

*The Shulamite
And
The Shepherd*

*A Verse by Verse Commentary
on the
Song of Solomon*

**By
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This Book Is Dedicated to the Memory of

My Faithful Father,
Rev. Gene B. Cook
1932-1986

I lovingly dedicate this book to the memory of my father who first urged me to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior, and then taught me the importance of *studying* the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15), *memorizing* Scriptures (Psalm 119:9-11), and *proclaiming* the Gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 4:2). Through his personal witness and instruction, I acquired a thirst for the knowledge of the Holy and for the souls of lost sinners. I thank God for a faithful father who was obedient to God's command to "*train up a child in the way he should go...*" (Proverbs 22:6).

And My Caring Friend,
Dr. Bob Wilson
1945-2003

I also gratefully dedicate this book to the memory of my dear friend and co-laborer, Dr. Bob Wilson. Pastor Bob was the first to encourage me after my call to preach, and the opportunities he afforded me have proven invaluable in my ministry. Two verses come to mind as I reflect upon my friend - Proverbs 18:24, "*A man that hath friends must show himself friendly*", and Proverbs 17:17, "*A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*" I will miss him very much.

"Friends"
(Author Unknown)

I went out to find a friend
But could not find one there.
I went out to be a friend
And friends were everywhere.

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Author's Preface

“I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.”
Song of Solomon 7:10

In the Song of Solomon, a lowly, Shulamite maiden boldly asserts, *“I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me”* (Song of Solomon 7:10). As I meditated upon this statement, my heart was stirred to determine its deeper significance. I searched my personal library for resources, but most of the books I possessed only gave a brief overview of the Song of Solomon, and many appeared to have difficulty harmonizing its divine meaning. When I attempted to obtain additional commentaries, I soon realized that there was not an abundance of commentaries available on the Song of Solomon. Further investigation soon led to the discovery of why so many commentators have avoided its exegesis.

Throughout the history of the Church, there has existed a cloud of controversy over the interpretation of this book. Although more than five hundred commentaries remain that were written during the first 17 centuries, most of these were dismissed by the Westminster Assembly in 1657 as obscure and detrimental in their attempts to understand the true spiritual significance of the book. Contemporary scholars have done little more to clarify its content. At present, there seems no interpretation dominantly accepted among theologians.

Many Old Testament scholars adhere to one of several allegorical views; some hold a two or three-character view; some view the book as a mere collection of disconnected love songs or idylls; while others go to the extreme of viewing the Song as a part of Eastern cult worship. Modern commentators believe the main reason for the book is to provide an object lesson promoting marriage fidelity. Another popular view contends that its primary purpose is to provide merely an allegory dealing with the relationship of Christ and the Church.

While many of these views provide rational and practical *applications*, one must remember that *context* is essentially important in the study of the Scriptures. The diligent student of the Bible must realize the context of any passage before fully comprehending its interpretation. There is only one *interpretation* of any passage of Scripture, but there can be many *applications*. I believe that some expositors have overlooked this important principle of hermeneutical study, and in so doing; they have misunderstood the true interpretation of the Song of Solomon.

Because of the maze of conjecture regarding this book, I decided to conduct my own personal study. During the past several years, I have endeavored to search the Scriptures, diligently seeking through prayer and research, to better comprehend the purpose and interpretation of Song of Solomon by biblically analyzing its content (2 Timothy 2:15). It was written primarily to address the unfaithfulness and idolatry of Israel. Therefore, one must view its message largely from a *Messianic* perspective. When Solomon penned this book, the Church was still a *mystery*, yet there are many *applications* that can be made to the New Testament Church.

Paul wrote, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). As we begin our study of this little book of only eight chapters and one hundred and seventeen verses, we will seek to expound upon its primary *interpretation*, as well as make practical *application* to believers of all ages. It is my sincere prayer that this book will serve a two-fold purpose:

- *Be a source of blessing to readers*
- *Cause the believer to thirst for a knowledge of Christ*

Dr. Steven G. Cook

Mission Ministries

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Introduction

The title, “Song of Solomon,” comes from a Hebrew idiom meaning, “The Most Exquisite Song.” It is considered by the Jewish Midrash as “the most praiseworthy, most excellent, most highly treasured among the songs.” It is commonly considered by many theologians to be the most difficult book in the Bible to understand for reasons that will be revealed in our study.

The authorship of the Song of Solomon is clear. In Song of Solomon 1:1 we read, “*The song of songs, which is Solomon’s.*” This leaves little doubt that Solomon authored the book, but there are differences of opinion regarding when he penned it. Jewish tradition holds that Solomon wrote the *Song* in his youth, *Proverbs* in his prime, and *Ecclesiastes* after he had grown weary of this world. There are some who doubt this theory since the author of the Song of Solomon praises marital fidelity, something Solomon never did as a young man. God’s Word reveals that Solomon was most certainly not monogamous. In his lifetime, Solomon amassed a harem of a thousand women (1 Kings 11:3).

This Song of Songs is a song of love portrayed by two lovers - a lovely, young Shulamite maiden and a lowly shepherd. One of the major themes of this book is Jehovah’s unconditional love for Israel. Certainly He shows great restraint for His people. Someone once said, “While it is true the Song of Solomon is a poetical book, we must never forget that it is first and foremost a practical book.”

To understand the context of the story, it is helpful to understand something of King Solomon’s reign. Solomon’s reign began as a glorious era, but alas, the glory of the Solomonic period was short-lived! Soon Israel’s sons lamented because of their worldly and self-indulging king. The fault was Solomon’s alone. The following verses from Chapter Eleven of First Kings explain the problems that existed during his reign:

- “*But king Solomon loved many strange women.*” (1 Kings 11:1)
- “*Solomon clave unto these in love.*” (1 Kings 11:2)
- “*His wives turned away his heart after other gods.*” (1 Kings 11:3)

- “*Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord.*” (1 Kings 11:6)
- “*The Lord was angry with Solomon.*” (1 Kings 11:9)
- “*The Lord said: I will surely rend the kingdom from thee.*” (1 Kings 11:11)

Solomon’s *infidelity* and *idolatry* precipitated the division of Israel into two separate kingdoms. The sun of Solomon’s glory was truly set in dark clouds. All of the gorgeous attractions of his costly attire could not hide the ugly blot of his character. Not only had Solomon abused marriage, but he had filled his great harem with women from the very nations which Israel had repeatedly received Divine interdict – Moab, Ammon, Edom, and others. Solomon had even built “high places” for their abominable idols. The king’s behavior being such, what would be more likely than that the people would quickly follow suit? Solomon had forfeited his Divine favor for the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. The *wisest* of all men had become the greatest of all *fools*, for he had sinned against light, privilege, and promise such as had been given to no other man on all the earth. The kingdom would be rent from his family, except that Judah should be retained for David’s sake.

Concerning the events of Israel’s past, Paul writes, “*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*” (1 Corinthians 10:11). The Apostle also writes, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Not only are there lessons intended for Israel, but God provided many practical lessons for New Testament saints as well.

According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. This *Song* is arguably his loveliest of all. Theologians often divide the Song of Solomon into *idylls*, or little songs, though the number of idylls is a topic of debate. J. Vernon McGee holds that there are five (5) idylls, while *The New Scofield Reference Bible* names thirteen (13) idylls. Noted expositor and author, J. Sidlow Baxter, attributes seven (7) to the book.

I have elected to use a more traditional approach in my study. By dividing the entire book into thematic chapters, by the grace of God, I will attempt to expound upon the story of the Shulamite and the shepherd. Solomon is relentless in his propositions, but as we will see, the Shulamite is just as steadfast in her resolve to remain faithful to her beloved shepherd.

As we have noted, the question of first concern for all diligent students of Scripture is the matter of *context*. It has been aptly put, “Nowhere in Scripture does the unspiritual mind tread upon ground so mysterious and incomprehensible as in this book, while the saintliest men and women of the ages have found it a source of pure and exquisite delight.” The major difficulty in the study of this book is concluding its *interpretation*.

Origen and Jerome tell us that Jews would not permit their young men to read this book until they were age thirty. The reason for this prohibition was that they feared the danger of reading into it the salacious and the suggestive, the vulgar and the voluptuous, the sensuous and the sexual. The Song of Solomon is anything but vulgar! As a matter of fact, it supports the sanctity of marriage, something dreadfully lacking today in modern society. The Song also reveals the beauty of *true love*, not the type of love promoted by today’s cesspool of sensuality.

The Jews call the Song of Solomon the “Holy of Holies of Scripture,” and as we have mentioned, not all Jews were permitted inside its sacred bounds. As we study this blessed book, we will find that not every reader will readily receive it. The unregenerate sinner and the carnal Christian will not enjoy exploring its content. It may seem to some that its message is nothing more than a mere story of eroticism and fleshly lusts, such as is common on daytime television! The unsaved man cannot possibly grasp the beauty and majesty of its tender story of love and spiritual commitment without illumination of the indwelling Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the spiritual man will find it a source of blessing, as well as a reason for renewal of love, allegiance, and enthusiasm in their Christian walk. It will lift their heart to new heights of gratitude for the Lord Jesus Christ. It will encourage them to draw near to God as never before. May God compel us to proclaim, “Christ is our *All in All*.”

One reason this book has been greatly neglected in the pulpits of Christian churches is because of its content. As we embark in our study, let us do so by first examining three (3) *theories of interpretation* commonly advanced. These theories are known as the *naturalistic*, *allegorical*, and *typical* theories. The definitions of these theories were taken from J. Sidlow Baxter's work, *Explore the Book*, Volume 3, pp. 171-172, (Zondervan, 1960).

- ***The Naturalistic Theory***

“The *naturalistic* theory promotes that this is a collection of erotic songs, or idylls of love, put together on the ground of literary merit, and without any allegorical or typical meaning, though possibly intended to describe ideal human love. This theory leaves the inclusion of the book in the sacred canon an inexplicable anomaly. When we remember how the Hebrews venerated their sacred Scriptures, and how careful they were that only inspired writing should be included in the canon, we cannot believe that the Song of Songs should have been given its decided place in the Scriptures simply on the ground of literary merit. Not one of the books is there simply as a piece of literature. Each has its place because of its religious character or its special connection with the peculiar national position of the Hebrew people. The very canonicity of the poem, therefore, argues its spiritual significance.”

