



“The righteous . . . shall grow
like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion
to the Book of
**Song of
Solomon**

*“So they read in the book in the law of God . . .
and caused them to understand the reading”*

Nehemiah 8:8

By

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“I am my beloved's,
and his desire
is toward me”

(Song of Sol. 7:10)

Introduction

This Song of Solomon is the fifth and final Old Testament (O.T.) book of poetry, after Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and it is Solomon's third contribution to God's Book of books. Of Solomon's three books;

- The book of Proverbs emphasizes wise *practice* or how we *act* – **Actions**.
- The book of Ecclesiastes focuses on right *philosophy* or how we *think* – **Intellect**.
- The Song of Solomon highlights *emotions* or how we *feel* – **Emotions**.

This final book of Solomon's is good instruction on the right and proper expression of love between a man and a woman. It is a biblically balanced answer to a couple of typical human extremes;

- Asceticism, or stoic, passionless, rigorous self-discipline and self-denial. God answers here with the genuine joy of love for another.
- Unbridled lust. In holding up the love relationship between man and woman God indeed lifts it from sinful abuse to sanctity within marriage commitment.

Distinctives

Solomon's song is largely put in the form of poetic dialogue or conversation. The book seems to be a series of stanzas of varying lengths, expressing what Charles Ryrie referred to as "snapshots" or little glimpses of various stages in the developing love relationship between a man and a woman, from soon after meeting to mature marital love.

The main characters in the book are Solomon, king of Israel, the Shulamite woman (6:13), and the daughters of Jerusalem. That she was a "Shulamite" would indicate that this woman hailed from a place called Shulam, but there is no certainty where this Shulam was. There is uncertainty as well as to who the daughters of Jerusalem were.

Harry Ironside gave the following description of the basic story of the book (summarized by Merrill Unger);

"King Solomon had a vineyard in the hill country of Ephraim, about 50 miles north of Jerusalem, 8:11. He let it out to keepers, 8:11, consisting of a mother...sons, 1:6, and...daughters... The Shulamite was 'the Cinderella' of the family, 1:5, naturally beautiful but unnoticed. Her brothers were likely half-brothers, 1:6. They made her work

very hard tending the vineyards, so that she had little opportunity to care for her personal appearance, 1:6. She pruned the vines and...kept the flocks, 1:8. Being out in the open so much, she became sunburned, 1:5.

One day a handsome stranger came to the vineyard. It was Solomon disguised. He showed interest in her, and she became embarrassed concerning her personal appearance, 1:6. She took him for a shepherd and asked about his flocks, 1:7. He answered evasively, 1:8, but also spoke loving words to her, 1:8-10, and promised rich gifts for the future, 1:11. He won her heart and left with the promise that someday he would return. She dreamed of him at night and sometimes thought he was near, 3:1. Finally he did return in all his kingly splendour to make her his bride, 3:6-7.”

The application to Jesus Christ and the church becomes obvious. Jesus also came veiled in flesh and poverty, in a sense disguised. He too loved and won His bride in the “vineyard” of earth, and in His ascension to the Father He left promise of His return. He too will come for the church, coming to take her as His bride, after the manner of a Jewish marriage procession.

Title

The opening verse gives the title to the book, “*The Song of songs, which is Solomon’s*” (1:1). The Hebrew O.T. simply titles the book by the first four words (two words in the original Hebrew), “The Song of Songs”. In the English Bible the change was made to “The Song of Solomon”, which is a shortened version of the whole of verse 1. The Latin title is “Canticles”, which means “songs” or “a series of songs”. Both the English and Latin titles lose much of the significance of the opening phrase, for “song of songs” is a Hebrew idiom meaning the best or most important of songs. As we would speak of the “King of kings” or “Lord of lords” or “Book of books”, or the Latin phrase “*crème de la crème*” (cream of the cream) as the very best of the lot. Thus is the sense of the opening phrase here. In I Kings 4:32 we discover that Solomon composed 1,005 songs, but this one is the *crème de la crème*, the only one of Solomon’s that God considers a keeper.

Consider the fact that this is a *song*. Because God considered many songs worth keeping in His Book of books (Psalms, Rev. etc.), therefore we can conclude that He meant singing and songs to be an important part of our walk before Him.

Purposes

Again, one purpose of this Song of Songs is to lift marital love and the physical expression of it to a level of purity. That God would include this little human love story in His Bible displays the honour He places on human love and the proper relationship between a man and a woman in marriage (Heb. 13:4). He made man and woman, and He made us capable of experiencing and expressing the passion of love. The joy of a man and woman in their relationship with each other is *God's* pleasure. It is a right and good thing and by His design, when handled appropriately. Sinful, selfish abuse of human love and intimacy destroys the beauty of this precious gift of God. While the book of Proverbs strongly admonishes us against sexual sin and encourages self-control, here the beauty and joy of love and intimacy is lifted high.

Another purpose of this book is to display the close love relationship between the Lord and His people, that we might understand the way of His love for His own, and to stir feelings of love in God's people for their God. Jesus Christ our Redeemer "*is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend*" (5:16). Compare Ephesians 5:22-33, where betrothal and marriage is used to describe our

relation to Jesus. And as a husband and wife are made one with each other in marriage, so believers are united with Jesus Christ, He in us and we in Him (Eph. 5:29-32; John 17:22-23). In II Corinthians 11:2 as well the Apostle Paul describes the church of believers as engaged or betrothed to Christ. Paul highlights in that context the danger of believers in Jesus being seduced by Satan and the world to sin and unfaithfulness against their Saviour.

Interpretive Approach

Opinions differ as to how we should read or interpret this book. Some writers understand Song of Solomon entirely in an allegorical manner, seeing only Jesus and the church in Solomon and the Shulamite. Others approach the book historically, but see *four* main characters; King Solomon, the Shulamite woman, the daughters of Jerusalem, and a shepherd whom the Shulamite truly loved. These interpreters see Solomon as the bad guy of the story, holding up before the Shulamite all that marriage to him promised in attempting to lure her away from her true love. This approach would tend to see Solomon as representing the world in its attempts to lure the affections of believers away from Jesus Christ. Such writers are led to this

conclusion through a consideration of Solomon's marital mess, concluding that his super-charged love life could never be presented by God in any kind of sanctified light (I Ki. 11). They insist that Solomon could never be seen as a positive example in marriage, neither could his love appropriately symbolize Christ's love for the church. As Will Varner put it, "How can Solomon be an example of true married love, and, furthermore, how can he be a type of Christ, in light of his lecherous 'love' life?"

Yet we need to ask the question of whether Solomon, though involved in multiple marriages, was ever rebuked by the Lord for immorality or infidelity? Please understand that the concern the Lord raised with Solomon in I Kings 11 is the *kind* of women he was willing to marry, "*strange women*", who brought false beliefs in foreign gods into their marriage. Mixed marriages was the concern with Solomon the Lord expressed there. To represent Solomon in a lecherous light is a judgment that seems to go beyond God's. Such a view would in fact disqualify Solomon from any righteous input into God's Book, while God has indeed included his input as a true record of divine wisdom, and even of the way of pure love.

It seems best to see this book as the historical

record of King Solomon's love for a young woman. Apparently the King came to her family's vineyard in disguise, perhaps examining the tenant operation of his own vineyard there incognito. There he met and fell in love with the Shulamite, won her love, and ultimately made her his bride. It was similar to that "chance" meeting of Ruth with Boaz in his barley field one day, a heart-warming event in Solomon's not so distant ancestry. For Boaz and Ruth were Solomon's great, great grandparents (Ruth 4:21-22). The story of their meeting and romance would have been well known to him.

