

# Rise Up My Love, My Fair One

by James Durham

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of responding to Christ's call to faith and communion, and encourages believers to 'rise and come away' to a more intimate relationship with Him.*

**Topics:** "Christ's Invitation", "Spiritual Discernment"

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## Description

James Durham preaches on the spiritual wisdom of filling Christ's absence with His word and call, emphasizing the importance of discerning Christ's voice and finding consolation in His words. The sermon highlights Christ's invitation to believers to rise up, come away, and experience the season of grace, symbolized by the end of winter and the arrival of spring. The call to faith is pressed with loving titles, encouragement from the changing season, and the readiness of the present time for salvation, urging believers to respond to Christ's call without delay.

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## Transcript

Verse 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 vine with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise my love, my fair one, and come away.

Having put by her observation of his carriage, she comes to speak to the second part, namely, what was her carriage: and it was to read over, or think over with herself, or to tell over to others, what Christ had said unto her: this is a main piece of spiritual wisdom, to fill Christ's room in his absence with his word and call, and to read his mind only from these, the best interpreters of it. These words prefaced to Christ's epistle, or sermon, 'my beloved spake, and said unto me,' are not idly set down, before she tell, what the words which he spake were, But, I. It shews she delights in repeating his name, for she had made mention of it before, verse 8. 2. It shows what commended Christ's epistle, or words to her, it was not only the matter therein contained (though that was warm and sweet) but it is come (saith she) from my beloved, it was he that said this, it was he that sent me this word. 3. It shews her discerning of his voice; and her assurance, that the word, call, and promise, (she was refreshing herself with) was his word, and no

devised fable. It is a notable ground of consolation in Christ's absence to believers, when they are clear, that such and such gracious words come out of Christ's own mouth to them. 4. It says, that fellowship with Christ, is no dumb exercise; those that are admitted to fellowship with him, he will be speaking with, otherwise than with the world. And, 5. That a believer hath an ear to hear, not only what the minister saith, but also what Christ saith. 6. It is the word as from Christ's own mouth, that hath an effectual impression; and a believer will receive it as such, that it may leave such an impression upon his heart. 7. When Christ quickens a word, it will be sweet; and such a word will be retained, so that those who have been quickened by it, will be able long afterwards to repeat it is our getting little good of the word of the Lord, that makes us retain it so ill. 8. It affords much satisfaction to a believer, when he can say, Christ said this or that to me, and that it is no delusion. 9. What Christ says unto the spirits of his own, in communion with them, may bide the light, and is, on the matter, that same which he says in the word and gospel, as we will see in the following discourse, which for this end, and for the edification of others, and honour of the beloved, she tells over.

We may take these words or epistles of Christ's, as directed to three sorts (as the duty here pressed, 'rise and come away,' will bear,) 1. To those that are dead in sins, whom Christ by his voice quickens, and makes to rise, John 5:28. Although this be not the immediate intent of it, as it is spoken to a believer; yet considering the scope of recording this, and the matter contained in it, it may well be thought useful to engage those who are yet strangers to Christ, there being still but the same way of making at the first, and afterward recovering nearness with him, to wit, by faith in him; and so it will press receiving of, and closing with Christ. 2. We may consider it as spoken to believers, but to such as sleep, or are sitten up; so it presseth quickening. And, 3. As spoken to believers in a disconsolate, discouraged condition; so its scope is to stir, quicken, rouse and comfort Christ's Bride, in any of these two last cases, that he may bring her into more nearness of fellowship with himself and to more boldness in the use-making of him; which is the great scope he aims at.

There are three parts of this sermon, or epistle, 1. There is a kindly invitation, that mainly respects the pressing of faith, from verse 10, to 14. 2. There is a loving direction, or two, verse 14, looking especially to the practice of duties. 3. Lest any thing should be wanting, he gives a direction concerning the troublers of her peace, verse 15.

In all these parts, there are four things common to be found in each of them. 1. Some sadness in her condition supposed. 2. Some directions given to cure it. 3. Some motives used, to press the practice of these directions. 4. Some repetitions, to show his seriousness in all, and the concernment of the thing spoken.

The case wherein those who are here spoken to, are supposed to be, in this first part of Christ's sermon, verse 10, &c. is, 1. Deadness, total, or partial: believers may be under a decay, and be in part dead. 2. It is supposed that they are secure, and not vigorous; but insensible, in a great part, of that ill. 3. That they are disconsolate, and heartless under distance and deadness: which ills often meet together.