- ***The Allegorical Theory***

“At the other extreme is the *allegorical* theory, which ignores as of no concern whether the poem has any historical foundation in a real love-suit between Solomon and the Shulamite, and treats the whole as a purely figurative and mystical fiction. To read some of the absurd and fanciful expositions associated with this theory such as that the hair of the bride represents the mass of the nations converted to Christianity, is too much for the God-given sense of humour, and brings the whole theory into disrepute.”

- ***The Typical Interpretation***

“Coming between the *naturalistic* and *allegorical* theories is the ***typical*** theory of interpretation, which recognizes the distinctive elements in each of the other two without going to the extreme of either. The writing has a historical basis; but in harmony with the rest of Scripture, it also has a spiritual purpose and content. An ideal human love is represented, to lead the soul into the thought of fellowship with God. Fundamentally, the facts are historical; but they are lifted up into the region of poetry for a religious purpose; the facts are idealized and given, by the Spirit of inspiration, a spiritual meaning.”

There are also different views of *application* held by scholars. We will mention four popular views in our study. Before doing so, let me mention again a basic principle of biblical interpretation. While there may be more than one *application* of Scripture, there is only one *interpretation*. Understanding context is essential for understanding its interpretation. It has been aptly said, “*Context is king when interpreting Scriptures.*” The four (4) *views of application* are as follows:

- ***The Song Reveals Christ’s Love for the Church***

While *application* can be made in the Song of Solomon to Christ and the Church, we must emphasize that this is not its primary purpose. The careful student of the Word will realize that the Song of Solomon could not directly address the Church, since the Church was still a secret hidden in God from the foundation of the world. The Church was later revealed to the apostles and prophets of the New Testament dispensation (Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:9).

With this in mind, let us examine the relationship between Christ and the Church. There are at least five (5) figures that picture this *union*:

1. *Scripture teaches us that Christ is the Head, and believers are the body – a Living Union*
2. *Christ is the Foundation, and believers are the building – a Lasting Union*
3. *Christ is the Vine, and believers are the branches – a Fruitful Union*
4. *Christ is the Firstborn, and believers are His brethren – a Joint Union*

5. *Christ is the Bridegroom, and believers collectively make up the bride – a Loving Union*

In writing to the Ephesian saints Paul taught them about the Church by using the figure of marriage - “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church*” (Ephesians 5:25-31).

In this passage Paul declared he was unveiling a *mystery* previously veiled by God. The *mystery* of which he spoke was the *union* of Christ and the Church. Since the existence of this union was a mystery until such time, the Song of Solomon dealt with relationship between Jehovah and the nation of Israel.

- ***The Song Reveals God’s Displeasure with Infidelity***

Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3), yet God was never pleased with the king’s infidelity. In stark contrast, Solomon is portrayed in an ungodly light in many of the Scriptures, but especially in the Song of Solomon. In this book Solomon is depicted as a type of seducer. He repeatedly attempts to coerce the young Shulamite to be one of the many “strange women” in his harem. The Shulamite proves nobler than the king. She resists his seductions and steadfastly remains faithful to her beloved shepherd.

This view has much credibility. In our study we will also see that every time the king is mentioned, the city and palace provide the setting. When reference is made to the shepherd, a rural setting provides the backdrop. This stark contrast between *city* and *country* reinforces the three-person view that we hold. While some believe that the

shepherd and Solomon are the same man, we believe that they are actually two different men. We hold to the view that there are three characters - *King Solomon*, the *Shulamite*, and her beloved *shepherd*. As we mentioned, Solomon was a polygamist, and he is presented as a type of tempter. Because all men have been tempted, there are several applications that can be made to believers of all ages.

The Shulamite should be viewed as a type of faithful spousal. The Shulamite represents a model of what God desired Israel to be. Israel had followed King Solomon's poor example and had committed spiritual adultery. God also desires saints today to be faithful. The shepherd, though unnamed, provides us a type of loving deliverer coming to the rescue of his bride. This view suggests God's primary purpose was to help Israel by exposing their sin and providing them a model for spiritual fidelity.

- ***The Song Portrays the Shulamite as a Remnant of Israel***

While the shepherd may be viewed as a type of Messiah, the Shulamite may be viewed as a type of believing remnant that will exist at the Second Coming of Christ. This view has much biblical merit. At Christ's return, the Lord will establish a relationship with this remnant of Jews that survive the Tribulation. On that day, Israel will look upon Him whom they have pierced. They will mourn for Him as one mourning an only son. Following the culmination of the Tribulation, "*all Israel will be saved*" (Romans 11:26). Of course, "*all Israel*" refers only to the faithful remnant that has put their faith in Jesus Christ prior to His Second Coming.

- ***The Song Promotes Marital Fidelity***

This view of application has become popular today. It sees the main theme of the Song of Solomon as an admonishment to marital fidelity. In a day when the rate of divorce is increasing dramatically, there is much practical value in this view. However, we must understand that this is only an application, not the primary purpose of the book.

Since Solomon is not portrayed in a favorable light, some scholars believe he penned the Song of Solomon when he was old, at a stage of life when he could openly

confess the foolishness of his youth. This view has support in the Book of Ecclesiastes. It reveals how he sampled everything under the sun in an attempt to satisfy his cravings. Near the end of his life, however, he learned that wine, women, and song could not quench the thirsting of his soul. When he was old, Solomon finally proclaimed, *“Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity...”* *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”* (Ecclesiastes 12:8; 13-14). He had come to understand the truth, but at great pain and expense!

Chapter 1

“The Steadfastness of the Shulamite”

Song of Solomon 1:1-2:7

- 1:1 The song of songs, which is Solomon's.
- 2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.
- 3 Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.
- 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.
- 5 I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.
- 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.
- 7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, 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?
- 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.
- 9 I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.
- 10 Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.
- 11 We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.
- 12 While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.
- 13 A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.
- 14 My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.
- 15 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.
- 16 Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.
- 17 The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.
- 2:1 I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

- 2 As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.
- 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.
- 4 He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.
- 5 Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.
- 6 His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.
- 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.

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

The *Song of Songs* and the *Song of Solomon* are both appropriate titles for this book. The Hebrew title is *Shir Hashirim*, “song of songs,” and it is actually found in the very first verse. It means “*the best song*,” and is similar to the expressions “King of Kings” and “Lord of Lords.” The title given in the Authorized King James Version is the *Song of Solomon*, and this is appropriate since Solomon wrote it. As we have already mentioned, 1 Kings 4:32 reveals that Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs which clearly testifies that he was a wise man and gifted songwriter.

After reading the book of Ecclesiastes, it is refreshing to read this poetic book called the Song of Solomon. Ecclesiastes speaks little of love, while the Song of Solomon overflows with passion between a Shulamite maiden and her beloved shepherd. Some might argue that Solomon is a poor teacher of true love, and especially the virtues of a monogamous relationship. It is common knowledge that he loved many women. What a display of the grace of God! God has indeed placed His treasure in *earthen vessels* (2 Corinthians 4:7), but that never diminishes His treasure. Matthew Henry wrote, “Let us all learn not to think the worse of good instructions though we have them from those who do not themselves altogether live up to them” (M. Henry, *Commentary on the Bible*, p. 734).

Many commentators believe that of Solomon's three books, his Song was written first. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes followed. One Jewish rabbi said, “When a man is young,

he sings songs. When he becomes an adult, he utters practical proverbs. When he becomes old, he voices the vanity of things.” (M. Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 791).

Eugene H. Peterson wrote, “The Song-Ecclesiastes polarity sets the ecstatic experience of love in tension with the boredom of the same old round. The life of faith has to do with the glories of discovering far more in life than we ever dreamed of; the life of faith has to do with doggedly putting one flat foot in front of the other, wondering what the point of it all is. Neither cancels out the other; neither takes precedence over the other. As we sing and pray the lyrics of the Song of Songs, we become convinced that God blesses the best that human experience is capable of; as we ponder the sardonic verses of Ecclesiastes, we recognize the limits inherent in all human experience, appreciate it for what it is, but learn not to confuse it with God. In such ways, these Wisdom writers keep us honest with and attentive to the entire range of human experience that God the Spirit uses to fashion a life of holy salvation in each of us” (E. Peterson – *The Message* – p. 7).

The Song of Solomon tells us of a lowly Shulamite girl who is deeply in love with an unnamed shepherd. King Solomon desires to add this lovely Shulamite maiden to his harem, and so he uses his royal powers to bring her to Jerusalem. From the first scene to the last, Solomon repeatedly attempts to coerce her, but she resists his seductions and remains faithful. While the story told is beautifully poetic, it is often difficult to follow. It seems to skip from one scene to another without a great deal of warning.

Solomon was a selfish monarch, and he indulged in every pleasure the world had to offer. A portrait of his life can be viewed in the book of Ecclesiastes: *“I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and peculiar treasure of kings and of the*

provinces: I get me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour” (Ecclesiastes 2:3-10).

It is this same king who took this innocent, young Shulamite from her family and friends in Lebanon to his palace in Jerusalem. She did not desire to be taken, but she had no choice in the matter. Our story begins with her in the presence of Solomon, vexed and troubled in spirit, uncertain of her future. We will see, however, that this young damsel possesses maturity beyond her years. Throughout her trial, she refuses to succumb to Solomon’s wiles and steadfastly resolves to remain faithful to her shepherd-lover.

- 1:2** *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.*
- 3** *Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.*
- 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.*

How tender is this opening scene! The reaction of this young Shulamite provides an immediate object lesson to Israel. Under Solomon’s rule, Israel had become slothful and lethargic in her faithfulness to Jehovah. Like their king, many Jews had become material minded, forgetting that Jehovah demanded obedience of them as His chosen people. The commandments of God no longer were a priority to Israel. Worship had become superficial orthodoxy. The Jews had mingled their religion with the religions of heathen nations. The philosophy of life under Solomon’s reign was “*eat, drink, and be merry!*” Most Jews were more concerned about satisfying the flesh instead of Jehovah.