As well, there is surely some typical representation in this Song of Songs of the love relationship between the Lord and His people;

- Between Jehovah and Israel. The Jewish people of O.T. times were quite convinced that Solomon's Song pictured the love relationship between the Lord and Israel. Remember how the nation of Israel entered into covenant with the Lord on Mt. Sinai. That covenant bond between the Lord and His people was as marriage. Many O.T. portions describe Israel's relation to her God as a marriage (Isa. 54:5-6), and her unfaithful involvement in idolatry as "*playing the harlot*", violating her covenant with the One who loved her and

drew her close. Compare portions such as Ezekiel 16 & Hosea. But always the Lord makes it clear that there is coming a day of restoration for the righteous remnant of national Israel, which is not fulfilled in the church (Ezek. 16:60-63).

- Between Jesus and the church. Also there is surely a representation in this book of Jesus Christ in His relation to His bride, the church (Eph. 5:25-32; II Cor. 11:1-2; Rev. 19:7-9), as well as in His relation to individual believers.

In Ecclesiastes we learn that we cannot find satisfaction without the Lord, though we might possess or experience everything under the sun. In Song of Solomon we discover that we cannot begin to fathom the depth of the preciousness of the Lord's pursuing love, He who is our joy and portion.

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Ponder Points

Presented in this book is a graphic picture of that proper closeness of relation between Jesus and true believers. We are as if married to Him (Rom. 7:4), certainly betrothed. Give thought to some ways in which love and marriage describe our Christian experience;

- When a man loves a woman, his mind, will, and emotions are involved. He first comes to know her, to know the truth about her with his mind. And then with his growing knowledge comes a growing feeling for her as his emotions become stirred. There then follows an act of his will, where he makes the decision to commit himself to that special one in love. He comes to know (mind), then to feel (emotions), then to decide or commit (will).

Even so a soul finds life in Jesus Christ in the same way. We first come to know or understand with our mind the truth concerning Jesus, who He really is and what he has done for us. Then we begin to understand and feel the anguish of a Saviour who gave Himself in our place, and of our sin that made His suffering necessary. Oh the unimaginable grace of God who made the way of salvation available when we were worthy only of His wrath and judgment. Thus we are gradually drawn to God by cords of love. Not just one cord, but cords, in all of the many ways in which we become impressed with His greatness and great goodness, all twisting into a mighty cable drawing our hearts after Him. And then finally we receive or believe in that Saviour as our own in a moment of

decision. As in marriage, it is an *event*, not a process of reformation. And not until that event, not until that moment of faith is a soul truly united with Him. Have you come to that moment of believing? The world is full of people who know about Jesus. Many there are who even have some feelings for Him. Perhaps some have experienced powerfully moving emotional experiences which seemed in some way related to Christ or Christianity. But until there comes that moment of personal belief in Jesus as the only hope of salvation from our sin and its penalty there is no true belonging to Him.

- We also see in the maturing love between Solomon and the Shulamite a picture of the developing relationship between the believer and the Lord;
 - o 2:16 – “*My beloved is mine, and I am his*” – Early in their relationship her commitment involves the careful marking of mutual possession, with emphasis upon what is hers. There is a givenness in her, but reserved, with seemingly greater attention to his givenness to her.
 - o 6:3 – “*I am my beloved’s, and my*

beloved is mine” – As their relationship matures, or perhaps as she matures in it, there is still the hold to mutual possession, but now with a shift in focus away from what was hers, to what “*I am*” for him, now put first in her thinking.

- 7:10 – “*I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me*” – Now simply the unconditional giving over of herself fully to him, with joy that his desire is “*toward me*”. Her only thought of belonging now is her belonging to him. See how much greater the expression of complete trust now.

We too must come to the full realization that the Lord deserves all, that it is for our best that we give Him our all, and that we are foolish to hold anything back. *I am His!* I am given! As in marriage so in our walk with our Saviour, there should be a developing desire in us to please the other regardless of returns, without keeping score. “*She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life*” (Prov. 31:12). This is the prevailing purpose in the

heart of biblical love.

Again, as in marriage, where our own body is no longer our own but is now a shared possession (I Cor. 7:1-5), so in Jesus Christ our life, body and soul, is for Him (Rom. 12:1-2). We now live to please our Lord, not only ourselves, rejoicing as we truly become conformed to His will.

- Another point of comparison is in the matter of communion. There is communication taking place throughout this book between a man and a woman, and the desire for it (2:14). Our God went to the extremes to which His love carried Him that we might walk with Him and talk with Him in fellowship with Him in the light (I John 1). How greatly our God desires our communion. We cannot miss this vital truth.
- Perhaps we see a glimpse of a natural human tendency in chapter 5. The bridegroom longed for the fellowship of his bride (vs. 2) and came to her just as God did/does with us. But her response was sluggish (vs. 3). “I do not want to put my coat back on!” “I do not want to dirty my feet!” “Do not bother me when I am so comfortable where I am!” “Do not mess up *my* programme!” Get the

picture? And when finally she was pricked in her heart and yearned for his presence, it was too late and He was gone (vs. 4-6). How the Lord would draw His own into fellowship with Him. But *we* are the ones who are too slow. We are the ones less interested. We are too busy with *our* programme, forgetting that all that matters is *His* programme. Like Martha, we can get too busy serving (Him?), too “*careful and troubled about many things*” to take time for that “*one thing [that] is needful*”, as Mary found, to sit at the feet of Jesus, in communion with Him (Lk. 10:38-42). How much happier, and more fulfilling, and more fruitful our lives might be if we would walk with Him there in the light, moment by moment.

- We, His bride, are not yet married to Christ. We are engaged or betrothed, and the “engagement ring” is the presence of the Spirit of God dwelling within every believer in Jesus (Eph. 1:13-14). But one day, after the pattern of a Jewish wedding, Jesus will come “*with a shout*”, and we will hear the voice of the Bridegroom with His attendants coming for His bride, and we shall be taken to be with Him, “*and so shall we ever be with the Lord*” (I Thess. 4:17). Thus the bride closes this

book crying “*make haste, my beloved*” (8:13), even as the New Testament closes with “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*”.

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Basic Outline

1:2-3:5 – Budding Relationship.

3:6-5:1 – Marriage.

5:2-8:14 – Deepening Relationship.

“Behold, thou art fair, my love;
 behold, thou art fair;
 thou hast doves’ eyes”

(Song of Sol. 1:15)

Chapter 1

1:1 *The song of songs, which is Solomon's.*

1:2 *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.*

1:2-4 – Shulamite's Thoughts

Vs. 2 – The Shulamite begins by expressing her growing love for the one she has met and the delightfully thrilling nature of their love, “*better than wine*”. Her love naturally leads to a desire for physical intimacy with the one she loves. See how the Lord is right up front with such physical interest. He does not deny this or frown upon it. This is the way we are wrapped by His design. Though this natural human desire is often expressed in this account, even in the early stage of their relationship, even from the first words of the record of it here, yet restraint is maintained. She is still pure on their wedding night, still “*a garden inclosed*” (4:12). Look well to the implication here. Romantic love and its longings for physical expression when handled properly is not a dirty or evil thing, but a natural thing, indeed a gift from God. Compare Proverbs 5:19 where we hear God's encouragement, even command, to the man to be

“*ravished [intoxicated] always*” with the love of his wife, and that involving physical expression (“*let her breasts satisfy thee at all times*”). That interest and the desire for its expression does not just turn on with the wedding bells, and there is nothing wrong with that! See here how this is not denied or rebuked. It is openly acknowledged. But again, this natural desire to express our love through physical intimacy can never be made to justify immorality. God never condones the world’s attitude that “It must be right if it feels so right”, or “It is O.K. for us to be physically involved because we are in love”, or “It is alright because we are planning to be married”, and all of the other ridiculous excuses people use for choosing to live in sin. God says such abuse of another is to “defraud” them, to strip from them their good name and honour.