The direction he gives in order to the helping of this, is in two words, 1. 'Rise.' 2. 'Come away.' Which says, that as she was now in a case of strangeness to Christ, so there was a necessity of rousing herself, and coming out of it; such a necessity as there is for a straying wife to return to her husband. Now these words are a sweet call of a kind husband, inviting to this return, and showing the remedy of straying, and estrangement from him. 'Rising' imports, 1. One that is settled some way, in a condition opposite to walking and running. 2. A stirring up of themselves as unsatisfied therewith, and desirous to be out of it,

with some endeavour to be up again: declining from Christ puts souls still down, and holds them at under.

1. 'Come away,' holds forth a term from which she is to come, from that condition she was in, whatever it was, it was not good: men are in no desirable condition, when Christ calls them.
2. A term to which she is to come, and that is Christ; it is to follow the Bridegroom; to get her brought to a nearer union and communion with him, is the great thing he aims at.
3. An act whereby she passeth from what she was, and turning her back on that, moves towards him, that she may thereby attain nearer union and fellowship with him. By both which, we conceive the exercise of faith in him, is mainly holden forth.

1. Because faith is ordinarily in scripture set forth by coming, Isa. 55:1; John 5:40; John 6:35, and this expression suits well the act of faith.
2. Because it is the only means of making up the distance betwixt him and us: decay in the exercise of faith, and distance from Christ, go together; and the exercise of faith, and nearness with him, are also inseparable companions. This is the meaning then, why liest thou in this discouraged, decayed and comfortless condition? There is another, and a far better, to wit, a lively and comfortable condition allowed upon thee; Christ calls thee to exercise faith in him, for recovering of thy case. And this now is set down imperatively by way of command, that we may know that believing in Christ, or keeping communion with him by faith, are not left to our option, but are laid on by a peremptory command, for necessitating us to the exercise of it, 1 John 3:23, as a thing most acceptable to him, with which he cannot be angry, nor will he call obedience thereunto presumption.

3. When he hath given the invitation; he presseth it most seriously and weightily; for though it be our concernment, we are not easily induced even to believe: O but the world is much mistaken in this, that think it an easy matter to believe! And also he would have us knowing; he allows us the comfortable exercise of faith in him, with all his heart (if we may speak so) when he thus presseth and persuadeth us to it; likewise we may gather, that it is no common thing which he exhorts unto, when he doth so seriously press it, but it is of most weighty concernment to us.

There are three ways he maketh use of, to press it:

1. By excellent, loving titles, 'my love,' and 'fair one;' which are given here, especially to let her know he loved her, and thereby to encourage her to follow the call. The faith of his love, hath no little influence upon our acting faith in particulars on him.
2. To show that he is no rigid, nor severe censurer of a discouraged believer, no, 'my fair one' (saith he) even when she hath many spots; Christ will raise no ill report on his own, whatever be their failings.
3. He presseth it from the special relation he hath to her, 'my love,' and 'my fair one,' which makes all his words very kindly, and shows an obligation on her, by the covenant-relation that stood between them to be his, and to subject herself to his directions, according to that word, Psalm 45:10, 'Hearken O Daughter,' &c. 'Forget thy father's house,' &c. And therefore she ought to leave all and cleave to him: Christ requires nothing from us, but according to the covenant, that ties us to communion or cohabitation (to speak so) with Christ, and it is a most binding obligation; if this prevail not in pressing us to duty, that we are Christ's, nothing will prevail: it is no little practick in believers, to be like the relation they stand in to Christ; what, my love (saith he) becomes it you to be so strange? 'Rise and come,' &c. Some other thing is allowed to you than to others, and some other thing is called for from you, than is to be found in the way of others.

The third way he insisteth to urge this (for the call, and kindness come still on his side, even when we are in the fault) is by most pressing arguments of three sorts. The first is verse 11. 'Rise' (saith he) 'and come away,' for there is no hazard now to travel this journey, because what may scare you is done away. The winter cold and storm is past, and the rain that makes rivers impassable and journeys dangerous and wearisome (therefore, it is said Matt. 24:20, 'pray that your flight be not in the winter') these are over. This suppones,

1. There was a sharp winter, and a bitter rain (as it were) whereby the way of fellowship with

God, was impassable, till these were removed; the sword (as it were) standing to keep sinners from paradise, that is, the sentence and curse of the broken law, and the wrath of God pursuing therefor; Which was indeed a fearful winter, and storm that made the sun dark, and the day gloomy, therefore is God's wrath in scripture compared to 'terrible blasts and tempests,' and 'who can stand before his cold?' Psalm 147:17. 2. It says, that now these are done away by Christ; and by his call in the gospel, he assures his people, they shall find them fully removed, so that there is no wrath nor curse, that any who yields to it needs to fear. 3. It implies that the gospel brings good news, and there is none better than this, that God's justice is satisfied, and his wrath removed. 4. It imports, that Christ can bear sure testimony to this, that wrath is over, because he paid a price to remove it, and therefore sinners may take his word, and follow his call. And, 5. That believers are sometimes ready to suspect, more than they have ground, that there is some storm yet before them; but Christ hath made all fair weather, ere he call: O great argument! He calls not to fight, but to gather the spoil. He puts not believers to the sea, till he himself hath made all calm: believers meet with blasts and storms sometimes, but readily that is when their back is on Christ, and not when their faces are to him-ward: the wind of wrath is not in a sinner's face that seeketh Jesus, but the word saith to such 'fear not,' Mark 16:6, 'ye seek him.'