Solomon’s attempts to persuade the Shulamite to become part of his collection of wives included offers such as fine *foods, clothing, and jewels*. Solomon was so used to buying whatever he wanted that he thought he could purchase her love. The Shulamite is faced with the challenge of choosing between the lusts of the flesh and remaining faithful

to her beloved. Believers must make choices between the temptations and consecrated living every day. Satan is relentless in his attempts to “*pervert the right ways of God*”.

In verse 2 we find the Shulamite thinking about her beloved shepherd. She muses to herself, “*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.*” It is interesting to notice that, despite her circumstances, she prefers to think upon the blessings of her beloved. We will see the Shulamite do this repeatedly during times of temptation.

She compares his love to *wine*. She is very familiar with wine, since she spent her life working in her family’s vineyard (Song of Solomon 1:6). She understood the value of a vineyard. Wine was a delicacy in those days; a drink of the powerful and rich. It was considered one of the great pleasures the world had to offer. Notice that in her comparison, the Shulamite declares “*thy love is better than wine.*” The Shulamite valued her beloved shepherd very much!

As she continues reminiscing of her shepherd, she compares his virtues to the *fragrance* of good ointments. Ointments, balms, and salves were extremely important in that day. As a matter of fact, several *ointments* are mentioned in God’s Word. Let us take a look at a few.

When Jacob sent his sons back to Egypt to retrieve little Benjamin, he sent them with gifts, including a “*little balm*” (Genesis 43:11). Such an ointment was valuable because of its medicinal purposes. Jacob feared he would never again see his son if he did not send a goodly ransom. The ointment Jacob sent must have been very valuable.

Jeremiah once asked the question, “*Is there no balm of Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*” (Jeremiah 8:22). Jeremiah compared the “*balm of Gilead*” to a physician. There is healing in balms, ointments, and salves. Of course, Jeremiah used the term, “*balm of Gilead*” metaphorically to characterize Israel’s need for spiritual healing.

We find another reference to *ointments* in the New Testament. Just before Christ went to Calvary, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, took a pound of expensive *ointment of spikenard* and anointed the feet of Jesus. She wiped His feet with her hair, and the house was filled with its beautiful fragrance (John 12:3). Judas, one of the Disciples of Christ, chided her for wasting the precious ointment. He argued that it could

have been sold for 300 pence and given to the poor (John 12:4-6). Of course, he only pretended to care about the poor. What he really cared about was the value of the precious ointment. Jesus rebuked Judas, but He commended Mary for offering the ointment for His burial. Christ viewed the valuable ointment of spikenard as an offering.

In the Book of the Revelation, Christ condemned the Church of Laodicea because of unfaithfulness. This church was described as *“lukewarm, neither cold nor hot”* (Revelation 3:15-16). The Laodiceans had become self-dependent, and they thought they had need of nothing. They relied upon their material possessions. Christ told them that they did not even realize how spiritually poor they were (Rev. 3:17). He then exhorted them anoint their eyes with *“eyesalve”* so they might see (Revelation 3:18). Of course, He was speaking figuratively, yet nonetheless, Christ recognized the salve.

The typology depicted by ointments, salves, and balms provide beautiful pictures of Christ. The Word of God declares that Christ would come *“to heal the broken hearted and bind up their wounds”* (Psalm 147:3). The very *name* of Jesus is a sweet smelling savour unto the Father. Like the ointment of spikenard poured out of the broken alabaster box, Jesus was broken and spilled out on the cross of Calvary. There is a *balm of Gilead* today. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. He can heal the most broken hearts!

Jesus *“came to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). Jesus came *“to preach the gospel unto the poor; ...to heal the brokenhearted; to preach deliverance to the captive, and recovering sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised”* (Luke 4:18). The purpose for Christ’s coming can be summarized in three simple words: Christ Jesus came *“to save sinners”* (1 Timothy 1:15). Christ is not merely *one* of several ointments...He is not merely *one* of even a few ointments. He is the *one and only* ointment that can heal the sin-sick soul. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). Acts 4:12 states, *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* No, Jesus is not *one of many*...He is the *ONE and ONLY!*

Let us see some additional Scriptures that support the uniqueness of Christ:

- *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:5-11).
- *“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21)
- *“But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* (John 20:31)
- *“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (Acts 2:21)

No wonder the songwriter wrote –

*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,
There's just something about that name.
Master, Savior, Jesus,
Like the fragrance after the rain.
Kings and kingdoms will all pass away
But there's something about that name.*

Truly, the *name* of Jesus is like no other name – it has a *fragrance* all its own. For those in need of healing, there is good news – The healing balm of Christ Jesus our Saviour is available to *ALL* who call upon His *name*. Listen the Word of God –

- *“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:12-13)
- *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:30-31)

- *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved”*
(Romans 10:9)

As the Shulamite speaks of the love that exists between her shepherd and her, the virgins of the palace find themselves in awe. They have never known such love with King Solomon. How could they? Solomon had seven hundred wives! As they listened to this innocent Shulamite speak of her true love, they desired to meet him. They thirsted for a man whose *“kisses are better than wine.”* They desired such a one whose *“fragrance is like the odor of fine ointments.”*

The Shulamite’s thoughts were strongly fixed upon her beloved shepherd. King Solomon’s enticements could not deter her from thinking on him. She speaks aloud, *“draw me, we will run after thee...”* (v. 4). If only he would come to the palace for her, she would run after him in ecstasy. This is what the Lord desired of Israel. Israel had become ensnared by the wiles of the devil, overcome by the cares of the world, and seduced by the strange women and idols of the heathen. Jehovah sought to restore Israel spiritually by illustrating the precious love of the Shulamite and the shepherd.

Does God have preeminence in your life? Are the thoughts of the Lord ever upon your mind, or have you become careless and cold in your Christian walk? God wants you to draw near to Him? James exhorts believers when he writes, *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you”* (James 4:8). God compels all to do the same, *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all thine heart”* (Jeremiah 29:13).

In 2 Samuel God illustrates His willingness to urge the backslidden to repentance. David had committed adultery with a beautiful woman named Bathsheba. For more than a year he refused to repent and confess his sin. Finally, God sent the Prophet Nathan to confront David. After Nathan revealed to David his sin in a unique way, David repented and confessed. David wrote Psalm 51 that illustrated the misery he had experienced during his loss of fellowship. In Psalm 32, after he was restored, David revealed the joy of sins forgiven! Friend, if you are harboring unconfessed sin, it is certain that you are

miserable. Why not bow your head right now and call upon the name of Jesus in heartfelt repentance? You have God's promise that He will hear and answer your prayer.

Though Solomon has brought the Shulamite to his palace, she promises, "*to be glad and rejoice in thee (her shepherd)*" (v. 4c). She promises, "*to remember his love more than wine*" (v. 4d), and then she seals her pledge by proclaiming, "*...the upright love thee*" (v. 4e). It is interesting that the Shulamite does not hesitate to describe herself with the word, "*upright*". She is confident that she has been faithful, loyal, and true to her beloved, and though Solomon has sorely tempted her, she has not fallen prey to his temptations. She has remained "*upright*" because of her devotion to her shepherd. This is the lesson that Jehovah wanted Israel to learn in Solomon's day, and it is the lesson He wants New Testament saints to learn as well.

The word "*upright*" is pregnant with meaning! Three times in the Book of Job God calls Job "*upright*". In the Job 1:1, God uses this word to describe Job - "*a man perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.*" In Job 1:8 the Lord again characterizes him as "*upright*" when He asks Satan, "*Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*" God describes Job a third time in Job 2:3 when He addresses Satan again, "*And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.*" What a report card Job received from God! The integrity of Job serves as a reminder that God desires us to be faithful and devoted to Him. Job was not only "*upright*", but he also "*feared God*". He reverently feared displeasing God as a son would fear to displease his father.

In the story of the Shulamite and the shepherd, God repeatedly admonishes Israel to shun evil and live "*upright*". We can apply the same exhortations in the New Testament Church. God wants all saints to demonstrate their faith by obedience and devotion. Like the Shulamite, we have been espoused to our Beloved Christ. The Church is essentially a *bride-in-waiting*, and our Great Shepherd is deserving of our fidelity. We must "*submit ourselves unto God*", so that we may "*resist the devil*". Just

as Solomon, a type of Satan, tried to tempt the Shulamite to be unfaithful, so the devil engages in tempting believers in order to corrupt their fellowship with the Lord.

God's Word emphatically commands believers, "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in this world, the lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of this world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*" (1 John 2:15-17).

1:5 *I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.*

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.*

Inside of the king's palace, the Shulamite speaks with the "*daughters of Jerusalem.*" It seems likely that some of these women ridiculed the Shulamite because of her dark skin. Prejudice is nothing new. It is as old as man himself. There are some who believe that this verse implies the Shulamite was an Ethiopian, but this does not seem logical in the context of verse 6. She states, "*I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children...made me the keeper of the vineyards.*" The Shulamite's skin was tanned because she worked in the sun tending her family's vineyards. She describes her appearance as "*comely*" (v. 5), revealing that she knows she is beautiful. But almost apologetically she excuses herself by saying, "*but mine own vineyard have I not kept*". "*Vineyard*" is used as a metaphor to describe her appearance. Obviously, she did not think she was as beautiful as the other women of the palace. She said that she had been so busy keeping her family's vineyard that she had no time to keep up her own appearance.

What humility is revealed in these words! Some women would boast of being courted by a king, but not this young, humble Shulamite. The Word of God condemns pride more than any other sin. The Christian's privileged position in Christ is no reason for boasting. Salvation is totally and completely a result of God's grace. God's Word tells us that God has designed salvation in such a way that "*no flesh may glory in his*

presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). None deserve God’s love and forgiveness; yet God condescended in love to reconcile man unto Himself. Humility is a virtue of the Shulamite, and it should be one of ours as well.

One problem with the Jews was that they thought highly of themselves since they were God’s chosen people to be His representatives to mankind. Paul wrote to the Romans, “*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*” (Romans 10:1-4). The Jews had largely become self-absorbed and arrogant. They no longer depended upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They believed that they could live without consequences for their actions, indulging in the pagan practices of heathen nations. They followed the example of King Solomon, and indulged in all sorts of worldly activities.

