

Grace For Communion

A SHORT ADDRESS TO A FEW FRIENDS AT MENTONE, AT THE BREAKING OF BREAD,

BY C. H. SPURGEON, ON LORD'S-DAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 2, 1887.

"Awake, O north wind, and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Belo ved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits." Song of Solomon 4:16.

THE soul of the Believer is the garden of the Lord. Within it are rare plants such as yield "spices" and "pleasant fruits." Once it was a wilderness, overgrown with thorns and briars, but now it is "a garden enclosed," an "orchard of pomegranates."

At times within that garden everything is very still and quiet. Indeed, more still than could be wished. Flowers are in bloom, but they seem scentless, for there are no breezes to waft the perfume. Spices abound, but one may walk in the garden and not perceive them, for no gales bear their fragrance on their wings. I do not know that, in itself, this is an evil condition. It may be that "So He gives His beloved sleep." To those who are worn with labor, rest is sweet. Blessed are they who enjoy a Sabbath of the soul!

The loved one in the text desired the company of her Lord and felt that an inactive condition was not altogether suitable for His coming. Her prayer is first about her garden, that it may be made ready for her Beloved, and then to the Bridegroom Himself, that He would come into His garden and eat its pleasant fruits. She pleads for the breath of Heaven, and for the Lord of Heaven.

First, she cries for THE BREATH OF HEAVEN to break the dead calm which broods over her heart. She cannot unlock the caskets of spice, nor cause the sweet odors to flow forth—her own breath would not avail for such an end. She looks away from herself to an unseen and mysterious power. She breathes this earnest prayer, "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden!"

In this prayer there is an evident sense of inward sleep. She does not mean that the north wind is asleep—it is her poetical way of confessing that she, herself, needs to be awakened. She has a sense of absent-mindedness, too, for she cries, "Come, you south." If the south wind would come, the forgetful perfumes would come to themselves and sweeten all the air. The fault, whatever it is, cannot lie in the winds—it lies in ourselves.

Her appeal, as we have already said, is to that great Spirit who operates according to His own will, even as the wind blows where it wills. She does not try to "raise the wind"—that is an earthly expression relating to worldly matters— but, alas, it might fitly be applied to many imitations of spirituality! Have we not heard of "getting up revivals"? Indeed, we can no more command the Holy Spirit than we can compel the wind to blow east or west! Our strength lies in prayer. The spouse prays, "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south!" She

thus acknowledges her entire dependence upon the free Spirit. Although she veiled her faith in a Divine Worker under the imagery of her song, yet she spoke as to a person. We believe in the personality of the Holy Spirit, so that we ask Him to, "Awake" and, "Come." We believe that we may pray to Him and we are impelled to do so.

Notice that the spouse does not mind what form the Divine visitation takes so long as she feels its power. "Awake, O north wind." Though the blast is cold and cutting, it may be that it will effectually fetch forth the perfume of the soul in the form of repentance and self-humiliation. Some precious Graces, like rare spices, naturally flow forth in the form of tears. And others are only seen in hours of sorrow, like gums which exude from wounded trees. The rough north wind has done much for some of us in the way of awakening our best Graces. Yet it may be that the Lord will send something more tender and cheering and, if so, we would cry, "Come, you south." Divine Love warming the heart has a wonderful power to develop the best part of a man's nature. Many of our precious things are brought forth by the sun of holy joy.

Either movement of the Spirit will sufficiently bestir our inner life, but the spouse desires both. Although in nature you cannot have the north wind and the south blowing at the same time, yet in Grace you can. The Holy Spirit may be at one and the same time working grief and gladness, causing humiliation and delight. I have often been conscious of the two winds blowing at once so that while I have been ready to die to self, I have been made to live unto God. "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south!" When all the forms of spiritual energy are felt, no Grace will be dormant. No flower can stay asleep when both rough and gentle winds awaken it.

The prayer is—"blow" and the result is—"flow." Lord, if You blow, my heart flows out to You! "Draw me, we will run after You." We know right well what it is to have Divine Grace in our souls and yet to feel no movement of it. We may have much faith in existence, yet none in exercise, for no occasion summons it into action. We may have much repentance, yet no conscious repenting. We may have much fire of love, yet no love flaming forth—and much patience in the heart, though at the moment we do not display it. Apart from the occurrences of Providence, which awakens our inward emotions one way and another, the only plan by which our Graces can be set in active exercise is by the Holy Spirit breathing upon us! He has the power to quicken, awake and bestir our faculties and Graces so that holy fruits within us become perceptible to ourselves and to others who have spiritual discernment.

There are states of the atmosphere in which the fragrance of flowers is much more diffused than at other times. The rose owes much to the zephyr which wafts its perfume. How sweet is even a field of beans after a shower! We may have much spice of piety and yet yield small fragrance unless the living power of the Holy Spirit moves upon us. In a forest there may be many a partridge, or pheasants and yet we may not see so much as one of them until

a passing foot tramples down the underbrush and causes the birds to rise upon the wing. The Lord can thus discover our Graces by many a messenger, but the more choice and spiritual virtues need an agent as mysterious and all-pervading as the wind—need, in fact, the Spirit of the Lord to awaken them!