I Thessalonians 4:2-6 – *“For you know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: that no man go beyond and defraud this brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.”*

- 1:3 *Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.*
- 1:4 *Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.*
- 1:5 *I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.*
- 1:6 *Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*
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Vs. 3-4 – Even the refreshing smell of him added to the thrill of being near him. She makes reference to the name of her lover, speaking of his reputation or character, his good name. Love that is true love would never trample this. Our good name is something quite precious, to be *kept* good! This too was an attractive and important aspect of this man, such that all who were upright loved him (compare Ecclesiastes 7:1 & Proverbs 22:1). The latter half of vs. 4 may be the response of “*the daughters of Jerusalem*” (compare vs. 5).

1:5-7 – Shulamite’s Insecurity

Vs. 5-6 – “*I am black, but comely*” – In describing herself she uses the word “*black*” referring to her skin suntanned through her outdoor work. Seems

- 1:7 *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?*
- 1:8 *If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.*
-

this was a less desirable condition for a woman in that culture and day. Yet she is “*comely*” or attractive. Hers is no made up or painted on pretty, yet her natural beauty caught the king’s eye.

Vs. 6 – “*My mother’s children*” – This phrase may indicate that the brothers she lived with were actually stepbrothers rather than full brothers. Because she is required to work in the vineyards she is unable to care for her own appearance, which she refers to as “*mine own vineyard*”.

Vs. 7 – She seems to mistake Solomon for a local shepherd. This is perhaps indication that his royalty was veiled in the dress of a commoner. Again, it seems he came disguised in this way in visiting one of his own vineyards in order to observe how the tenant keepers were conducting themselves, without them knowing they were under the eye of the owner himself, indeed the king of the land.

*1:9 I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of
horses in Pharaoh's chariots.*

*1:10 Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck
with chains of gold.*

1:8-11 – Solomon's Response

Again, vs. 8 & 11 may be comments from the daughters of Jerusalem.

Vs. 9-10 – *"I have compared thee..."* – The first words Solomon speaks to her are words of praise. N.B. how it is all positive expressions of admiration and tenderness for her from his very first words. He denies her low estimation of herself and counters with uplifting assurance of her beauty in his eyes. How very often he calls her *"fair"* or beautiful in this little book (1:15; 2:10, 13; 4:1, 7; 6:4; 7:1, 6). I am reminded of the words of Boaz to Ruth. Boaz always met Ruth with encouraging words of praise (Ruth 2:8-12; 3:10-11). In the case of Boaz, praise of Ruth's virtuous character rather than praise of beauty as here. Praise of others, of wife and husband, is often far too foreign to our tongues. It takes humility to speak genuine words of praise. Oh this is such a vital ingredient in any relationship. Do not miss how prominent is praise in the interactions of this couple. This is something we would be wise to carefully observe in this book.

1:11 *We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.*

1:12 *While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.*

1:13 *A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.*

Do not miss the meaning their example is meant to carry into your marriage and mine.

Compare Jesus Christ in His dealings with the church. We are so utterly unworthy of Him, and yet He is quick to encourage and lift our hearts in His love. He calls His followers “*friends*” (John 15:14-15). He promises to return to us and prepares a place for us (John 14:2-3). He desires that we be with Him always (John 17:24).

1:12-14 – Shulamite’s Thoughts

Vs. 12 – The smell of her perfumed sachet worn as a necklace (a common practice in that day) is a reminder of her beloved.

Vs. 13 – “*A bundle of myrrh is my beloved*” – As she is ever aware of the aroma of her perfume, so he is constantly in her thoughts day and night. She speaks of her wish that as that sweet-smelling sachet lay “*betwixt*” her breasts, so her beloved

1:14 *My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in
the vineyards of Engedi.*
1:15 *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair;
thou hast doves' eyes.*
1:16 *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant:
also our bed is green.*
1:17 *The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters
of fir.*

might lie with her all night. Again, her growing love for him led naturally to her longing for his touch, for physical intimacy with him, wishing to be together in every way. See and understand the effect of his assuring words of admiration in vs. 8-11, stirring now this response in her. Tenderly caring words fanned the flames of this woman's interest.

Vs. 12-15 – *“My spikenard...a bundle of myrrh...a cluster of camphire...dove's eyes”* – Note the many references to differing plants and animals of the land of Israel throughout this account. A reminder of Solomon's great interest in the study of flora and fauna, mentioned in I Kings 4:33.

1:15 – Solomon's Praise of Her Beauty

“Behold, thou art fair, my love” – This he repeats for emphasis. Again, this second time he speaks to her his words are all loving admiration as well.

1:16-17 – Shulamite’s Response

She returns praise for his attractiveness to her, and the charm of his character (*“pleasant”*). She describes a delightful country setting, perhaps a memorable place where they began to fall in love. The green grass is described as a couch under them as they speak together. The branches of the cedars and fir trees were as if rafter beams above. Again, the growing feeling of love and passion between them is evident, stirring the desire to be together.

Chapter 2

2:1 I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

2:2 As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

2:3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

2:1 – Shulamite to Solomon

Her insecurity seems to fade in the warmth of his praise. Yet she perhaps still suggests her plainness in comparing herself to common flowers of the field.

2:2 – Solomon Adds to Her Self-description

Not only is she as a lily, but as one among thorns he suggests, highlighting her special uniqueness to him as one who stood out among all other women. Lessons here on how to impress a lady. Are you listening gentlemen?

2:3-6 – Shulamite's Response

Vs. 3 – As he described her rare preciousness, likening her to a lily among thorns, even so she

2:4 *He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.*

immediately returns praise, likening him to an apple tree among all the other common trees. A rare find, offering both refreshing shade and sweet fruit. How she expresses her “*great delight*” in his presence.

Vs. 4 – “*His banner over me was love*” – She is impressed that he openly flew his banner or flag of love over her, publicly delighting in her. These images speak of the reassurance of his sheltering protection and public acknowledgement of her as his choice above all others. He is not ashamed or embarrassed by her. He is not shy to publish his love for her. Some foolish men will see a public setting as an opportunity to belittle their wife before others. But this man freely proclaims his love, flies it like a flag. How important is such public honouring of your lady, and that she see the readiness in a you to speak so of her.

Compare Christ with His bride, the church. Though we are sinners now saved by His grace, now washed in the blood of the Lamb, yet our Lord gladly, publicly embraces His bride. Consider the contrast with us. We have every reason to not be ashamed

2:5 *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.*

2:6 *His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.*

2:7 *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.*

of the Lord, yet how often we quietly blush when questioned of our association with Jesus Christ.

Vs. 5-6 – “*I am sick of love*” – She is overwhelmed with her love of him, to the point of sickness (lovesick), and finds comfort and strength in his embrace. Perhaps she expresses here the *wish* for his embrace rather than the reality of it as yet. How her loving appreciation blossoms in the environment of his love, again turning her thoughts physical.