Today there are many who teach that salvation is a matter of “*conduct*” instead of “*condition*”. Many proudly proclaim they have obtained salvation by their own good works! My I submit to you that Heaven is not a reward, and salvation is not achieved by the deeds of the flesh. Forgiveness of sin and eternal life is a direct result of God’s grace! Listen to God’s Word, “*For the wages of sin is death; but the GIFT of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 6:23). “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourself: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*” (Ephesians 2:8-9). There is no reason for anyone to boast in regard to salvation. Salvation is completely a work of God - *plus nothing and minus nothing!*

- 1:7** *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, 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?*
- 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.*

The Shulamite's thoughts again turn toward her beloved. She speaks to him softly in soliloquy. She asks him where he can be found, "*Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon...*" (v. 7a). She is confounded by her circumstances, and she wants nothing more than to be with her beloved. This is revealed by her question, "*...for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions*" (v. 7b). The plight of this young maiden is indeed tragic.

In response to her questions, the "*daughters of Jerusalem*" sarcastically suggest that she can find this shepherd by following the footsteps of the flock and by feeding goats, "*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 shepherd's tents*" (1:8). How cruel some people can be, especially at a time when comfort is needed! These women were so jealous of this beautiful Shulamite that they delighted in adding to her misery.

- 1:9** *I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.*
10 *Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.*
11 *We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.*

The scene of our story now changes. King Solomon again speaks to the lovely Shulamite, and once more heaps lavish pleasantries and promises upon her. He equates her beauty to the horses of an Egyptian Pharaoh. He notes the beauty of her cheeks saying that they are hemmed with jewels. This figure referred to the jewels attached to her facial veil. He praises her neck that is adorned with gold necklaces, obviously given by him as a gift and placed upon her by royal attendants. The attendants pledge to make her borders of gold with studs of silver.

All of these proposals were relevant to Israel, since the Jews had followed the example of their worldly king. All of these temptations illustrate the allurements and pleasures of sin. Israel had become ensnared by materialism and worldliness, and the idea of indulgence and living without consequences seemed quite appealing to them (Ecclesiastes 2:10). In *application*, the New Testament saints are also exhorted to "*walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise*" (Ephesians 5:15). Satan is able to "*transform himself into an angel of light*" (2 Corinthians 11:14). Believers "*should not lust after*

evil things, as they also lusted” (1 Corinthians 10:6). God repeatedly warns us in Scripture to “*flee from the devil*” and “*avoid temptations*”. To the Church of Corinth Paul wrote, “*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Jesus said, “*the Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*” (Matthew 26:41). Like Israel, God exhorts us to avoid such temptations of the world.

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

13 *Bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.*

14 *My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.*

As the Shulamite continues to sit at the king’s banqueting table, she remains undaunted by Solomon’s flattery. She chooses instead to focus upon the love of her life. She is so consumed with thoughts of the shepherd that she is oblivious to the seductions of the king. She clutches a small bundle of myrrh, a memento of her beloved. She holds the bundle tightly in her hands beneath the table, concealed from others. As the king assays her, she smells the bundle of myrrh, which reminds her of her beloved. In soliloquy she speaks of her beloved. She says, “*he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.*” Most likely this refers to the memento of myrrh that she hangs about her neck at night. It cannot be taken literally because she and her shepherd are separated.

As she reflects upon her shepherd, she compares him to a cluster of “*camphire*” from the vineyards of *En-gedi*. *En-gedi* is a beautiful oasis near the Dead Sea. It is there that David hid when King Saul sought to take his life. This oasis is a wonderful sight to behold! There are magnificent waterfalls and springs that provide fresh water. There is lush, green vegetation that grows there. Visitors can watch the playful harts as they frolic upon the cliffs, in the caves, and among the bulrushes. The rich, blue-green waters of the Dead Sea serve as a backdrop for this gorgeous oasis in Israel.

The word “*camphire*” refers to the *cypress tree*. Some translate it to mean “*henna flowers*” that are the color of the cypress blooms. The cypress tree commonly grows in Palestine and Turkey. It is as beautiful to the sight as it is to the sense of smell. The bark of the tree is a beautiful, dark brown color with light green foliage, and a mixture of

white and yellow blossoms. These blossoms grow in clusters and provide the passer-by with a beautiful aroma. Many women in Israel gather clusters of these fragrant flowers and carry them close to their bosom, or display them in their homes to freshen the air.

We are reminded that *myrrh* characterizes Christ. Wise men came from the East to bring the Christ child gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh at His birth. *Myrrh* depicts suffering. The Lord Jesus was familiar with sorrow and grief. He knew suffering during His ministry. He had little possessions. He had no place to lay His head. He lived a life of servitude in ministry to others. Religious leaders relentlessly tried to find fault in Him, but none could be found. The Pharisees and Sadducees conspired to have Him put to death for fear He would expose them. Judas Iscariot, a disciple of Jesus, betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a female slave. Arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was taken to the house of the Annas, then Caiaphas, then to Herod, and finally to Pilate. He was ridiculed, beaten, given a mock trial, and finally crucified between two common thieves.

The prophets prophesied his sorrow and suffering in the years before. Listen to the words of Isaiah as he described the sufferings and sorrows of Christ:

“He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:3-5).

As the Shulamite kept the bundle close to her bosom, so should believers keep Christ close to their hearts! From morning till night, He deserves the preeminence. As the Shulamite maintained a memento of her beloved, let us remember God’s goodness and grace toward us. This is the admonition of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians, *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK on these things”* (Philippians 4:8).

Notice two other aspects of the Shulamite's description of her beloved – he is both *beautiful* and *fragrant*. What a *foreshadowing* of Christ! There was nothing ugly or disfigured about Him! The description of the shepherd beautifully portrays Christ - “*My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet, yea, HE IS ALTOGETHER LOVELY. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem*” (Song of Solomon 5:9-16).

I read a story of two men having a discussion about peculiarities. The first man made the statement, “You know, we all have our peculiarities.” The other man replied, “I don't believe that. I don't think I have any peculiarities.” The first man said, “All right, let me ask you a question. Do you stir your coffee with your right hand or with your left hand?” He answered, “I stir it with my right hand.” “There,” he said triumphantly, “that's your peculiarity. Most people use a spoon!” It does not take long to find imperfections and peculiarities in other people, but I dare say it is impossible to find fault with Christ. The Jewish religious leaders tried, but when Jesus stood before Pilate, he confessed, “*I find no fault in him.*” How could he? Christ Jesus had no faults!

As we read the Shulamite's reflections, we cannot help but notice the shepherd was the object of her affections. Thoughts of him consumed her every waking moment. Such it is when a person begins their life anew in Christ. They are consumed with spiritual matters! They willingly tell others about Jesus. They read their Bible, they pray, they attend church regularly, but too often the case, some lose their enthusiasm over time. Their fire dwindles, and spiritual thoughts are replaced by temporal. Friends, this does not have to happen! God wants us to enjoy His fullness every day. One reason why many saints are weak and anemic is because they have no joy. God's Word says, “*The joy of the Lord is our strength*” (Nehemiah 8:10). They have *forgotten* how God reached down in tender loving mercy and grace and pulled them out of the pit of sin.

This is exactly what happened in the Church of Ephesus (Revelation 3:1-7). They had *left* their first love. Once these saints had been faithful, fearful, and fruitful, but over the process of time, they had grown cold and insensitive; they got caught up in the cares of the world. In order to restore fellowship, Christ instructed them to do three (3) things: “*Remember...Repent...and Repeat thy first works!*” (Revelation 2:5). Those who are saved have a loving High Priest, Jesus Christ. He understands your infirmities. He knows your weaknesses. He implores you to come boldly to the throne of grace to find help in time of need (Hebrews 4:15-16). He beckons you, “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls*” (Matthew 11:28-29).

1:15 *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.*

In this verse we find Solomon flirting with the beautiful, young Shulamite. He comments on her *fairness* and the purity of her *eyes*. Doves' eyes are an emblem of *chastity* and *constancy*. The eyes of this young maiden were so beautiful and innocent that Solomon could not resist them.

A person's eyes reveal much about their character. Law enforcement officials have made a study of people's eyes to develop techniques in interrogating suspects. A careful examination of a person's eyes can be used to determine whether a person is telling the truth or lying.

1:16 *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.*

17 *The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.*

The Shulamite does not acknowledge Solomon's advances. Instead, she again floods her mind with thoughts of her beloved, “*Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant.*” How skillfully she employs this process to avoid temptation! She will not even consider Solomon's seductions for fear that she might be unfaithful.

What a wonderful lesson for us to learn! God's Word exhorts us to avoid temptation at all costs! Temptation itself is not sin, but temptation leads to sin. Christ was tempted, yet Jesus "*knew no sin*" (2 Corinthians 5:21). If we allow ourselves to dwell on temptation long enough, our flesh is prone to yield to it. Sin begins in the mind as temptation. By thinking about the temptation, it makes its way to our heart, and sin is a *matter of the heart*. The heart is described as "*deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...*" (Jeremiah 17:9). Proverbs 4:23 reads, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*"

Paul warned believers, "*Neither give place to the devil*" (Ephesians 4:27). As Christians, we must remember that we are in spiritual warfare. Paul taught the Ephesians that the flesh and the Spirit are vehemently opposed to one another. "*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*" (Galatians 5:17).

I once heard a man say that his daughter would often ask to do something or go somewhere. Sometimes he would say, "No, you can't go there or do that." Once she asked, "Why not? Don't you trust me?" He replied, "It's not that I don't trust *you*, darling. I don't trust *your flesh*! As a matter of fact, I don't trust *my flesh*!"

When temptations arise, we should follow the Shulamite's example and set our thoughts upon the things of God. Paul wrote, "*Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*" (Philippians 4:5-8).

She thinks of his "*fairness*." Is Christ, our Beloved, not also "*fair*"? Augustine said of Christ, "*He is fair in heaven, fair in the earth; fair in the virgin's womb, fair in the arms of His parents, fair in the miracles, fair in His stripes...fair in laying down His life, fair in receiving it again; fair on the cross, fair in the sepulchre.*" Yes, Christ is fairer than all!

