

Christ's Heart Towards His People Part 3

Samuel Bolton, D.D. (1606-1654)

Song of Songs 4:9

I. The Text Opened

A. Song of Songs 4:9, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse: thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes; with one chain about thy neck."

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. DOCTRINE: Since Christ is ravished with his people, they can expect even more from him for their good.

1. This then may be a ground for us to expect, and here our faith may be strengthened in the expectation, that Christ will yet do more for his church and people, than what he has done.
2. Indeed, he has done much for his Zion.
 - a) God has seemed to over-look our great unworthiness.
 - b) He has set forth, and gone forward in a way of mercy.
 - c) And that which God has given us in hand, is an earnest of what we have in hope.
 - (1) *What we have in possession presses us to look to what we have in promise, and expect its performance, because God loves the church.*
 - (2) *The heart of Christ is taken with the church.*
 - (3) *He loves his church, and therefore, he will purify his church, and burn away all her dross.*
 - (4) *He loves his church, and therefore will he reform his church.*
 - (5) *He loves his church, and therefore will he take away whatsoever offends, all soul-burdens, all conscience-burdens, which oppress the spirits of his own people.*
 - (a) *The church is his fold, and he will destroy the wolves, which have gotten in to devour the sheep.*
 - (b) *The church is his field, and he will weed out the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them.*
 - (c) *The church is his house, and he will sweep it.*
 - (d) *It is his floor, and he will fan, and blow away the chaff.*
 - (e) *That love which made him engage himself to his church, in precious promises, will not suffer him to rest, until he has made good those promises to it.*
 - (f) *That love which moved him to begin, will not suffer him to rest, until he has made an end.*
 - (6) *You see in Ezekiel 37:27, the whole chapter is but an addition of mercy to mercy.*
 - (7) *When God begins to go forth towards a people, in a way of mercy, he knows no stop, he can make no end.*
 - (a) *I will do this, and also this, as you see in that chapter.*
 - (b) *God adds mercy, to mercy.*
 - (c) *And the reason is, because free-love begins, and that knows no end.*
 - (8) *The proceedings of God's mercy, towards his church and people, do arise from himself, his own free-grace.*

(9) *If, when he threatened to punish Israel, he said, he will “add judgement to judgement.”*

(10) *This, and this also will I do, (Amos 4:12).*

(11) *How much more then when he promises to show mercy to Israel, will he add mercy to mercy?*

(12) *God has also of mercy, as well as of judgement.*

3. Well, then, is the heart of Christ taken with his church and people?
- a) Then will we with confidence believe, and with patience wait and expect, that Christ will yet do more for his church and people, than ever he has done, because he loves them?
 - b) Let us but join supplication with expectation; praying, with waiting, and we shall see it, to the joy of our hearts.
 - c) I never read, that God ever bestowed any great mercy and deliverance on his church and people, but he first stirred up the hearts of his people mightily to pray to him.
 - d) And never did God mightily stir up the hearts of his people to seek him, but he fashioned some great mercy and deliverance for them.
 - (1) *God loves to make his people as thankful as they were prayerful.*
 - (2) *As happy enjoyers, as they were humble seekers.*
 - (3) *When trouble sends us to prayer, then deliverance shall send us to praises.*
 - (4) *Let us then join our supplications to our expectations.*
 - (5) *Times of great expectations, should be times of great supplications.*
 - (6) *Whether they are expectations of hope, the object of which is good.*
 - (a) *Or, expectations of fear, the object of which is evil.*
 - (b) *Or, mixed expectations between hope and fear, as our times are; they are times of expectation, and therefore they ought to be times of supplication.*
 - (c) *We are now big with expectation; let us now be mighty in supplication.*
 - (d) *Great stones are not to be turned over without great strength.*
 - (e) *Great mercies are not to be gotten without great strivings.*
 - (f) *The man-child of deliverance is not to be brought forth without pangs.*
 - (i) **Let us then be mighty in prayer.**
 - (ii) **That will make all our present difficulties subservient to deliverance.**
 - (g) *And then let us stand still and wait.*
 - (i) **Wait for performance of promises.**
 - (ii) **Wait for performance of prayers.**
4. There are many thousands of prayers registered in God's book.
- a) Let us wait when all these shall come down on our heads in a warm shower of mercy.
 - b) Wait for when the great revenue of prayers will come in.
 - c) The longer the stay, the greater will be the harvest.
 - d) This is all our comfort.
 - (1) *God will not bring to the birth, and afterward not bring forth.*
 - (2) *Nor will he bring forth, and afterward shut the womb again, as he says in Isaiah 66:9.*
 - (3) *He is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning, and the Finisher; where he lays the foundation, there he will lay its roof.*