2:7 – To the Daughters

In vs. 7 is a refrain or chorus appearing three times in this book (also 3:5; 8:4). Each time this refrain is found it seems to mark a turning point in the message of the song. The challenge to the daughters here could be a protective stance, wishing to preserve the comfort of her lover. Or her words could perhaps refer to love itself rather than

2:8 *The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*
2:9 *My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.*
2:10 *My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

to the object of love, i.e. do not stir up the passion of love until “it please”, until the time is right. Allow love to develop in its own time without forcing things. She perhaps suggests that if you would have such a truly rewarding relationship, then wait patiently on the Lord to bring it to pass. Much of modern dating would seem to run impatiently ahead of such caution.

2:8-16 – Shulamite’s Narrative

Vs. 8-9 – The Shulamite recalls her beloved coming to see her. How attractive and strong he is! She heard his voice and saw him “*leaping*” and “*skipping*” over every obstacle, over every mountain and hill, in coming to her.

Even so God takes the initiative to overcome all obstacles, every mountain and hill, in coming to us.

Vs. 10-15 – She Remembers His Words.

2:11 *For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;*

2:12 *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;*

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.*

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.*

Vs. 10-13 – “*Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away*” – He invites her to walk with him out in the countryside. How the fresh beauty of Spring matches the joy of their budding relationship. Again, always his praise, his expression of love, wanting to be with her, to do things with her. Less about what they did, only that it is with her. Married couples can lose the joy of being with each other, doing things together.

Vs. 14 – “*Let me hear thy voice*” – Do you hear the deep intensity of his words, “*O my dove...*”? He longs to see her and to hear her speak to him. His interest is so far beyond only pleasures or advantages she could provide. His is a love that wants to hear from her, that he might know and understand her.

Even so the Lord bids lost souls to arise and “*come away*” to Him (Matt. 11:28). Even so the same intensity of desire we hear in His words to His rejecting people, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...*” (Lk. 13:34). Even so He bids believers to come to Him and call upon Him in abiding fellowship. It is His wish that we might come boldly to His presence and that He might hear our voice in communion with Him. This is such a key component in our spiritual growth. There is a mutual love between those truly redeemed and their Redeemer, and they long to be together. Thus the wonder of that promise of God with the return of Jesus Christ, “*and so shall we ever be with the Lord*” (I Thess. 4:17).

Please do not miss how abundant the terms of endearment in these last few verses – “*my love*” (vs. 7), “*my beloved*” (vs. 8, 9 & 10), “*my love, my fair one*” (vs. 10 & 13), “*my dove*” (vs. 14). Understand how important the meaning of such terms, that say “you are dearly cherished by me”. Please understand how our God lays before us here a winning way with our spouse.

Compare as well this image of the fragile dove hiding in “*the clefts of the rock*” with we who are saved. We are so weak in ourselves, but find refuge in the clefts or wounds of the Rock of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 10:4;

2:15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

Ex. 33:18-23). And there in that place of refuge in Him He bids us to come to Him and commune with Him, for *“the prayer of the upright is His delight”* (Prov. 15:8). There He expresses His longing and long-suffering love for we who are His, His bride.

Vs. 15 – *“Take us the foxes”* – He calls her to join him in quickly dealing with every little thing that might eat away at the foundations and fruitfulness of their relationship, and ultimately bring it to ruin. He illustrates with the image of little foxes creeping into the vineyard, eating the grapes and ruining the crop. S. Craig Glickman wrote of what those little foxes might represent; “The foxes represent as many obstacles or temptations as have plagued lovers throughout the centuries. Perhaps it is the fox of uncontrolled desire, which drives a wedge of guilt between a couple. Perhaps it is the foxes of mistrust and jealousy, which break the bond of love. Or it may be the fox of selfishness and pride, which refuses to let one acknowledge his fault to another. Or it may be an unforgiving spirit which will not accept the apology of the other. These foxes have been ruining vineyards for years and the end of their work is not in sight”. Genuine, mature love desires

completest unity, and will overcome all obstacles to keep close to the object of its love.

Even so the Lord bids us to join Him in catching *“the little foxes that spoil the vines”* of our relationship with Him. *“Little foxes”*. Not great life-shaking things but little things that get in the way, little things that grow into big things, little things adding to other little things to become wedges big enough to drive us apart, little things unconfessed and never made right with Him. *“The [little] cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful”* (Mk. 4:19). May we ever desire completest unity with the Lord. May we resolve together with Him to work toward keeping any littlest thing from coming between. It is our God who invites us to walk with Him in the light that our joy *“might be full”* (I John 1:7-9). He does not want us to sit down *“under His shadow”* only to find shelter, but to find Him sweet to our taste as well (2:3). Such a love as the Lord’s for us should cause a turning in us, a drawing closer to Him. Compare the movement in Romans 5:1-11 from what He has done for us and in us (5:1-10) to our joy in the wonder of Him (vs. 11).

Even so in your relationship with your spouse. That

2:16 My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.

2:17 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

special one was never meant to be only a protector or provider or handyman, cook or house keeper. This is simply not good enough! May the Lord give us the grace to make that dear one our “*great delight*”, their friendship truly “*sweet to my taste*” (2:3).

Note how often Solomon used illustrations from the life with which she was familiar. It is a mark of a wise teacher or preacher. Even so Jesus in His parables.

Vs. 16 – “*My beloved is mine, and I am his*” – She revels in the thrill of their mutual possession of each other. So she responds with givenness to him, but at this stage in their relationship with a measure of reserve, with greater attention to his evident givenness to her.

Apparently Solomon returns to Jerusalem at this point, while the Shulamite remains at her country home. She holds close her hope in the promise of his love and the assurance of their coming marriage.

“Who is this that cometh
out of the wilderness
like pillars of smoke...”

(Song of Sol. 3:6)

Chapter 3

3:1 *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.*
3:2 *I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.*

3:1-4 – Shulamite’s Dream

Vs. 1 – She sought for “*him whom my soul loveth*” on her bed “*by night*”, referring to a dream she had before his return to their wedding. Perhaps this dream arose out of her fear of losing the one she so dearly loved. Notice that in all four verses describing her dream the phrase “*him whom my soul loveth*” appears. Her heart is consumed with him, to the very core of her.

In this life, fleeting as a dream, God’s promise concerning Himself is “*seek and you shall find*” Him, for He is “*a rewarder of the them that diligently seek Him*”, “*and ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart*” (Matt. 7:7; Heb. 11:6; Jer. 29:13). There is none so worthy of our most intense love and pursuit as our gracious Lord. May we be consumed with Him!

- 3:3 *The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?*
- 3:4 *It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.*
- 3:5 *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.*
-

Vs. 2 – “*I will seek him*” – In her dream she searches throughout the city but is unable to find her beloved.

Vs. 3 – The watchmen of the city are unable to help her.

Vs. 4 – “*But I found him*” – In her dream, soon after leaving the watchmen she *does* find her beloved, and holds him so tight and will not let him go, until she brings him into her mother’s house.

3:5 – Refrain

Again we find the same refrain as in 2:7. And again it marks a turning point in the message of the book, with Solomon’s name now becoming prominent (vs. 7, 9, 11). The bride-to-be, upon awaking and in her longing for her beloved in His absence, admonishes

*3:6 Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like
pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and
frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?*

patience in love's development. It is a mark of character that she would exercise and admonish patience in love when she so longed for union with him.