The Shulamite does not stop with these thoughts only; but she ponders his “pleasantness” as well. Have you ever considered the *pleasantness* of Christ? The word “pleasant” means much more than our English language suggests. It literally denotes a “soothing provided by melodious refrains.” When Saul was king of Israel, he often called for boy David to pluck the strings of his harp to soothe his troubled and tormented mind. When David spoke of his beloved friend, Jonathan, the son of King Saul, he said, “I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me...” (2 Samuel 1:26). Our Lord Jesus Christ can soothe the tormented soul. He can speak, “Peace be still” to the most troubled heart! He is the Prince of Peace, and He desires to speak peace to your heart by giving you a “peace that passeth understanding.”

Next, the Shulamite anticipates the place they planned to dwell together. Notice their bed is “green”, implying a pastoral setting. Their home would be in the country. Their dwelling place would be on a bed of *green grass*, with *cedar* beams and *fir branches* for their roof. Notice also that the Shulamite does not designate the dwelling place as “his” or “mine”. Rather, she refers to it as “ours”, denoting their mutual ownership. The same is true in the relationship between the Christ and believers.

Christ is the *Bridegroom*, and the Church is His *Bride*. Every believer is part of the Body of Christ, and we are both heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17). The principle of mutual ownership between husbands and wives is taught in 1 Peter 3:7 - “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life...”. Matthew Henry wrote, “Everything in the covenant of grace (on which foot all their treaties are carried) is very firm, very fine, and very fragrant.”

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

This is one of the most familiar verses in the Song of Solomon, yet it is one of the most misunderstood. It has been used repeatedly in poetry and hymnody in reference to Jesus Christ. However, as we investigate the *context* of this verse, we conclude that it is actually spoken by the Shulamite of *herself*. Remember the hermeneutical principle of

interpretation. There can be many *applications* for a passage of Scripture; but there can be only one *interpretation*.

We admit that many great commentators have interpreted this verse to refer to Christ. Many of these same theologians have written wonderful expositions. However, while we respect their great contributions to biblical exposition, we must respectfully disagree with their *interpretation* of this verse. As we have stated, we maintain there is a *three-person view* of the Song - *Solomon*, the *Shulamite*, and the *shepherd*. We do not believe that the king and the shepherd represent the same person, as those who hold a *two-person view*. In the *three-person view*, Solomon is a type of *tempter*. The Shulamite is a type of *faithful remnant* that Jehovah wanted Israel to be. The shepherd is a type of *Jehovah*, to whom the Shulamite was faithful and devoted.

This statement made by the Shulamite in Song of Solomon 2:1 is simply a continuation of her previous protestations of her unworthiness and humility. She cannot understand her circumstances. Why does her shepherd love her so much? Why is King Solomon so attracted to her? She humbly compares herself to the “*rose of Sharon*” and the “*lily of the valleys*.”

To fully appreciate these statements, we must understand the flowers used as metaphors. Neither of these flowers is a cultivated flower. Both the *rose* and the *lily* are common, wild anemones. The Shulamite testifies of her own unworthiness by calling herself the “*rose of Sharon*” and the “*lily of the valley*.” By these comparisons she acknowledges that she is unworthy to receive the blessings she has known with her beloved. She knows that he is *fair* and *pleasant*. She realizes his worth, but she does not comprehend her own.

As New Testament saints, we were saved only after we acknowledged our own inabilities and infirmities. We recognized our unworthiness and sinfulness, but by grace we repented, received forgiveness of sins, and became the sons of God (1 John 3:1). The very moment we were saved, we became God’s “*workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10). God not only saves, but He sanctifies (sets apart). God desires all the saved to “*be conformed to the image of his Son*” (Romans 8:29). Saints are exhorted to live righteously in this present, evil world. Saints are exhorted to be *light* in the midst of

darkness; to demonstrate *hope* where there is *hopelessness*; to exhibit *love* where there is *hatred*; and to proclaim the glorious gospel of *life* where there is *death*.

While the primary interpretation of this verse reveals the humility of the Shulamite, there are many applications that can be made in regard to Christ as well. Let us examine six (6) reasons why Christ may also be compared to the “*rose of Sharon*”.

When visitors arrive to Israel from the west, they will see the beautiful blue-green waters along the Mediterranean coast. The coastline appears painted with bright, white sand. Beyond the Mediterranean coastline is the Carmel Mountain range with its lush, green vegetation. Between this range of mountains and western seacoast is a valley called Sharon. It is one of the most beautiful valleys in the world. The Valley of Sharon is blanketed with beautiful, wild, red roses called the “*roses of Sharon*.” It is these magnificent flowers used by the Shulamite. Christ can also be compared to the “*rose of Sharon*”.

- ***The Excellence of the Roses of Sharon***

Like the excellent flowers along the coast of Israel, Christ is excellent as well! He is excellent because He is the “eternal Son of the eternal Father.” In all of secular history, there are little more than a few chapters written about Jesus, yet most of the civilized world has heard of His name. Like the *roses of Sharon*, the world does not recognize His excellence, yet it still exists!

- ***The Redness of Color of the Roses of Sharon***

The Word of God refers to Christ by the color *red* more than any other color. The red *blood* of Christ is the only remedy for sin. The precious *blood* of Christ is the only means of our redemption (1 Peter 1:18-22). There is no other atonement; no other means to obtain entrance into Heaven (Acts 4:12).

- ***The Fragrance of the Roses of Sharon***

Like the fragrant, red roses in the Valley of Sharon, Christ too is a “*sweet smelling savour*.” The sweetness of His sacrifice reached all the way to the Father. In Bulgaria there is a valley of roses said to be so fragrant that anyone

who walks through its beds of flowers will smell of their odor for days. Can those you come into contact with detect the sweet smelling aroma of Christ in you?

- ***The Roses of Sharon Are Planted by God***

It is said that no man planted the roses of Sharon. They are not cultivated, yet they bloom year after year. Christ had no earthly father. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, His mother a virgin. He was fashioned in the form of sinful man, yet without sin. The purpose of His incarnation was to become our substitute in death as the Lamb of God. His coming manifested the grace of God in bringing salvation (Titus 2:11).

- ***The Roses of Sharon Have Been Trampled Under Foot of Man***

Throughout the centuries, many wars have been waged in Palestine. Army after army has plodded through the Valley of Sharon en route to battle, trampling under foot these beautiful, red, fragrant flowers, yet the roses of Sharon continue to bloom. In comparison, many tyrants have attempted over the past 2,000 years to trample under foot the very name of Jesus, yet the cause of Christ continues! Likewise, millions of His followers have been persecuted and killed for their testimony of faith, yet the Church lives to fight the good fight of faith. Truly, our Saviour and Lord is like the rose of Sharon!

- ***The Roses of Sharon Are Free for the Taking***

Tourists may go to the Valley of Sharon and pluck the beautiful, fragrant roses freely. No laws prohibit a person from enjoying these flowers that grow wildly in the region. They are *accessible*; they are *abundant*; and they are *free*! Does this not perfectly depict Christ? Friend, Jesus Christ has an infinite supply of grace for you! He is readily accessible! Whosoever may come and partake of His grace freely! There is no person so vile He cannot save! There are no signs posted, “Keep Out!” Like the roses of Sharon, Christ is free for the asking! Believers should be ready to speak as “ambassadors of Christ”. Peter wrote, “*be*

ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you for a reason of the hope which is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

In Song of Solomon 2:1 the Shulamite also says of herself, *“I am the lily of the valleys.”* There is some debate about which flower this means. It most likely refers to a flower found in the Valley of Esdraelon. There are many gorgeous, decorative flowers throughout Israel, but in this valley there is a flower called the *iris*. The *iris* grows wildly, and like the rose of Sharon, it is also depicts the character of Christ. The *iris* is a simple, humble plant. Paul wrote of the *humility* of Jesus in Philippians 2:5-8 – *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he HUMBLLED himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* Both the stately *Rose of Sharon* and the humble *Lily of the Valley* are types of Christ.

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

Upon hearing the Shulamite describe herself in such humility, Solomon tries to arouse her by saying, *“As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”* Obviously, Solomon sought this opportunity to convince the Shulamite that he loved her. He compares his love for her by the comparison of a lily among thorns. This simile intimates how lovely he thought her to be. By this comparison Solomon meant that her beauty made the appearance of other women in his palace seem as common as thorns.

Bonar commented on the lily in the following manner: *“Close by these lilies there grew several of the thorny shrubs of the desert; but above them rose the lily, spreading out its fresh green leaf as a contrast to the dingy verdure of these prickly shrubs- ‘like the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.’”*

Jesus too can be described as the *“lily among thorns”* in comparison to all other gods. There is none like Him. Since God desires others to see Christ in us, the hope of glory, believers should also reflect Christ’s purity, humility, and beauty to the world.

This is what Paul meant when he wrote, “*For whom he (God) did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren*” (Romans 8:29). Every child of God should reflect the image of Christ. Do others see you as a “*lily among the thorns*” of the world?

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.*

Once more the Shulamite engages in the thoughts of her beloved shepherd. In soliloquy she speaks of his loveliness. *First*, she contrasts him to other men - “*As the apple tree among the trees of the wood – so is my beloved among the sons.*” Her beloved is the most desirable among men. Not even a king could persuade this young maiden to lose her resolve.

The figure of an “*apple tree among the trees of the wood*” also provides us with a vivid type of Christ. Apple trees are not grown in Israel because of the arid climate in the region. Their fruit would not be as juicy as those grown in cooler, more precipitous climates. The Shulamite most likely refers to type of *citron tree* in the region, possibly an *orange* or *lemon* tree. Such citron trees thrive in Palestine. Visitors of Israel are astonished at the citrus fruit in the country, and especially in the vicinity of Jericho. The produce grown there is often abnormally large, and considered to be the most delectable in the world.

Secondly, the Shulamite compares her beloved to the shade supplied by these citron trees. Notice the latter half of verse 3, “*I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.*” Is it possible that Solomon considered his father’s Psalm 34 as he penned these words? David wrote, “*This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing*” (Psalm 34:6-10).