e) If the heart of Christ is once taken with his church and people then he will never take his heart off from them.

(1) *His heart once taken, shall never be taken off.*

(2) *Men may love today, and hate tomorrow, but God cannot.*

(3) *Whom he loves once, he loves to the end; even to all eternity.*

(4) *There was nothing in us, that was the ground of his planting his love on us.*

(5) *So, there is nothing that shall be able to over-turn the thoughts of his love, when once they are fixed on us.*

5. Indeed, our behavior may be such, as may cause God to be angry with us, and correct us sharply; yes, and make us to know, we had better never to have tried such things with him.

a) But there is nothing which shall cause him to hate us, and cast us off.

b) He may correct his spouse, but he will not divorce her.

c) The Israelites were so hard-hearted, that for every trivial fact they would put away their wives.

(1) *But the Lord hates putting away, (Mal. 2:16).*

d) For, sin fore-seen was not able to hinder him from planting his heart on us.

e) But though he saw what we would be, yet he loved us.

(1) *How then shall it be able to over-turn the thoughts of his heart, when once they are fixed on us?*

f) God foresaw everything.

(1) *He foresaw all that which you now think is a ground for him to alter his mind to you.*

(2) *And, if all that foreseen could not hinder him from fixing his love on you, neither shall it be able to move him to take off his heart, when once his heart is taken with you.*

g) Here, he is said to make an everlasting covenant with us, and he will never depart from us.

(1) *No, he will put his fear into our hearts, that we shall never depart from him, (Jer. 32:40).*

(2) *And Isa. 54:9-10, "Saith the Lord (speaking of the covenant of grace, which he will make with his people) It shall be 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 will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee."*

(a) *As if he had said, this is as sure as the other.*

(b) *The one as firm as the other.*

(c) *You have experience of the one, believe the other.*

(3) *If men were as bad as devils, they will by their works never bring a second flood on the world, because God has sworn never to destroy it.*

(a) *And as he has sworn to that, and is therefore, steadfast and immutable.*

(b) *So he has sworn to the other, that he will never leave you, nor forsake you; and therefore God will not.*

6. Objection. But alas! Do we not see that God sometimes forsakes his church and people?

a) Answer: Now for the answer of this, we will premise these three distinctions.

(1) *There is a seeming, and there is a real forsaking.*

(2) *There is a temporary, and an eternal forsaking.*

(3) *There is a partial, and a total forsaking.*

(a) *From these we will lay down three conclusions, in answer to the objection.*

b) 1. Conclusion.

- (1) *God sometimes seemingly, when he does not really, forsake his people.*
- (2) *God does not really neglect his people, when he seems to neglect them.*
- (3) *He seemed to neglect and forsake Job, Heman, David, Christ himself, when he cries, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?"*
- (4) *It was said after the manner of men.*
 - (a) *He feigned himself to be gone, but was not gone.*
 - (b) *The cloud may take the sun from our sight; but not pull it out of the sky.*
 - (c) *God may seemingly be gone, when he is really there.*
 - (d) *He seemed to be gone from Job, but he was really there.*
 - (e) *Otherwise Job could not have trusted in him, in that great difficulty.*
 - (f) *The same I may say of Heman, of David.*
 - (g) *Though God seemed to be gone, yet he was really there.*
 - (h) *Otherwise they could not have prayed, exercised their faith, and sought after God, as they did.*
 - (i) *So also was it with the church in the Song of Songs 3:1 and chapter 5.*
 - (i)** *And that is the first conclusion, God may seemingly forsake his people, when not really forsake his people.*

c) 2. Conclusion.