3:6-11 – Solomon Comes for His Bride

Vs. 6 – “*Who is this that cometh...*” – Here is now the wedding procession. One important aspect of a Jewish wedding is the procession, when the groom and his friends come to the bride's home to take her away to her new home in the house of her husband's father. There in his father's house would begin the marriage feast, which would often last for many days. The newlyweds would begin sleeping together from that first night of festivities. There is no reference to the marriage feast here in Solomon's Song, but we find great attention on the marriage procession here and to their wedding night (4:1-5:1). The bride (or some other narrator perhaps) describes in poetic terms the exhilaration and stunning sights of that moment when her beloved comes for her as he promised, in all of his kingly glory, to take her to himself in marriage.

- 3:7 *Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.*
- 3:8 *They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.*
- 3:9 *King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.*
- 3:10 *He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.*
- 3:11 *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.*
-

Vs. 7-8 – She describes Solomon's well-guarded travelling couch or carriage on which he is carried in the procession.

Vs. 9-10 – She relates the beautiful construction of his chariot or carriage. Perhaps the same travelling seat mentioned in vs. 7.

Chapter 4

- 4:1 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.*
- 4:2 Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.*
- 4:3 Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.*
-

4:1-5:1 – Wedding Night

4:1-7 – Solomon again prizes and praises the beauty of his bride. Three times that night he assures her of her beauty (vs. 1, 7).

Vs. 1 – Her dark soft eyes are like a dove's (1:15). Her flowing hair is like dark flocks of goats, seen from a distance as they streamed down the side of Mount Gilead.

Vs. 2 – Her teeth are white and even. Sheep are never so white as when newly shorn and washed. It is lessons on good hygiene here, for all was clean and pleasant smells.

Vs. 3 – Her lips are soft and attractive, like a red

- 4:4 *Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.*
- 4:5 *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.*
- 4:6 *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.*
- 4:7 *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.*
- 4:8 *Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.*
-

satin ribbon. Her speech is so becoming to his ear. The sides of her blushing face are as ruby red as a pomegranate.

Vs. 4 – Her neck he describes in a strong and stately figure, a reference perhaps to her majestic bearing.

Vs. 5 – Her breasts are like soft, young deer, set in a scene of loveliness (*“among the lilies”*).

Vs. 7 – To him she is spotlessly lovely.

4:8-15 – Solomon describes her intoxicating effect upon him. He begins now to refer to her as his *“spouse”* (vs. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), and his *“sister”* (vs. 9, 10, 12, 5:1-2), an affectionate term for a wife.

4:9 *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse;
thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,
with one chain of thy neck.*

4:10 *How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how
much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of
thine ointments than all spices!*

4:11 *Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb:
honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell
of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.*

4:12 *A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring
shut up, a fountain sealed.*

Vs. 9 – He tells how she had ravished his heart. He is utterly carried away in his passion for her.

Vs. 10 – He is carried away in the enchantment of her love as well, which is “*better than wine*”, borrowing her analogy (1:2).

Vs. 10-11 – Her smell and lips he compares to things fragrant and sweet.

Vs. 12-15 – “*A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse*” – Her sensual attractions he likens to the most delightful garden of spices, with orchards and fountains and springs and the most fragrant of plants. He is expressing his desire, his longing to partake, yet the point he affirms is that she is *for him*, for at that point she remained a sealed garden. Note his emphasis in vs. 12, “*inclosed*”, “*shut*”, “*sealed*”. Here is her husband’s praise that she had

- 4:13 *Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,*
4:14 *Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:*
4:15 *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*
4:16 *Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.*
-

kept herself “sealed”, preserving her purity only for him.

Vs. 16 – “*Let my beloved come into his garden*” – Obviously he is gently knocking on the door of that garden, which has now become his (theirs) to enjoy. What he had referred to as *her* garden (“*thy plants*”) in vs. 13, she now freely gives to him (“*his garden...his pleasant fruits*”). He so tenderly bids entry, not demanding or brash, but sensitive, thoughtful. So patiently he handles her. And to this she now responds with willing invitation, “*Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits*”. Again, behold what turns on a woman’s interest. Hear his tender words of praise and appreciation, speaking even poetically. His passionate interest expressed is the way to his woman’s passion. Such free enjoyment of each other is now finally right and good. Such a complete

giving of ourselves to the other is a part of the undefiled marriage bed (I Cor. 7:3-5; Heb. 13:4).

Learn the lesson here. A man is not thoughtful or wise to just run according to his passions at such a time. In so doing he risks running ahead, leaving her out of the pleasure of their moment. She needs time and tenderness and touch to ensure they share their “*pleasant fruits*” together.

Compare again the Lord’s euphemism in Proverbs 5, commanding the man in vs. 15 to “*drink waters out of your own well*”, expressing the necessity to “*rejoice with the wife of your youth*” (vs. 18), to freely allow your passion to be satisfied with that one and no other (vs. 19-20). It is a command of the Lord that is both selective (“*HER breasts*”) and directive (“*drink*!”). See that you are active in this physical aspect of your relationship. Therefore she needs to remain an open garden for him, they freely available for each other, and in the way the other needs, and freely able to openly discuss how to maintain this crucial access to each other.

“What is thy beloved
more than another beloved,
O thou fairest among women?”

(Song of Sol. 5:9)

Chapter 5

5:1 *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: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

5:1 – “*I am come into my garden*” – Solomon enters his garden of intimacy with his precious beloved. See his great emphasis upon the fruits of her garden now become his (9 times “*my*” in this verse). Together they partake freely of the beauty of their physical union, which God has created to be enjoyed with thanksgiving. And behold now how the Lord Himself seems to quietly enter on the scene to speak His blessing and approval over their happy union, saying,

“Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.”

Some think these are perhaps the words of the friends of bride and groom, but they would not belong in such a place. The love for each other these two experience is a gift from God. And their ability to physically express their love for each other is from the Lord’s hand as well. And so it is He Himself who invites them to enjoy that gift He has prepared

5:2 I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

for them (us), as if He would invite them to the pleasure of a feast, “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved”.

Now could the Lord have spoken with such pleasure over their pleasure if this had taken place *prior* to their marriage? Or extra-marital? Of course not! The sanctity of the physical relationship between a man and woman is preserved when we see God so elevating it, and delighting in it. It is carried far beyond just the “*do not*” of immorality, becoming the delightful “*do*” of a gracious gift of God within marriage.

5:2-6:3 – Lovers Separated

The events now described appear to take place quite some time after their wedding.

Vs. 2-3 – The Wife’s Resistance.

Vs. 2 – Her husband comes to her in the night looking for the comfort of her companionship. He

5:3 *I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?*

has apparently been out involved in some work (*“my head is filled with dew”*).

Vs. 3 – Her initial response to him is sluggish, refusing the inconvenience he represents. She is not interested in messing up her routine to accommodate his will. It is all about herself, her convenience. Her excuses are silly, and express a measure of coolness toward him. How a married couple must ever guard their hearts against any such fall from complete earnestness toward each other.

See here indication of phases in a marriage relationship. There is the *honeymoon phase* in the early days of marriage, when all is delightfully new and exciting. With time we come back down to earth in a measure to the *reality phase*, as we are confronted with the challenges of living with a spouse, challenges that are meant to grow our maturity and security together as we are stretched in the way of patience and proper compromise. The need of the hour is to continue to catch those little spoiling “foxes” of pride and selfishness that might cool love’s passion, to deal with them quickly while

5:4 *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door,
and my bowels were moved for him.*

they are still little foxes. We learn to love the other in the way our gracious God loves His believing child, in spite of our failings, openly dealing with our faults together in the right way, confessing and forgiving with all humility, keeping ourselves in love with each other, refusing to allow any separating wedge between.