God's children should desire such fellowship with Him. The Lord is our *rock*, our *refuge*, and our *bulwark* in time of trouble. Under His wings we find *refuge*, *comfort*, and *security*. Isaiah 32:2 says of the Lord, "...a shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Why do we often forfeit the blessings of such sweet fellowship? Why do we struggle and fret when the Lord compels us to "*cast our cares upon Him*"?

We find that the widow Ruth was rewarded for her faithfulness and trust in the Lord, "*The LORD recompense thy work, and full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust*" (Ruth 2:12). David knew the benefit of trusting in God as he prayed, "*Show thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about*" (Psalm 17:7-9).

Christ spoke to the people of Jerusalem before He was crucified saying, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" (Matthew 23:37).

Are you trusting in the shelter of His wings? Why not receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour right now? Simply bow your head and call upon Him, "*Dear Lord, I confess I am a sinner. I believe in my heart that Jesus died for my sins. I believe that He was buried, and on the third day rose from the grave. I repent of my sins and receive Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour. Come into my heart and save me by your grace. Thank you for saving me. In Jesus' name I pray.... Amen.*"

2:4a *He brought me to the banqueting house...*

The psalmist David wrote in Psalm 139:6, "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*" This is the way this verse affects me! Historically, Israel had committed spiritual adultery. They had engaged in worldliness, idolatry, and heathen customs. The Song of Solomon was inspired by God to encourage the Jews to spiritual fidelity. God wanted Israel to acknowledge their sin, repent, and serve Him as His representatives to the world.

By application, the Christian life is a life filled with temptations, trials, and seductions. Christians are daily enticed to be unfaithful to God. We are involved in a spiritual battle, and it is essential that we *“put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”* (Ephesians 6:10-18). Only as we yield ourselves to the Lord can we have victory over the devil. *“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4).

Soon the Lord will come to take His Church to a place He has gone to prepare (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The heavenly *Marriage of the Lamb* will occur, and we will enjoy blessings untold as His Bride. *“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God”* (Revelation 19:6-9).

After the marriage, we will celebrate the *Marriage Supper* for a thousand years. Our blessed Redeemer will *“bring us to the banqueting house”*. It is no wonder the songwriter wrote,

*“What a day that will be, when my Jesus I shall see,
And I look upon His face; the One who saved me by His grace.
And forever I shall be with the One who died for me,
What a day, glorious day that will be.”*

Yes, praise the Lord, what a glorious day that will be! The Shulamite says, *“He brought me to the banqueting house!”* Friend, you can make yourself ready for God’s *“banqueting house”* this very moment by asking Jesus Christ into your heart. When Christ comes for His *Bride*, only those who have been *“born-again”* will be *“caught up”* to meet Him. Those who reject Christ will be damned to an eternal lake of fire, separated forever without a second chance of salvation (John 3:36).

Listen to the words of Jesus Christ as He speaks -

- *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15)*
- *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16-17)*
- *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)*
- *The thief cometh not, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10)*
- *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25-26)*
- *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3)*

Others also compelled the lost to come to Christ in order that they might be saved. The beloved Apostle John wrote,

- *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36)*

The Apostle Paul wrote,

- *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10)*

- *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”*
(Romans 10:13)

Christ compels all men everywhere to come to His *“banqueting house.”* The supper of salvation is offered to *“whosoever will.”* This supper is full, free, and forever! When Christ was brought to the temple as an infant, an old man named Simeon saw Him. Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and said, *“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel”* (Luke 2:25-33). Simeon realized that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, and the Anointed One sent from God the Father to provide salvation for all men.

Upon discovering her favor of God, Mary, mother of Jesus, proclaimed, *“My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away”* (Luke 1:46-53).

The Shulamite earlier implored her shepherd, *“Draw me, we will run after thee”* (Song of Solomon 1:4). Loving Christ with all of your heart always results in a desire to fellowship with Him. How is your desire? Do you long to commune with Christ? He desires to fellowship with you. James 4:8-10 says, *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”*

2:4band his banner over me was love.

If the first part of this verse did not stir your heart to rejoice, the last half certainly will! What a wealth of doctrine is found in this fantastic verse! “*He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.*” Let us examine three (3) main features of the banner:

- ***The Purpose of the Banner***

A banner is used for many different reasons. Armies use banners to identify themselves; corporations and businesses use banners to market, and schools use banners to excite their teams and fans. The Shulamite says that her beloved’s banner was *love*. Can we not also say the same of the banner of God? John writes, “*For God so loved the world...*” (John 3:16). Paul writes, “*But God commendeth his love toward us...*” (Romans 5:8). John writes, “*Behold, what manner of the love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God*” (1 John 3:1). The Lord’s banner is written in *love*. The Word reveals Jesus as the manifestation of His *love*. It declares God to be *love*; and it stirs the hearts of men because of *love*! Truly, God’s banner over us is “*love*”.

- ***The Person of the Banner***

The Shulamite revealed the Person of the banner. This was not simply a banner or even one of many banners. The banner spoken of by the Shulamite is specifically *his* banner. There was something quite familiar about *his* banner. The shepherd’s banner of love emanated from his heart to hers. God’s banner of love emanates *from* His heart *toward* mankind in the Person of His dear Son. “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

- ***The Placement of the Banner***

Notice a third feature of the banner. The Shulamite reports that the banner was *placed over* her. The shepherd’s love for the Shulamite was not camouflaged or concealed. It was no secret how he felt about her. Everyone could easily see his fondness for the Shulamite. The same is true of God’s banner of love. The Lord

openly and publicly displayed His love for the whole world to see. Jesus was lifted high upon the cross of Calvary on the most sacred of Jewish holy days. All who passed Golgotha on that Passover day could observe Him hanging on the cross.

Paul wrote to the Romans, “*Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*” God has never attempted to hide His love. Jesus told of His impending death to both His disciples and the religious leaders in Israel. Before He was arrested, beaten, falsely tried, and crucified, Christ expressed His great love for sinful man. His banner of love flew high for all to see. May I submit that His banner of love is still flying just as high today! Oh, how He loves you and me!

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

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

In these two verses we find further evidence of the love between the Shulamite and the shepherd. The Shulamite admits that she is “*love-sick*”. Have you ever missed someone so much that you became physically ill? When my wife and I were dating, she went to Myrtle Beach with friends after her high school graduation. Though Cosie was gone only a week, it seemed like forever to an 18-year-old boy! One day my mother noticed I had lost my appetite, and I always had a big appetite! Mom quickly diagnosed that I was “*sick of love*” (lovesick). She told me everything would be all right, and that Cosie would be home soon. How embarrassing for a teenage boy to admit that he was lovesick!

Well, this Shulamite is not afraid to admit she is sick of love. She requests the daughters of Jerusalem to attend to her. She says, “*stay me with flagons and comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.*” Stress takes a great toll upon the body! When a person experiences stress for any length of time, physical problems can occur. Many people experience insomnia, loss of appetite, and body aches. The Shulamite requests *flagons* (ointments) to revive her and *apples* (citrons) to strengthen her.

As we have stated, there are many practical lessons for the New Testament saints in the Song of Solomon. One such lesson to learn concerns the priorities we maintain in

life. When spiritual matters become less important than the temporal matters, it is a sure indication that something is wrong with the heart. Paul's greatest desire was *not* to win souls, but rather to "*know Christ.*" Our most earnest desire should be for a more intimate and personal relationship with Christ. David wrote in Psalm 119:20, "*My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.*" In Psalm 119:81 he wrote, "*My soul fainteth for thy salvation; but I hope in thy word.*"

Another important lesson is to realize that the Shulamite required the help of others during her "*sickness*". Believers draw strength from other believers. The writer of Hebrews wrote, "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting (encouraging) one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day (Christ's return) approaching*" (Hebrews 10:25).

During her meditation, the Shulamite thinks of a time when her shepherd held her in his arms. She muses of how he gently held her with his "*left hand under her head, and his right hand embracing her.*" What beautiful, lyrical doggerel we find in this Song of Solomon. What a tender depiction of our loving Savior who vowed, "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" Oh, the rapture of such a rapport with the Lord of Hosts! This was what Jehovah wanted with Israel, and this is what He desires of His saints today. His eyes are ever fixed upon us, and His ears are ever open.

Psalm 11:4 reads, "*The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men.*" Psalm 34:15 declares, "*The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.*" How comforting to know that our Beloved Lord is always willing and able to hear our cries in such difficult and trying times as these.

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.*

On three separate occasions in the Song of Solomon (2:7; 3:5; 8:4) we find this particular "*charge*" issued by the Shulamite to the "*daughters of Jerusalem.*" Obviously, the Holy Spirit places great importance on this statement. The "*charge*"

constitutes the “*keynote*” of the book. It is the principal lesson God wanted Israel to learn. What does it suggest? What is its meaning? What value does it have for us today?

The Shulamite’s “*charge*” is the equivalent of a military officer issuing a command to a subordinate. We find many such charges in the Word of God. In Jude 21 Jude, the brother of Jesus, gave a charge to the brethren when he wrote, “*Keep yourselves in the love of God.*” What did Jude mean by this statement? How can one “*keep themselves in the love of God?*” Is it not true that God unconditionally loves mankind? According to John 3:16, “*God so loved the world.*” Romans 5:8 states, “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” If God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son, then *how* or *why* is it necessary to “*keep ourselves in the love of God?*”

An illustration might be beneficial to understand this principle of truth. Let us consider the hot rays of a summer sun. Whenever the sun is beating down upon us, and its rays seem insufferable, we may choose to get “*out of the sun*”. We might go inside a cool, air-conditioned house, or we may choose the shade of a tree, or perhaps open an umbrella to shield ourselves from the sun’s rays. Though it seems that we are “*out of the sun*”, the fact remains that the sun is still shining. Our actions have not stopped the sun’s rays from shining, but we no longer sense the affects of the sun’s rays when we block them out.