Holy Spirit, You can come to us when we cannot come to You! From any and every quarter You can reach us, taking us on our warm or cold side. Our heart, which is our garden, lies open at every point to You. The wall which encloses it does not shut You out. We wait for a visitation! We feel glad at the very thought of it! That gladness is the beginning of the stir—the spices are already flowing forth!

The second half of the prayer expresses our central desire—we long for THE LORD OF HEAVEN to visit us. The bride does not seek that the spices of her garden may become perceptible for her own enjoyment, nor for the delectation of strangers, nor even for the pleasure of the daughters of Jerusalem, but for her Beloved's sake. He is to come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits. We are a garden for His delight. Our highest wish is that Jesus may have joy in us! I fear that we often come to the table of communion with the idea of enjoying ourselves or, rather, of enjoying our Lord— but we do not rise to the thought of giving Him joy.

Possibly that might even seem presumptuous. Yet, He says, "My delights were with the sons of men." See how joyfully He cries in the next chapter, "I am come into My garden, My Sister, My Spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk." Our heavenly Bridegroom rests in His love. He rejoices over us with singing! Often He takes more delight in us than we do in Him. We have not even known that He was present, but have been praying Him to come—and all the while He has been near us!

Note well the address of the spouse to her Beloved in the words before us. She calls Him hers—"My Beloved." When we are sure that He is ours, we desire Him to come to us as ours and to reveal Himself as ours. Those words, "My Beloved," are a prose poem—there is more music in them than in all the laureate's sonnets! However slumbering my Graces may be, Jesus is mine! It is as mine that He will make me live and cause me to pour forth my heart's fragrance!

While He is hers, she acknowledges that she is wholly His and all that she has belongs to Him. In the first clause she says, "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden." But now she prays, "Let my Beloved come into His garden." She had spoken just before of her fruits, but now they are His fruits. She was not wrong when she first spoke, but she is now more accurate. We are not our own. We do not bring forth fruit of ourselves. The Lord says, "From Me is your fruit found." The garden is of our Lord's purchasing, enclosing, planting and watering—and all its fruit belongs to Him. This is a powerful reason

for His visiting us! Should not a man come into his own garden and eat his own fruits? Oh, that the Holy Spirit may put us into a fit condition to entertain our Lord!

The prayer of the spouse is—"Let my Beloved come."" Do we not say, "Amen, let Him come"? If He does not come in the glory of His Second Advent at this moment, as, perhaps, He may not, yet let Him come! If not to His Judgment Seat, yet let Him come into His garden. If He will not come to gather before Him all nations, yet let Him come to gather the fruit of His redemption in us! Let Him come into our little circle—let Him come into each heart. "Let my Beloved come." Stand back, you that would hinder Him! O my Beloved, let not my sinful, sluggish, wandering thoughts prevent You from coming! You did visit the disciples, "the doors being shut"—will you not come where every opened door bespeaks Your welcome? Where should You come but to Your garden? Surely my heart has great need of You. Many a plant within it needs Your care. Welcome, welcome, welcome! Heaven cannot welcome You more heartily, O my Beloved, than my heart shall now do! Heaven does not need You so much as I do! Heaven has the abiding Presence of the Lord God Omnipotent, but if You dwell not within my soul, it is empty and void, and waste! Come, then, to me, I beseech You, O my Beloved!

The spouse further cries—"Let Him eat His pleasant fruits." I have often felt myself overcome with the bare idea that anything I have ever done should give my Lord pleasure. Can it be that any offering I ever gave Him should be thought worthy of His acceptance? Or that anything I ever felt or said should be a joy to Him? Can He perceive any perfume in my spices, or taste any flavor in my fruits? This is a joy worth worlds! It is one of the highest tokens of His condescension. It is wonderful that the King from the far country should come from the Glory Land, where all choice fruits are at their best, and enter this poor enclosure in the wilderness—and there eat such fruits as ours—and call them pleasant, too! O Lord Jesus, come into our hearts now! O Holy Spirit, blow upon our hearts at this moment! Let faith, love, hope, joy, patience and every Grace be now like violets which betray themselves by their perfume, or like roses which load the air with their fragrance!

Though we are not content with ourselves, yet may our Lord be pleased with us! Do come to us, O Lord! That You are our Beloved is a greater wonder than that You should come to us. That you have made us Your garden is a greater favor than that You should eat our fruits. Fulfill to us that gracious promise, "I will sup with him and he with Me," for we do open to You. You said unto the woman of Samaria, "Give Me to drink," and will you not, now, accept a draught of love from us? She had no husband, but You are our Husband—will You not drink from the cup which we now hold out to You? Receive our love, our trust, our consecration! Delight Yourself in us, as we now delight ourselves in You. We are asking a great thing of You, but Your love warrants large requests. We will now come to Your table where You shall be our meat and drink—but allow our spices to be the perfume of the feast

and let us each say, "While the King sits at His table, my spikenard sends forth the smell thereof." Fulfill this wish of our soul, Divine Lord and Master! Amen.