Even so in our walk with God. How we must ever keep ourselves “*in the love of God*” (Jude 21), guarding our heart against the least subtle fall from earnestness toward Him and His perfect will in and through us, ever pursuing the “*little foxes*” of coolness toward Him. Maintaining closeness takes work and means inconvenience.

“*Keep thy heart with all diligence* (above all your keeping) *for out of it are the issues of life*” (Prov. 4:23).

Vs. 4-6 – The Husband’s Retreat.

Vs. 4 – Not to be easily put off, Solomon tries the door but finds it locked. Yet he patiently makes no demands and displays no anger. This effort on his

5:5 *I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands
dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet
smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.*
5:6 *I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had
withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed
when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find
him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.*

part stirs her to sympathy and regret.

Vs. 5 – When she finally does rise to open for him, she finds the smell of his perfume on the door handle, a sweet yet bitter reminder that he had been there but was now gone.

Vs. 6 – Her heart breaks as she remembers his request and now finds him gone. The phrase “*withdrawn himself*” seems to indicate more than only his turning to go, but suggests a purposeful response to her coolness.

Vs. 5:6-6:1 – The Search.

Vs. 6 – No longer is there any thought of preserving her comfort or carefully washed feet. She begins searching and shouting for her beloved, “*but he gave me no answer*”. Again, this perhaps implying more than just his absence, but some measure of refusal to respond? She said, “*he gave me no*

5:7 *The watchmen that went about the city found me,
they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the
walls took away my veil from me.*

answer”, not that he did not hear.

Vs. 7 – The watchmen of the city (police) apparently mistake her for a worthless sort to be handled roughly. See now how anguish and trouble come to her immediately upon her separation from that one who is her protector.

In Psalm 91 we find abundant imagery of the Lord as the Protector or Keeper. Yet this place of safety under His shadow does not belong to every soul, but to *“he that dwells in the secret place of the Most High”* (vs. 1). There in His presence, in close abiding relation with Him, is found all of the radiant promise resident in this priceless portion. The choice to face this world on our own, without placing our trust in that almighty Keeper, is to lay ourselves open for trouble, indeed for Jeremiah’s curse upon *“the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord”* (Jer. 17:5). As the Lord relates there through His prophet, such a way of divine denial can lead to an empty, parched existence, as if living *“in a salt land and not inhabited”* (Jer. 17:6).

5:8 *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find
my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.*
5:9 *What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O
thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved
more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge
us?*

And further, what can we say of the soul who is without relation to the true God, who has denied faith in Jesus Christ? Such a one has no hope, and is quite “*without God in the world*” (Eph. 2:12). He is on his own in facing the harsh foes and trials of life, and without eternal life in the end.

Vs. 8 – The Shulamite now calls upon the daughters of Jerusalem for help, instructing them that if they find her beloved they must tell him that she is love-sick for him. Her attitude is now completely transformed from the cool lethargy displayed earlier. Now she so earnestly longs for his embrace.

Vs. 9 – “*What is thy beloved more than another beloved*” – The response of the daughters is mild scorn, to the effect of “what makes him so special?” And oh do they ever get an earful!! For that challenging question asked at that desperate moment draws from the Shulamite the most extensive and exultant description found in this book of that love of her heart.

*5:10 My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among
ten thousand.*

*5:11 His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are
bushy, and black as a raven.*

*5:12 His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of
waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.*

Even so the Lord sometimes puts His own children into the vice of hard circumstances that He might squeeze out of us the sweet evidences of His true work in us. For it is there in the press of hard times that we (and others) find what is truly in us, what our Lord truly means to us; either the sweet wine of the Lord's miraculous transforming touch or the bitter gall of a false, unredeemed heart. John Bunyon's treasured *Pilgrim's Progress* was produced while in the press of an unjust prison. Martin Luther's epic hymn "A Mighty Fortress" came out of that time when his enemies were pursuing his life. Paul's most Christ-exalting "Prison Epistles" (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon) were written while under an unjust Roman bondage.

Vs. 10-16 – The Shulamite again publicly honours her beloved. Her description of him is all of things golden and beautiful of sight and smell. She speaks with passion of his stately, strong, impressive body and bearing. And she concludes her jubilant elation

- 5:13 *His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.*
- 5:14 *His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*
- 5:15 *His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.*
- 5:16 *His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*
-

over that one whom her soul loves with the summary statement, “*yea, he is altogether lovely*” (vs. 16). This is no discussion of what she has received from him or of any personal advantages gained through her association with him. This is simply a song of the glory of him, without the slightest reservation, proclaimed to her peers with nothing held back. N.B. how this is all things positive and impressive and attractive. Make the decision to keep your focus there, rather than dwelling upon the faults and failures of that spouse the Lord has given to you. Fly the flag of your delight in him/her publicly, before your friends and family. Work at this. Learn to love the person, not just the personal benefits they provide, and falling to carping when they fail to benefit to your satisfaction. Here is perhaps the whole purpose of the exercise, of her beloved responding in the way he did. See how even her failure opens a door of

opportunity to testify of the wonder of her beloved, and she strides right through that door with greatest passion and finesse.

Part of the Lord's purpose in our hardships is to see how far under the surface (if under there at all) is just such happy praise of Him as we see here. Compare Job, who fell down upon the ground and worshipped in those darkest moments of his life, saying, "*blessed be the name of the Lord*". Her response here is truly wonderful, a far cry from the normal apathy so characteristic of Christians toward our Saviour.

Where is the one utterly in awe of the wonder of Jesus Christ, as this one was consumed with the splendour of her beloved. This is no invitation to *church*. This is no description of Christianity's *advantages*. This is no typical modern effort to attract folks to Jesus by mingling in a dose of the world. *This is Christ – only Christ!* This is the most enthusiastic wonder in *Him*, an overflow of elation in that beloved Person. Look well at the difference between a soul merely *dressed* with Christianity and a soul truly *transformed* by Christ. See the difference between interest in what Jesus can do for you (John 6:26-27) and marvelling in the wonder of "*what manner of man is this*" (Mark 4:41). This is

wonder in the *person* of our Beloved, not in His methods or gifts or advantages. Compare Abraham's flawed response in Genesis 15:1-2, in his failure to grasp the sense of the Lord's words to him in pointing up the true treasure of the person and presence of our God.

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Ponder Points

Did you notice that this situation is something of the Shulamite's earlier dream (3:1-6) now become reality, but with some changes in real life. Note some comparisons of her dream with reality;

- Dream – *She* desired, sought, and found her beloved.
- Reality – *He* desired and sought her, but she was sluggish, putting silly preferences before him. In real life she learned how unreasonable her own response, and yet how long-suffering the love of her beloved.
- Dream – Watchmen were civil.
- Reality – Watchmen were abusive. A reminder that reality can be much harsher than our dreams. This perhaps as a result of her having separated herself from her protector.

- Dream – She was not responsible for the separation.
- Reality – She was at fault.

Our dreams and thoughts of ourselves do tend to cast us in a more complimentary light than truth would happily support. Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream of coming human kingdoms in Daniel 2 saw those kingdoms as forming a most awesome image or statue. God's representation of the same kingdoms through the dream of His prophet saw them more justly, as *beasts* (Dan. 7-8).

Chapter 6

6:1 *Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.*

6:2 *My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.*

6:3 *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.*

6:1 – “*Whither is thy beloved gone*” – The response of the listening daughters here is striking. See how the Shulamite’s passionate portrayal stirs their thirst for him as well. For here is an example of truly effective witnessing.

6:2-13 – Love’s Solution

Vs. 2 – When pressed by the daughters where her beloved might be found she seems suddenly to know where she can find him.