Now imagine the sun’s rays represent the *love of God*. Whenever we allow sin in our lives, we block out the *affects* of His love upon our life. We no longer *sense* the rays of His love, yet His love still shines as brightly as ever. Our *fellowship* with God is severed, but our *relationship* remains the same. God still loves us, but we are unable to sense His love because of unconfessed sin. When Jude says, “*Keep yourselves in the love of God,*” he is exhorting us to “*guard*” ourselves from anything that hinders us from enjoying the affect of God’s love in our lives.

The Shulamite instructs the “*daughters of Jerusalem*” that there is a “*time for love*”, but it should not be “*aroused by carnal means.*” Solomon had repeatedly attempted to stir love within the Shulamite by carnal means. There is a distinct difference between *love* and *lust*. Lust was a major problem during Solomon’s reign. The Jews had lusted after the things of the world, and were guilty of spiritual adultery. This lesson is

emphasized repeatedly throughout the Song of Solomon. By illustrating the Shulamite's love of the shepherd, God provided a model of spiritual fidelity. The Shulamite was firmly committed to her beloved.

W. Twyman Williams writes, "Love is not a thing to be bought or forced or pretended, but a thing to come spontaneously, to be given freely and sincerely." William MacDonald wrote, "If Israel had followed this simple rule, it would not have been unfaithful to Jehovah." This "*charge*" is given not once, but three different times. It is truly the "*keynote*" of the Song of Solomon.

Chapter 2

The Song of the Shulamite Song of Solomon 2:8-17

- 2:8 The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.
- 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.
- 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 vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.
- 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.
- 15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.
- 16 My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.
- 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.

- 2:8 *The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*
- 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.*

Have you ever daydreamed? Have you ever stopped in the middle of the day, just for a moment, to ponder about something? Certainly everybody has done this on occasion. In this passage of the Song of Solomon, the Shulamite daydreams about her courtship with her shepherd. She recalls both the *sound of his voice* and the *sight of his coming*. She recounts with exuberance the great zeal in which he approached her. These

recollections cause her to extol his person in melodious rapture – “*The Song of the Shulamite.*” Let us glean some lessons from her song.

First, the Shulamite sings praises unto the *voice* of the shepherd! There is something special about his voice. His voice immediately arrests her attention. The sound of his voice demands that she stop and listen. It is “*the voice of my beloved!*” says the Shulamite. It is interesting to note that the shepherd’s voice *precedes his appearing*. As she hears his voice, she is compelled to look for him whom her heart adores. What a beautiful foreshadowing of Christ! When He comes for His Bride, His voice will also *precede His appearing*. Paul wrote, “*For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout...*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). His *voice* will no doubt arrest our attention as we are translated “*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye to meet the Lord in the air*” (1 Corinthians 15:51).

Secondly, the Shulamite sings of his *coming*. Her beloved “*cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*” There is such enthusiasm portrayed by his approach. He does not come *dutifully*, but rather with great *desire!* Oh, how the Shulamite’s heart pounds with every step he takes. He comes for her with the energy and excitement of a “*roe or young hart.*” He passionately approaches her with the grace of a gazelle! Friends, such will be the manner of Christ’s *coming for His Bride*, the Church. The Lord Jesus is right now awaiting the Father words, “*Son, go get your bride!*”

Thirdly, the Shulamite sees him standing behind the wall of her home, looking into her window, revealing himself through the lattice. These two lovers yearned to commune in unbridled love. When the shepherd came for the Shulamite, she alone saw him! When Jesus Christ returns for His bride, only the *saved* will be see Him (1 Corinthians 15:51-58). The world will not see Christ until He comes at the end of the seven years of tribulation. At that time, Christ will come riding upon a “*white horse with eyes of flaming fire, crown upon His head and a vesture dipped in blood*” (Revelation 19:11-17). At that time, those who have survived the Tribulation will see Him. Listen to John’s description of the Second Coming of Christ - “*Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him*” (Revelation 1:7).

What caused the Shulamite to daydream of her beloved? She thirsted for him as “*a hart panteth after the water brook*” (Psalm 42:1). We have never seen Jesus with our eyes, yet we believe. In Romans Chapters 1 and 2, Paul says that there are two distinct evidences of God’s existence – *creation* and *conscience*. As we look at God’s wondrous creation, one cannot help but be in awe of His power and majesty. As a shepherd, David often fixed his eyes upon the marvelous handiwork of God’s creation. As David gazed into the heavens, he was compelled to ask a question, “*O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens....When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?*” (Psalm 8:1; 3-4).

Our *conscience* proves there is a God because His law is written in our hearts, enabling us to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. When a person commits sin, it is their conscience that condemns them. It is true that the consciences of some are not as sensitive as other. This is because their conscience has been “*seared with a hot iron*” (1 Timothy 4:2) by continual rebellion. It has been said, “*If your conscience does not condemn you, you ought to condemn your conscience.*”

2:10 *My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

As the Shulamite continues her daydreaming, she recalls a time when her shepherd beckoned unto her, “*Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away...Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away*” (Song of Solomon 2:10; 13). Such words remind us of what Jesus taught His disciples (John 14:1-3). He taught them about the doctrine of the *rapture*. There are four (4) passages that clearly teach this doctrine. Let us briefly look at them.

- **John 14:1-3**

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I WILL

COME AGAIN, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

This is one of the most wonderful passages in the Word of God. The promise of our Lord’s return is called “*the blessed hope*”. However, it was not until after Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection that His disciples comprehended what He meant. They had hoped that He would deliver them from Roman tyranny, but this was not the reason Jesus had come.

The reason for Christ’s First Advent is clearly defined for us by the Apostle Paul – “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (1 Timothy 1:15). The only way He could save sinful man was to become our *Substitutionary Sacrifice*. He was literally born to die a death He did not deserve. He was born without sin, lived without sin, yet He bore the sins of sinful men, nailing them to the cross. By His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus Christ provided salvation for all.

Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul as he wrote, “*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*” (Galatians 4:4-5). “*For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight*” (Colossians 1:19-22). “*He is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*” (Romans 1:4).

His disciples were afraid when Jesus was arrested and taken away by soldiers. They were fearful for their lives, so they hid themselves. They all forsook Him and fled (Mark 14:50). Only a few attended His crucifixion. Most who witnessed His death hated Him. They mocked Him, spat upon Him, and taunted Him for not saving Himself. But even during the shame and reproach of the cross, Christ never ceased to love them. As He suffered the pain and

humiliation of the cross, He prayed unto the Father to forgive them, excusing their ignorance for what they did (Luke 23:34).

Finally, Jesus bowed His head, commended His spirit unto the Father, and gave up the Ghost. No man killed Him; He submitted Himself willingly to die for sinful men. After He was laid in a borrowed tomb, He rose from the grave three days later as He said He would! He remained on earth for forty days, and was seen by over five hundred people. On the day of His Ascension, atop the Mount of Olives, He instructed His disciples to tarry for the promise of the Father. This promise referred to the *Comforter* or *Holy Ghost*. He told them that they would “*receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon them, and that they shall be witnesses in all Judaea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth*” (Acts 1:4-8).

Then Jesus ascended into the clouds and out of their sight (Acts 1:9). While the disciples gazed up into the heavens, two men in white apparel appeared unto them. They said, “*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into the heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven*” (Acts 1:10-11). What a picture of the *rapture* of the Church. This next great event on God’s prophetic calendar could happen any time. Christians are exhorted to live as if His return would be today. One day soon “*This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner...*”.

- **1 Corinthians 15:51-57**

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality, So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is

the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In this passage, Paul reveals the “*mystery of the church*” that was formerly concealed by God. Saul (Paul) was born a Jew in the tribe of Benjamin, but on the road to Damascus, the Lord Jesus appeared to him, and he was gloriously saved! God changed Saul’s name to Paul, and commissioned him to be a minister to the Gentiles. Today, God is calling out a people unto Himself; a people made up of both Jews and Gentiles who have obeyed the Gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Though every child of God is a part of the “body of Christ”, the whole body has not yet been *collectively* assembled. The “*dead in Christ*” are today “*present with the Lord.*” Those who are alive and remain are instructed to tell others about Jesus Christ. We are exhorted to “*hold forth the Word of Life,*” to be a “*light shining in a dark place.*” When Christ returns for His Bride, He will come as the shepherd, “*like a roe or a young hart*”, and for the first time the entire body of Christ will be assembled together.

When that time comes, notice the events that will transpire. All of the “*dead in Christ*” will be resurrected. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, their bodies will be raised from their graves and transformed into a glorified state. Those who are “*alive and remain*” will also be changed and “*caught up*” together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. A “*shout*”, a “*voice*”, and a “*trumpet*” will precede these events. What a glorious, blessed hope we have in Christ Jesus our Lord!

- **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall

rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The Thessalonians were looking for the *imminent return* of Christ, and they were concerned about their loved ones who had already died. They did not understand what had happened to them, where they were, or what their future held. Paul explained the *rapture* to them. He told them that Christians who were still alive would not prevent the "*dead in Christ*" from being resurrected. Death is not the end, but only a separation of the soul and spirit from the body. The bodies of the "*dead in Christ*" will be resurrected and changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52). Listen to Paul's clear instructions:

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). It is important to understand that Paul was instructing saints, as evidenced by the term "*brethren*". He wanted them to fully understand the doctrine of the rapture. The word, "*asleep*", refers to the death of believers. This is not "soul sleep", as some have falsely taught. It speaks of the *physical bodies* of the "*dead in Christ*". Their bodies are dormant, lying in wait, for the glorious resurrection that will occur at His return. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by saying, "*... sorrow not, even as others that have no hope.*" The teaching of Christ's imminent return is a blessed doctrine, and one that should cause all believers to rejoice with hope and assurance. Christ has gone to prepare a place for them that love God (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Paul continues in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 by stating, "*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*" This is evidence that those who have been saved and have died are presently with the Lord Jesus Christ! The Lord cannot "*bring them back*" if they are not presently "*with Him*"! The condition for their being with Christ is "*believing the gospel of Christ*". There is no other way a sinner can be saved. (John 14:6; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 4:12).

In the remaining verses of 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul writes, *“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words”* (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18). Believers should find great comfort in knowing that Jesus is coming for His Bride soon!