- (1) *God may partially forsake his people; but he never totally forsakes them.*
- (2) *I say, God may in part forsake his people, which may be occasioned on their part, by some fresh and new-acted sin.*
- (3) *As you see it was with David, Psalm 51:1.*
 - (a) *David had sinned.*
 - (b) *God had withdrawn himself.*
 - (c) *God was gone, comfort was gone, light was gone for a time.*
 - (d) *Works of darkness, and walking in darkness went together.*
 - (e) *He did not follow the direction, and therefore lacked the consolation of the Spirit.*
 - (i)** *But though God does this partially sometimes, yet he never totally forsakes his people.*

d) For the clearer understanding of this conclusion, you must know there is a threefold presence of God, 1. Quickening. 2. Comforting. 3. Supporting.

- (1) *1. God may forsake a man in part, in respect of his quickening presence, and leave a man to the barrenness, flatness, deadness of his own spirit for a time, that the soul cannot pray, hear, meditate, do anything, as formerly it has done.*
 - (a) *As it was with Samson when his locks were cut, his strength was gone; and therefore, though he thought to go out, and do as he did in former times, yet he found there was no such matter; he had become even as another man.*
 - (b) *So it is here; our strength lies, not in our hair, but in our head.*
 - (c) *When God is gone, our locks are cut, our strength is gone.*
 - (d) *And though we may think to go on doing duties, as at other times, and meet with those lively and vigorous workings of Spirit in duty, yet, we shall find no such matter; we are even become as other men.*
 - (e) *Indeed, so much of his quickening Spirit God leaves in the worst of times, as usually, to keep up the heart to duty.*
 - (i)** *The soul will pray, will read, etc.*
 - (ii)** *But he gives not so much, as to carry the soul through the duty, with that life and vigor of affection, which formerly it had.*

(a) *There was a time when the soul never came to prayer without an inflamed heart, never on the duty, without a quick and enlarged soul.*

(b) *But now the spirit is dead in duty, cold in duty, heartless in the performance of those things, in which the heart was so much taken.*

(2) 2. *God may forsake a man in respect of his comforting presence.*

(a) *Though man is not able to rob us of our comforts, and take away our joys, they are such as the arms of men are not long enough to reach; yet God can.*

(b) *He may eclipse our joys, and dampen our comforts, and withdraw the beams of his countenance from us, and leave us in darkness and trouble.*

(c) *I say, he may turn our day into night, our light into darkness, our comforts into discomforts.*

(d) *You see, it was in this way with Job, with David, with Heman, Psalm 88.*

(e) *Who, although they had the quickening-presence of God, yet they lacked his comforting-presence.*

(f) *And indeed, of the two, it is better to lack the comforting, than the quickening-presence.*

(g) *Better to lack comfort than life, joys than graces, or their lively exercise.*

(h) *A man may live, and serve God, and obey him; and yet lack his comforting-presence; as you see, Isa. 50:10.*

(i) *But he cannot live without his quickening-presence.*

(3) 3. *God may forsake a man in part, in respect of his quickening-presence, and he may more forsake a man in respect of his comforting-presence.*

(a) *But God does never forsake us in respect of his supporting-presence.*

(b) *In the saddest condition, in the darkest night, in the stormiest day, the soul has still support from him.*

(c) *David, Job, Heman, they lacked the comforting-presence of God for a time; but yet they had his quickening, and they had his supporting presence.*

(d) *As he told Paul, so he did for all.*

(e) *His strength was seen in their weakness, and his grace was sufficient for them.*

(f) *Sufficient to bear them up in the trial, and sufficient to bring them out of the trial.*

(i) *So much for the second conclusion.*

e) 3. Conclusion.

