows himself through the lattices. — To comfort us — To break us — To make us open to him. Dr. Gill, if I remember correctly, suggested that the windows and lattices by which the Lord Jesus shows himself are the ordinances he has given us.

- The Reading of His Word and Prayer.
- The Preaching of His Gospel.
- The Singing of His Praise.
- The Bread and Wine of The Lord’s Supper.

A CALL OF LOVE

Secondly, once Christ has come to us and revealed himself, causing our hearts to burn for him — he lovingly calls us to himself (vv. 10-13).

(Song of Songs 2:10-13) My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. (11) For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over *and* gone; (12) The flowers appear

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on the earth; the time of the singing *of birds* is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; (13) The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines *with* the tender grape give a *good* smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Would to God we were all keenly sensitive to our Savior’s voice. Let us be like Abraham, Samuel, and Isaiah, ready to hear his voice, ready to obey him, ready to do his will.

In all of our frames and circumstances, Christ’s love and attitude toward us is unchanged. His chastisements are the chastisements of a loving heart. He calls us his “*love*” and his “*fair one.*” — Imagine that! Our Lord’s love for us is immutable. It is in no way dependent upon us.

My soul through many changes goes;
His love no variation knows.

In his eyes, we are always fair and lovely, because he has made us so, by virtue of our union with him.

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The Lord Christ calls for us to arise and come away with him (vv. 10, 13). See Ephesians 5:14.

(Song of Solomon 2:10) “My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

(Song of Solomon 2:13) “The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

(Ephesians 5:14) Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

With tenderness and earnestness he urges us to come to him.

- Arise from your bed of slothful indifference.
- Come away from your carnal amusement and worldly care.
- Come to Christ — *“To whom coming.”*

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Then the Lord Jesus presses our hearts to come to him (vv. 11-13).

(Song of Solomon 2:11-13) “For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over [and] gone; 12 The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing [of birds] is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; 13 The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines [with] the tender grape give a [good] smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

“The winter is past.” — Our long, hard, bitter winters will not last forever. They will pass away. But **spring would not be so pleasant if it did not follow winter.** The winter is past for now; but it will come again. So we must make provision for it now.

The time of fruitfulness and singing has come. When Christ comes and makes himself known, his people rejoice, and sing, and bring forth fruit. One of the old writers said the serpents are driven away by the smell of grapevines. I don’t know about that. But

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I do know that the old serpent is driven away when our True Vine puts forth his tender grapes.

This picture might easily be applied to many things...

- Our Lord’s First Advent, The Dawning of The Gospel Age.
- The Conversion of Sinners.
- The Revival of Christ’s Church.
- The Great Resurrection Day.

SWEET COMMUNION

We see then that in reviving his people, Christ first comes to us, then he calls us to himself, and *thirdly*, our all glorious Christ communes with his believing people (v. 14).

(Song of Songs 2:14) O my dove, *that art* in the clefts of the rock, in the secret *places* of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet *is* thy voice, and thy countenance *is* comely.

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In the most gentle and loving tones, Christ speaks to the hearts of his people. **God always deals with his children graciously, in love and tenderness.** Listen to the loving description he gives of those who put their trust in him.

The Church of God is compared to a dove.

- For Beauty
- For Innocence
- For Humility
- For Faithfulness
- For Peace

The church is his dove. He owns her and delights in her. She can find no rest except in him. Sooner or later she must return to him even as Noah's dove returned to the Ark.

The Church is a dove, hidden in the clefts of the rock, Christ Jesus. — The believing soul may not always be sensible of Christ's presence. But he is always sensible of his soul's need; and he takes refuge in the wounds of that One who was smitten in our stead.

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“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!”

Sensing our need for Christ, every believer will find a closet in the secret places of the stairs to seek the Lord. Our love for and communications of love to Christ are not things which we make a public spectacle. **Public passion is cheap, demeaning, and disgusting.** Believers, those who love Christ, pour out their hearts’ passions to him in the secret places of the stairs.

The Church of God, you and I are the objects of Christ’s peculiar love and tender care. All that our Lord does for us, or to us, or allows to be done, he does because he loves us. In his eyes, we are lovely. He delights in us.

- He wants to see our faces turned toward him.
- He wants to hear our voices calling upon him (Hebrews 4:16).
- He wants to commune with us and us with him.

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My soul, what can I say! The Son of God delights to have such worthless worms as we are! He does truly love us!

Has he come to you? Have you heard his voice? Have you seen the Lord, showing himself through the windows and lattices of your own soul? Has he driven away your long winter and made your soul to sing? I know that some of you have been made to rejoice in his love.

(Isaiah 12:1-6) “¶ And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. 2 Behold, God [is] my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH [is] my strength and [my] song; he also is become my salvation. 3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.”

“4 ¶ And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name

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is exalted. 5 Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this [is] known in all the earth. 6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great [is] the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.”

(Isaiah 25:1) “O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.”

(Isaiah 25:6-9) “¶And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken [it]. 9 ¶ And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this [is] our God; we have waited for him, and he will save

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us: this [is] the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

A LOVING ADMONITION

Now, in the last place, our Lord Jesus gives us a loving admonition (v. 15).

(Song of Songs 2:15) Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines *have* tender grapes.

The admonition which he gives us is to guard against and suppress those little foxes which destroy the tender vines and would disturb the peace of his beloved dove.

This is a charge to every believer to suppress his own sinful nature. Those evils of our nature which seem little in our own eyes must be avoided, for the good of Christ’s kingdom.

- Anger
- Wrath
- Slander

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- Gossip
- Peevishness
- Neglect

Those little foxes that destroy the peace of God’s church must be taken out of the way.

- Doctrinal Error
- Schisms And Divisions

APPLICATION

There is a peculiar responsibility upon our shoulders as a Church. The Lord has greatly blessed us.

Look at what he has done for us.

- He has taught us the gospel.
- He has revealed himself to us.
- He has given us an unusual opportunities.
- He has allowed us to be useful to many around the world.
- He has given us 31 years of blessedness, 31 years of sweet fellowship in Christ.

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Let us arise and follow him, diligently performing the work he lays before us.

- Watch out for those little foxes.
- Cherish Christ.
- Publish his honor.

Amen.