Vs. 3 – “*I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine*” – Her heart delights again in their mutual possession of each other (2:16), but now with greater weight upon her givenness to him.

Vs. 4-10 – His praise.

- 6:4 *Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.*
- 6:5 *Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.*
- 6:6 *Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.*
-

As always, when finally she finds him he meets her with praise. When we might expect to hear his irritation toward her for her uncaring apathy, only praise, still his delight in her. Behold the patient, undemanding way of his love.

Even so, though we might expect God's wrath toward us for our sin, when we come to Him with a right heart of repentance and belief we instead find His grace.

“O LORD, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me” (Isa. 12:1).

Vs. 4 – He compares her to the majestic attractiveness of cities known for their beauty, and to the awesome splendour of a marching army with flags proudly flying.

Vs. 5-7 – He speaks many of the same words of

6:7 *As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.*
6:8 *There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.*
6:9 *My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.*

praise as he spoke on their wedding night (4:1-3), indicating that things have not changed in his appraisal of her, or in his commitment to her.

Vs. 8-9 – Again he describes her as “*the lily among thorns*” (2:2), the best of them all in his eyes.

Look well how he meets her with praise rather than the scorn she might have expected as her due. For he loves her! And through his separation from her he has accomplished in her that in which he delights, drawing out of her the expression of her love and praise of him. Never do we see them apart again after this. Through these hard events and lessons their love becomes settled and matured. It is precious lessons here on building and maintaining the tenderness of a love relationship between husband and wife.

Vs. 10 – This may be the daughters of Jerusalem chiming in, joining in his admiration of her.

*6:10 Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair
as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an
army with banners?*
*6:11 I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits
of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished,
and the pomegranates budded.*
*6:12 Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the
chariots of Amminadib.*
*6:13 Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that
we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the
Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.*

Vs. 11-13 – This portion is a bit obscure. It may perhaps be the Shulamite's description of their reconciliation.

Vs. 11 – She goes to the garden where she now knew her beloved to be (vs. 2), to be reconciled to him. She perhaps describes in poetic form her checking on the indications of their love, whether it is still healthy and growing, as if checking on the status of the garden fruit. She is unsure of the damage done to their relationship. And again, when she finds him there he meets her with praise (vs. 4-9).

Vs. 12 – Before she knew it her husband had scooped her up into his chariot? This is a very difficult verse to translate, perhaps a poetic expression of her surprise as her beloved lifts her spirit when she finds him, rather than scorning her.

Chapter 7

- 7:1 *How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.*
- 7:2 *Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.*
- 7:3 *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.*
- 7:4 *Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.*
- 7:5 *Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.*
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7:1-8:14 – Deepening Relationship

7:1-9 - Appreciation for Her Beauty.

Vs. 5 – “*The king is held in the galleries*” – The Hebrew word translated “*galleries*” could refer to the flowing curls of her hair. The king is held captive in her curls perhaps?

Do you notice the difference here from his previous appraisal of her beauty in 4:1-7? Apart from a feet to head progression here, rather than head to feet in 4:1-7, this time he praises the vision of her *naked*

- 7:6 *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!*
7:7 *This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.*
7:8 *I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples;*
7:9 *And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.*
-

body. They are naked before each other and unashamed. Marriage is something of a return to the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:25). Here the husband looks upon the body of his wife in the good and proper context of marriage and that is all good. It is an appropriate, even important part of that relationship between man and wife. There are natural human curiosities, to be fully satisfied together in God's proper way and time and place. See. Share. Experiment. Explore. A married couple are asking for trouble if they refuse such complete freedom with each other.

7:9-10 – Her response to him is in the last half of vs. 9, beginning with “*for my beloved...*”. All that she has to offer is for him. If he considers her to be as sweet as wine, it is wine for *him* to enjoy.

Vs. 10 – “*I am my beloved’s*” – Now at length she holds nothing back from him, given fully to him. He has proven his sincere love for her, that “*his desire is toward me*”, and that without guile. His consistent praise and expressions of delight in her, especially after she had disappointed him, gradually wins her fullest commitment. Therefore she can freely entrust her all to him. Do you see how by coming through their troubles and finding love still intact she is confirmed in his love? Trial and discipline, handled with love, form in her a deeper trust, such that she can freely give herself wholly to him. Praise God for our afflictions if they lead us to the same.

Look well how his way with her is not about forcing or demanding or manipulating, but about drawing her to want to, wooing her. It is not about their obligation to each other, but about their mutual trust, secure in the love of the other. “Though at times I deserve his anger, yet he loves and is devoted to me still”, she affirms. “Therefore I can trust myself wholly to him”.

Proper givenness to each other in marriage is a

7:11 *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.*
7:12 *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.*
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.*

picture of our all given wholly to Jesus Christ, holding nothing back in the complete trust of ourselves, soul and body, to Him.

7:11-8:14 – A Visit to Her Country Home.

7:11-13 – Her Responsiveness to Him.

Vs. 11 – “*Come, my beloved...*” – Now it is the Shulamite who pleads for the companionship of her beloved, in contrast to 2:10-13 & 4:8. She calls him away to places where she might give him her love, indeed “*all manner of pleasant fruits*”. She has now become the eager pursuer! This the product of her complete entrusting of herself to him, which is the product of his persistent delight in her. Do you see? He has lovingly drawn out of her such a givenness to him that moves her to desire to give to him all that would be his delight. See and understand how it really began with him, with his consistent, loving

praise, appreciation and delight. The process of her givenness to him has been gradual, but with time he receives back all that he could want from her, even as she has received all that she could want from him. A man might long for the active, eager, pursuing interest of his wife toward him. But this cannot be forced or demanded. It must be drawn from her through the kind of patient love we have seen exemplified here.

“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:38).

“Set me as a seal
upon thine heart,
as a seal upon thine arm:
for love is strong as death”

(Song of Sol 8:6)

Chapter 8

8:1 *O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.*

8:2 *I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.*

8:3 *His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.*

8:4 *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.*

8:1-3 – “*O that thou wert as my brother*” – She playfully wishes she could freely express her love for him even in public (“*without*”, vs. 1). In their culture a brother and sister were apparently free to publicly show their affection with embrace and kiss, but not so a husband and wife.

8:4 – Again this refrain we have seen before (2:7; 3:5), encouraging others to allow love to develop in its own time and way. For it is indeed the purpose of this priceless book to instruct the wise reader in how the preciousness of love develops between a man and a woman.

8:5a – “*Who is this that cometh*” – This may be the question on the lips of the people of her home

8:5 *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,
leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the
apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth:
there she brought thee forth that bare thee.*

8:6 *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon
thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is
cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire,
which hath a most vehement flame.*

country as the couple approached arm-in-arm.

8:5b – Solomon speaks his delight in her birth and in their meeting.

8:6-7 – The Shulamite’s Challenge.

Vs. 6 – “*Set me as a seal upon thine heart*” – A seal was a symbol of ownership or authority over someone or something. Her request is that he seal her upon his heart as ever to be his own. Compare David and Jonathan’s vow of forever love for each other in I Samuel 18:1-4 & 23:16-18.

Five characteristics of true love (from Will Varner & Bible Knowledge Commentary);

- Love is permanent (vs. 6) – “*Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm*”. True love does not come and then leave. Love involves a lasting commitment.

8:7 *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.*

8:8 *We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?*

- Love is possessive – “For love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as sheol”. As death and the grave eventually possess us all, so love lays claim to (takes and holds) its object.
- Love is powerful – It is “coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame”. True love is a powerful force that comes only from God.
- Love is persevering (vs. 7) – “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it”. Troubles, trials, temptations, and tests will never destroy true love.
- Love is priceless – “If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be rejected”. Love cannot be purchased. It is something that must be given and received freely.