2. He presseth her to rise and come, from some heart-some encouragement he propones, verse 12. There is a great change (saith he) now, when the angry winter is over, all things are pleasant and lovely. 1. 'The flowers appear,' that shows there is heat and warmness in the earth, and it is an effect of the spring, and a proof that winter is past. Hereby the fruits of grace, appearing in the change that is wrought upon sinners, may be signified, as is frequently hinted in this Song, where the church is called a garden, and believers are the flowers: come, (saith he) grace hath made others to come through the ground, who once were like flowers in the winter, under ground, but now they appear and flourish. 2.

'The time of the singing of birds is come.' As in the spring, birds sing, which in the winter drooped: so (saith he) now many poor sinners have changed their sad note, and begin to sing, who once were sinking under fears; and the good news of the gospel, like the voice of the turtle, is heard in our land; these good tidings have been sent even to us, which is no little evidence of love, and no small confirmation to faith. That the news of the gospel, and the consolation of sinners thereby, is here understood, is very agreeable to the scope: and these prove the removing of wrath, and are encouraging for stirring sinners up to the exercise of faith.

And O how how heartsome, and refreshful is the spiritual spring, when the 'day-spring from on high' visits us! (as these things mentioned in the text, are in the natural spring very pleasant, and tend to provoke men to go and recreate themselves in the fields.) And this is the particular scope of this place: there is never a sinner hath gotten good of Christ, but it proves him to be very kind; and the blessed change Christ hath wrought on them, should encourage others to believe, especially when it is the day of their visitation, and the Sun of righteousness hath become warm by the gospel unto them, or unto the place and society in which they live. 3.

He presseth his direction and call, by the very presentness and now, of the season of grace, verse 13, 'The fig-tree putteth forth,' &c. Which shows not only, that summer is near, but that 'it is even at the door,' Matt. 24:32,33. And (saith he) the vines bud and give a smell; whereby is holden forth, the thriving of the plants of God's vineyard, under the dispensation of grace, as we may see verse 15. All these prove that 'now is the acceptable time, and now is the day of salvation;' and there are large allowances of consolation to them that now will accept of Christ's offers, and be subject to his call: therefore, saith he, even to us, sit not the time when all is ready, but up, and come away: and that 'the voice of the turtle is heard in our land,'

(that is even the church wherein we live) proves it to be the season of grace also; for, it is long since the time of the turtles' singing hath come to us, and their voice is yet still heard:' and this says the season of grace is amongst our hands, now when Christ's call comes to our door, and therefore it should not be neglected.

And so he doth in the fourth place, repeat the call in the end of verse 13, 'Arise my love,' &c. And this repetition is to shew, 1. His willingness to have it effectual, if sinners were as willing, it would soon be a bargain. 2. Our sluggishness in not answering at once, therefore must word be upon word, call upon call, line upon line, precept upon precept. 3. To bear out the riches of his grace and love in this call, wherein nothing is wanting that can be alleged to persuade a sinner to close with Christ, and to press one that hath closed with him to be cheerful in him: what a heartsome life might sinners have with Christ, if they would embrace him, and dwell with him in the exercise of faith! they should have always a spring-time, and possess (to say so) the sunny side of the brae of all the world beside, walking in gardens and orchards, where the trees of the promises are ever fruitful, pleasant, and savoury to sight, smell, taste; and every word of Christ, as the singing of birds, heart-some and delightful to the ear; and all of them healthful to the believer. Who will have a heart to sit Christ's call? Or if they do, who will be able to answer it, when he shall reckon with them? It will leave all the bearers of the gospel utterly inexcusable. Lastly, this repetition shews the importunateness, and the peremptoriness of his call; he will have no refusal, neither will he leave it arbitrary, if we will come, when we will come, or what way: but he straitly enjoineth it, and that just now: it is always time to believe, when Christ calls, and it is never time to shift, when he persuades. All this says, Christ must be a kind and loving Husband; how greatly play they the fool, that reject him! and how happy are they who are effectually called to the marriage of the Lamb!

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