(1) *God may forsake his people for a time, but not forever.*

(2) *It is but a temporary, not a final, not an eternal forsaking, Isa. 54:7-10, "For a moment have I forsaken thee; but with everlasting kindness will I gather thee, have mercy on thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed. But my kindness shall not depart from thee."*

(3) *And in this way these points shall serve for the answer of the objection.*

(a) *And notwithstanding that, the conclusion is firm.*

(b) *That if the heart of Christ is once taken with his church and people, he will never take it off; he will never completely forsake them.*

7. God will not forsake his church, as forsaking has relation to spiritual cases, and soul-distresses.

a) So I might show you at large, to prevent another objection.

- (1) *That he will not forsake his church, as forsaking has relation to temporal and outward distresses.*
 - (2) *You may take his word for it, Joshua 1:5, "I will not leave, nor forsake thee."*
 - (a) *It is true, it was a promise made to Joshua in particular; but belongs to the whole church of God in general.*
 - (b) *General promises may have particular applications, and particular general.*
 - (3) *As general promises belong to every particular member, so particular promises may belong to the whole body.*
 - (4) *And therefore, though it was a promise to Joshua, yet the apostle (who knew the mind of God) makes it ours, as well as his.*
 - (5) *He brings it into the common-stock, and shows it part of our riches, Heb. 13:5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; for he has said, he will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."*
 - (6) *In brief; he will not forsake his church: 1. Either he will protect them from danger. 2. Or he will deliver them out. 3. Or he will support them in. 4. Or he will sanctify everything to them.*
 - (7) *And this is the third conclusion which flows from this doctrine.*
 - (a) *If the heart of Jesus Christ is taken with his church.*
 - (b) *Then all the passages of God's providence in the world, are for the good of his church and people.*
 - (c) *All the dealings of God in the world, not a step God takes in the world, but he walks towards his people in it.*
8. All the passages of God's providence to the church in general.
- a) All the passages of God's providence to any member of the church in particular, they are all for good.
 - b) For the first, all the passages of God's providence to his church in general, they are for good.
 - c) Are they sad, or are they joyful; they are all for good.
 - d) Are they sad?
 - (1) *It is to humble them, to quicken them, to purge them, to purify them, to blow away their chaff; this is certain.*
 - (2) *Whatever is done in the world, is done either by God's permission, or by God's commendation.*
 - (3) *God must either permit, or allow of whatever is done in the world.*
 - (4) *And assure yourselves, God would never permit, much less would he ever allow, and approve of anything to be done in the world, which should not be for the good of those he loves so dearly.*
 - (5) *Whatever way the wind blows, be it north, or south, good or evil, all is for the church's benefit.*
 - (6) *As the physician orders poisonous and destructive ingredients to useful services for the health of the patient, so God turns those things which in themselves are evil, and destructive to the good and comfort of his church and people.*
 - (7) *Here it is, that Christ turns the saddest and sorest perplexities that ever the world shall see, into an use of comfort to his church. Luke 21:25-28, "There shall be signs in the sun; and moon, and stars, distress of nations, with perplexity," etc.*
 - (8) *Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the world; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken; and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.*

(a) *When these things begin to come to pass — then look up, and lift up your heads, “For your redemption draweth nigh.”*

e) One would think this were a strange consequence deduced from such an antecedent.

(1) *A consequence so comfortable, from an antecedent so terrible.*

(2) *It seems strange, that such a terrible doctrine as God forsaking you, should afford a use of consolation.*

(3) *Yet, it is so.*

(4) *No matter what the premises are what they will, the conclusion is good.*

(5) *If his providences are what they will, his promises are good.*

(6) *And those promises shall turn all his providences to good at last.*

III. The Text Applied

A. Consider this in your church.

1. As all the passages of God’s providence to the church in general, so every passage of his providence to any member of it in particular, is for the good of the church.

a) All your enjoyments, they are love.

b) You may read the heart of Christ, the image of a friend, engraved on all you have.

c) You may behold the impress of love, the good will of God circled about all you do enjoy.

2. All that wicked men do enjoy, is but from the hand of God; that is the highest tenure they can show; even his general providence, which causes the sun to shine upon the good and bad, and this tenure may be cut off at pleasure.

a) But all that you enjoy, is from the heart and good will of God.

b) They are expressions of his good will to you, and you may read love in all.

c) No, they are the earnest of further love.

d) You may see and read heaven and glory in all you have.