Here is a vital message for a day of “trial” marriages, cheap love, and marital infidelity.

8:9 *If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.*

8:10 *I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.*

8:8-9 – “*We have a little sister*” – The Shulamite remembers what her brothers (guardians) had said of her when she was a young girl, in preparing her for the day of her marriage (“*when she shall be spoken for*”). If she remained morally pure (“*a wall*”) as she grew up, they would allow her freedom and reward her. But if she became loose (“*a door*”), open to the inappropriate attentions of men, then her brothers would be forced to restrain her. See here the reminder that freedoms are *earned* through responsible behaviour. Usually those who demand freedom the loudest are least worthy of it.

8:10 – “*I am a wall*” – Having kept herself pure for her husband, she could rejoice at the last in his pleasure in her. Look well at the rewards of her obedience. She chose the way of submission in respecting her brothers’ wishes, both that she remain pure, and in labouring in the vineyard [1:6]. And there, in the way of submission, is where she met her beloved. That she found the love of her life and was able to please him well were the direct results of her submission to her guardian brothers.

8:11 *Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.*
8:12 *My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.*
8:13 *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.*
8:14 *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*

Compare Ruth's quiet patience and submissive love for her mother-in-law rewarded with her landing in the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:3). God's gift to her, for He moves the tides of circumstance such that good blessing follows submission to legitimate authority.

8:11-12 – Though her husband had much, she had only herself to offer, which she freely gave to him (vs. 12). She seems then to ask of her husband, using the illustration of standard vineyard keeper arrangements, that he take care of her family (*"those that keep the fruit"* of her vineyard). As they had blessed her (and Solomon) through their wise guidance in her up-bringing, so she would see them well cared for in return.

8:13-14 – We come out the end of the book with the bridegroom pleading again to hear the voice of his beloved (vs. 13), and the bride pleading for his soon

return (vs. 14). Is this not precisely where we who know the Lord stand today? The Lord longs to bring his own into communion with Him, thus concerning our voice He pleads, “*cause Me to hear it*”. And the heart of all who love Him plead, “*Make haste, my Beloved*”!

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

Ponder Points

How much better and closer the relationship of these two after their painful time of separation and search, brought on by the Shulamite’s sluggish indifference and intensified by Solomon’s retreat, bringing upon her a time of trial. The pressure of that hardship drew from the depths of her soul that supreme, public expression of her loving appreciation for him. Consider again how the Lord does this with His own (Job, and Jacob at Peniel). Such times are meant by God to draw out and display our true heart’s devotion, what we are truly trusting and treasuring.

Never is our witness so effective as when we are moved by our circumstances to complete surrender and delighted devotion to Jesus Christ. As soon as

the Shulamite expressed the resplendent loveliness of her beloved she had all the daughters looking for him too. Behold the power of an earnest testimony. Do not be ashamed to tell of Jesus Christ. It is your unreserved expression of loving devotion to Him that stirs the heart of the unsaved to thirst after Him too, not your invitation to your church or efforts at impressing folks with advantages Christianity offers. It is our sincere love for Jesus Christ that wins them, He who *“is altogether lovely”*. Compare the effective witness of Philip and the woman at the well (John 1:45-46; 4:28-30).

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As with the Shulamite’s beloved in 5:2, so the Lord stands at the door and knocks, bidding entry, as with the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:20. With how many churches, as the disappointing one there at Laodicea, is the Lord Himself actually left outside with no open door of entrance and no real presence within?

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Note well that when the Shulamite denied her husband’s advance (5:2-3) he did not go running off to someone else. When she finally found him she did not find him in the arms of another. His heart was still wholly hers and consumed with delight in

her, praise falling from his lips as readily as on their wedding night. It is an expression of what our love should be in marriage, and of the Lord's faithful love for His own. Compare the father's ready embrace for his returning prodigal son in Luke 15:20. Though our faith be weak, the Lord abides faithful (II Tim. 2:13). Though His believing child should grieve Him, He cannot be grieved away.

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Have you noticed that there were no children or parenting concerns mentioned in this portrait of love between a man and a woman? Why? Because this is all about the way of love between a man and woman. Everything else is side issues, and must be kept so. Children can often be allowed to become the focal point of emotional interest, indeed as if the very purpose of a marriage. This can so easily lead to a subtle loss of the passion of husband and wife for each other through the parenting years. But see and understand that this is God's call to a husband and wife to ever keep that core relationship intact and vibrant, regardless of what their lives together may bring. This precious little inspired writing from the Lord is a testimony to the fact that nothing must ever be allowed to intrude into that core union of a man with a woman, nothing allowed to distract or detract from their shared love for each other, till

death do them part.

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Be wise to observe and mark well the life-changing, relationship-transforming guidance that we find so highlighted in this little book. A man is so back to front in his thinking and approach if he allows himself to fall to resentment when his lady fails to cherish him as he wishes her to do. His choice to go bitter actually accomplishes the very opposite of what he desires to find in her, serving rather to drive her only to greater self-protective reserve toward him.

Never forget what we see here in this account, how it is the free abandon to love for her in the man that draws out the woman's free abandon to love toward him in return. It is his sincere, patient, steadfast delight in her that brings her return of delight and praise of him. It is his unwavering cherishing of her that gradually leads her out of all reserve to a complete givenness to him and cherishing of him, lifting in her a wish to give him everything that would bring him delight, the very thing a man longs for from the woman he loves. By his complete giving to her, in time he receives back her complete, unreserved giving to him. Exemplified here is a critical guiding principle in a man and woman

finding their joy with each other.

There is a natural way in proud man to attempt to correct a wrong attitude in his lady by force, by demanding or manipulating. But what we see demonstrated in this account is not the natural approach of natural man. This is more in keeping with God's way, a way of patient pursuing love. Loving and caring for the unlovely, and by this means winning love and givenness in return.

Learn the lesson my Christian brother! Before you destroy your marriage, or poison all of the years of your married life in varying degrees of sullen existence with your lady. The lead has been given to you by the Lord, to choose to cherish her in spite of what you perceive as irritations or disappointments in her. As you lead in true loving, even as the Lord has patiently loved you in spite of you, you will begin to see her gradually make her way out of her cave of self-protective hiding. And as her heart begins to warm toward you (the new you), as she begins to recognise that this is for real, the new normal, you will find her beginning to return to you the same. Where you have previously driven away your joy in her by your angry spirit you will instead begin to see a return to joy together. You will find her tending to let go of the distractions and hobbies and business ventures and such that she has taken

up to fill her life in your years of “absence”, the absence of your real love for her. You will find her rather wanting time with you, to do things with you, for you, indeed to give to you all that is your delight. Not because she must, but now because it is her delight to do so, because that is the nature of your way with her. You will find her stubborn hold on things she has always known were an irritation to you begin to loosen, for she has now lost interest in fostering irritations, wanting rather only to please you. Where your lives had veered apart, they have now merged again in new happy union.

Ask your Father to do the miraculous in you my brother, to give to you the patient humility, the courageous abandon to plunge yourself into love.

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Consider again the overwhelming reality of a Saviour and God *“who loved me, and gave Himself for me”* (Gal. 2:20).

*“Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood”* (Rev. 1:5).

The words in these above quotes were spoken of Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of sinful souls. Dear reader, has Jesus washed you from your sin?

*“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).*

