

There are times when, even as believers, we fall into a condition of sinful doubt and feel as if Christ's gracious presence is no longer with us. But in all of this, He assures us that He has not forsaken us. He is working both *"to will and to do His good pleasure,"* and all of it is for His glory, our good, and the advancement of His kingdom in this world. If we as individual believers, or as a collective church body, will ever experience real revival, it must begin with a clear awareness and knowledge that we are eternally and unchangeably *"in Christ,"* clothed in His righteousness, and therefore accepted of God in Him and loved by Him. We must always realize that *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 4:10).

(7:10) - I AM MY BELOVED'S, AND HIS DESIRE IS TOWARD ME. - Even in acknowledging her own sinfulness, slothfulness, neglect, and unworthiness, that faith which is *"the gift of God,"* called the *"faith of God's elect,"* and which believes God's Word over our feelings and circumstances, enables God's church to make such a bold statement. These words are the words of Christ's church, expressing a strong assurance of faith that she is in union with Christ, one with Him in the eyes of God's law and justice. This is an assurance from God in Christ that He loves us with an everlasting love, and He will not condemn or forsake us (Rom. 8:33-39). The apostle Paul expressed this same gift of faith and assurance in spite of his sufferings because of preaching the Gospel - *"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that HE IS ABLE to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day"* (2 Tim. 1:12). The ability to enter into this truth and continue in it is usually the result of a fresh awareness of our Lord's love toward us and His continual presence with us, IN SPITE OF OURSELVES. In a sense, these words are a modest acknowledgement by the church that all we are, and all we possess, are from Him.

This word *"desire"* in the original language conveys the idea of the longings of a man for a woman. The bride is saying that Christ longs FOR HER, and only FOR HER, His wife, His sheep. Consider how long Christ's desire has been toward His church. First, His desire was toward her from eternity past when the Father graciously gave us to Him in the everlasting covenant of grace, and He agreed to be our Surety. Because of His desire toward us, He willingly made Himself of no reputation, becoming incarnate in a sinless humanity in order to suffer, bleed, and die in our place. Secondly, His desire was toward us even before our conversion and our faith in Him when we were enemies of God in our minds by wicked works (Col. 1:19-22). Thirdly, His desire is toward us after our conversion, desiring to fellowship with us and have the graces He gives us exercised towards Him (Rev. 3:20). Finally, His desire toward us will not and cannot be fully satisfied until He brings all He longed for in eternity safely to eternal glory to be with Him forever. This also includes Christ's preservation and care for His bride. He sympathizes with us under all our distresses, protects us from all dangers and enemies, and provides everything necessary for us for time and eternity.

(7:11-12) - COME, MY BELOVED, LET US GO FORTH INTO THE FIELD; LET US LODGE IN THE VILLAGES. LET US GET UP EARLY TO THE VINEYARDS; LET US SEE IF THE VINE FLOURISH, WHETHER THE TENDER GRAPE APPEAR, AND THE POMEGRANATES BUD FORTH: THERE WILL I GIVE THEE MY LOVES. - The bride had expressed in verse 10 her desire that her Bridegroom would go with her wherever she goes. This expresses not only our NEED of Christ, but also our LOVE for Christ. We do not want to go anywhere without Him (Exod. 33:11-16). Some interpreters claim *"the field"* refers to the Scriptures. If this is the case, then the bride desires that Christ go with her as she studies God's Word, for without Him, it is

meaningless (*John 5:39-47*). I believe it probably refers to the fields to which Christ directed His disciples which were “*white already to harvest*” (*John 4:35*). This would be His commission for the church to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, seeking His sheep (*Matt. 28:18-20*).

“*Lodge in the villages*” is interpreted by many to be the true churches established by Christ throughout the world. Christ said, “*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them*” (*Matt. 18:20*). To “*get up early to the vineyards*” has to do with the care of Christ’s church in which He uses His ministers to serve them through His Word and pray for growth in grace and in knowledge of Christ. I heard a man once say in referring to the great need of evangelism that “Christ has called us to be fishers of men, not keepers of the aquarium.” Although the true church is to be zealously and proactively evangelistic in seeking the salvation of the lost, she is also to be zealously and proactively engaged in the edification and care of the saved.

It is in the ministry of the church that we see the flourishing “*vine*,” which is the life of Christ given to His people, the “*tender grape*,” which are young believers, and the “*pomegranates bud forth*,” which are mature believers. As believers, sinners saved by grace, we are to give our love to Christ throughout our lives and in every place. But it is in our fellowship with His people, the church, in public worship as we identify with Him and His people that we express our love to Him in the greatest way (*John 13:35; Heb. 10:24-25; 1 John 3:14-19; 4:7-13*). When I prepare a Gospel message for people to hear in a worship service, I always pray for four things to be realized as I preach God’s Word:

(1) That God be glorified as both a just God and a Savior, the sovereign God Who chose His people in Christ, Who sent Christ into the world to save His people from their sins, Who has justified the ungodly by His grace based on the blood of Christ, His righteousness imputed, and Who gives spiritual life to spiritually dead sinners;

(2) That Christ be exalted in the glory of His Person as God manifest in the flesh, and in the power and success of His finished work by His death on the cross for His people as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, Who was made sin so that they are made the righteousness of God in Him, and Who was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven to be their Intercessor and Lord;

(3) That lost sinners be saved by God’s grace and power in giving them life and bringing them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry; and

(4) That God’s people, sinners saved by grace, be edified, unified, inspired, and guided by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word.

(7:13) - THE MANDRAKES GIVE A SMELL, AND AT OUR GATES ARE ALL MANNER OF PLEASANT FRUITS, NEW AND OLD, WHICH I HAVE LAID UP FOR THEE, O MY BELOVED. - A mandrake is a short-stemmed, flowering plant in the nightshade family. They are mentioned here and in one other passage (*Gen. 30:14-17*). It is called a “love apple.” It was considered in the ancient world as an aphrodisiac and eaten as a fertility drug. The idea here is the bride’s desire for sweet and fruitful communion with the Bridegroom. These are God’s people, “*new and old*,” who are the fruits of His Holy Spirit produced in the objects of His love. These are the mandrakes, the lovely flowers produced in His children as they abide in Him (*John 15:1-11*). These fruits are His gifts to us by His purchased redemption. He planted them by sovereign grace at our gates. How blessed we are if we have fruits, even the fruits of faith and love, along with all the gifts and fruit of the Spirit. By God’s grace we should go to our blessed Lord, seeking for Him to lodge or abide with us, and grant us to abide with Him. We can only be fruitful as we are in Him and living by His grace, love, and power.