- **Revelation 4:1-5**

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”

Undoubtedly John witnessed *“in spirit”* the rapture of the Church as God gave him revelation of *“things to come”*. He saw *“a door open in heaven”*, he heard a *“voice as a trumpet which said, Come up hither”*, and he saw *“a throne set in heaven, and the one who sat upon the throne”*. The Beloved Disciple John witnessed all of these wondrous sights as he was inspired by God to write the Book of the Revelation.

As the Shulamite dwells upon her beloved’s voice calling unto her, *“Rise up,”* we see many similarities to the revelation of John. How exciting it will be to

finally know the perfect rest that will be ours! No wonder John ends his prophesy with this prayer, “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*” (Revelation 22:20).

- 2:11** *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 vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

The shepherd continues calling the Shulamite, “*For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; 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; 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*” (2:11-13). The phrase, “*the winter is past*” suggests a long period of anticipation endured by the shepherd. He compares his anticipation to one waiting for spring, a time when beautiful flowers begin to bloom and birds return from their winter lodgings to brighten the day with their songs. The freshness and resonance of springtime is rejuvenating after a long, cold winter. Spring is a type of *resurrection*, when the dead begin to come alive once more.

As the Shulamite recalls his wonderful words, no doubt she is enlivened with the hope of his coming. One day the Church will also hear our Beloved shout, “*Come up hither,*” and then all of the toils and troubles of life will be over. Believers will be changed as our mortal bodies put on immortality, and our corruption puts on incorruption. No wonder Paul spoke so frequently of Christ’s return for His Bride!

Notice the words of Paul as he wrote the following exhortation to the Romans:

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also,

which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:18-23).

To the Corinthian church Paul wrote the following:

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:7-9).

What blessings await those who know Jesus Christ as Savior! Both Paul and Peter spoke of *“loving His appearing.”* Shortly before his death, Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith near the end of his ministry, *“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that last day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).*

Peter too talked of about our *“lively hope”* to the scattered, suffering saints in Asia Minor, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto the praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:3-9).*

What a glorious day this will be indeed! The rapture of the Church requires no signs. No prophecies must be fulfilled before Jesus comes for the Church. Christ’s return for us is as imminent as the shepherd’s return for the Shulamite! Believers today should be listening for a *sound*, not looking for a *sign*. Do you live with the anticipation

of “*Christ’s coming*”? Does the hope (*anticipation*) of His imminent return compel you to live each day as if it were your last? Are there loved ones you want to see saved before it is too late? Have you told these loved ones about Christ and His return? There may be no more opportunities to share the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus emphasized the urgency of the moment when He said; “*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work*” (John 9:4).

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.*

In this verse we find the shepherd’s reply to the Shulamite. He solicits her to the window. He addresses her as his “*dove*,” and says that she is “*hidden in the clefts of the rock in the secret places of the stairs.*” He yearns to hear her sweet voice. The shepherd speaks of the “*comeliness*” of her visage. What familiarity between these two lovers!

God’s Word affirms, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...*” (2 Timothy 3:16). There is profit for the New Testament saint in this passage as well. Let us make a few applications. *First*, the believer’s *desire* for Christ’s return should be the same as the Shulamite’s desire for her shepherd. Paul wrote, “*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you*” (Philippians 1:21-24). Paul was torn between his desire to depart and be with Christ, which he said was “*far better*”, and his desire to remain on earth. Paul realized that God had a purpose for him yet to fulfill.

The Holy Spirit has gifted every believer to minister in some particular manner (1 Corinthians 12:7-12). Christians are *ambassadors for Christ* (2 Corinthians 5:20). This world is not our *home*; it is our *mission field*. Some saints have been called to *preach*. Others have been given the gift of *helps, administration, teaching, evangelizing*, or some other gift of ministry. Believers need to be sensitive to the *voice* of God. We need to know what God’s will is for our lives, and then do it. Following His will is not necessarily easy, however. Paul told young Pastor Timothy, “*Yea, and all that will live*

godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). There are often many obstacles along our pathways.

One great obstacle is the *flesh*. Paul understood the quandary of the two natures within the believer - the nature of *humanity* and the nature of *divinity*. In Romans Paul taught concerning these two natures within himself. *“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin”* (Romans 7:22-25).

Paul also gave instruction on the warfare between these two natures when he wrote to the Galatians believers, *“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would”* (Galatians 5:16-17).

Throughout the Christian life, believers must continuously *“combat the flesh”* while *“contending for the faith.”* There is no escaping this conflict that wages between the two. The Spirit and the flesh constantly struggle for control of our *“earthen vessels”*. Paul understood this harsh reality and exhorted the Galatians to *“walk in the Spirit”*. If we walk in the Spirit, he says, *“...ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”* (Galatians 5:16). When believers grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, the world will lose its luster. As saints walk in the Spirit, a more intimate, fruitful relationship is enjoyed with Christ. Abiding in Him is the only way to be victorious in contending for the faith.

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

The Shulamite and shepherd are interrupted when her brothers rebuked her. They demand that she get back to work in the vineyards. In Chapter One the Shulamite confessed to the daughters of Jerusalem that her dark skin was the result of working in her family’s vineyards. She said, *“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" (1:6).

Her brothers scolded her for allowing the “*little foxes*” to spoil the “*vines.*” This verse contains some valuable lessons. A farmer may build fences, hedges, or walls to keep “*big foxes*” out of their fields, but there remains the danger of “*little foxes*” creeping in unaware. In like manner, the believer must contend against the “*little foxes*” that creep into our lives. Just as “*little foxes*” spoil “*tender grapes*” of a vineyard, so “*little foxes*” can spoil tender, immature Christians (Ephesians 4:11-15).

Satan knows exactly how to best employ “*little foxes*” in our lives. He does not always attack by mammoth measures. No, the devil is much too subtle. Often he tempts us to compromise our testimony by convincing us to agree that “It’s not that important” or “No one will ever know.” The Word of God affirms that the devil “*is a murderer from the beginning...for he is a liar, and the father of it*” (John 8:44). The devil frequently uses such “sneak attacks” to “*pervert the right ways of God*” (Acts 13:10). Satan is able to “*transform himself into an angel of light*” so that he might deceive and destroy (2 Corinthians 11:14). These attempts of Satan can certainly be compared to the “*little foxes that spoil the vines.*” There is an important verse regarding the subtlety of Satan in our lives – “*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices*” (2 Corinthians 2:11). The fact of the matter is most Christians are ignorant of his devices. They are “*spoiled by the little foxes*” that creep into their spiritual vineyards unaware.

There is an Old Testament story that sheds light on this principle of truth. In Amos 5:19 we read, “*As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.*” This verse speaks of a man who fled from a lion and a bear. He reached what he thought was the safe refuge of his own home. After entering, he leaned against the wall, panting from his race. Inside his own house, a little, undetected snake slithered down the wall and bit his arm. The lesson is simple. While we may be cognizant and careful to guard against the bears and the lions “without”, we should also be cautious of the little serpents “within”.

Our *flesh* can be compared to these “*little serpents*”. Believers are exhorted several times in the Word of God to guard against the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the

eyes, and the pride of life. Not only do the obvious evils present dangers to our spiritual walk, but seemingly insignificant wrongs can be fatal to our testimony as well.

An illustration of this is found in 1 Chronicles 4:10. In the prayer of Jabez, he asked God to save him from himself, “*And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not greive me! And God granted him that which he requested.*” The name of *Jabez* literally means, “*pain; sorrow*”. Jabez prayed that God would save him from “*Jabezing himself*”.

Paul also spoke of his own wretchedness. He cried unto the Lord and said, “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” (Romans 7:24). Why did both Jabez and Paul think of themselves in such a manner? Because they both realized just how depraved mankind truly is. They realized the ever-present danger presented by the flesh. The flesh is like the “*little foxes which spoil the vine.*”

Let us consider one more example of “*little foxes*”. Within the local church there are those who incessantly stir up other members and cause discord among the brethren. Like the “*little foxes which spoil the vine*”, their subtle, and often not so subtle, actions spoil other members like “*tender grapes.*” Some squabble and bicker over the most trivial things! God says that such people that “*sow discord among the brethren*” are an abomination (Proverbs 6:16-19). We must guard against “*little foxes*” that create problems in the church such as jealousy, envy, greed, gossip, bitterness, unforgiving spirit, backbiting, hatred, contention, pride, disrespect, and immorality.

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

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.*

In these last two verses of the second chapter, the Shulamite’s thoughts rest upon the blessedness of her beloved. She boldly asserts, “*My beloved is mine, and I am his*”. What a warm and wonderful relationship these two enjoyed! She uses the pronouns, “*my*” and “*his*” to portray the intimacy of their association. The Shulamite and the shepherd are wholly committed to each other. Nothing discourages their love; not even

the affairs of everyday life. Though the Shulamite had been told by her brothers to get back in the vineyards, she continues to think of her beloved as she does so.

Every child of God is the recipient of an everlasting covenant with Christ. Every Christian may boldly proclaim, *“My beloved is mine, and I am His.”* He was made ours the very instant we placed our faith in Him for our salvation. At that very moment, His precious blood was applied to the door of our heart. Regardless of circumstances of life, we can still rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, to know our relationship with the Lord will never change. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-39). An *eternal union* has been established between Christ and the saints of God.

Writing to the Romans, Paul spoke of the *eternal union* between Christ and believers in his teaching on the doctrine of *justification*. In Romans 5:1 he wrote, *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Paul declared in Romans 5:20, *“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”* Some inquired of Paul, *“If where sin abounds, grace does much more abound, then why not continue in sin, that grace might abound even more?”* (Romans 6:1). Some may argue that those who believe in *eternal security* only attempt to excuse themselves so that they might live as they wish without consequence. This is not true. Paul wrote much and often on this doctrine of eternal security. Paul insisted that the basis of salvation is predicated by the believer’s *“union with Christ.”* If there is no *“union”* then there is no eternal life.

As the Shulamite declares, *“My beloved is mine, and I am his,”* so too can every child of God declare such a relationship with Christ based upon our union with Him. Paul asserts in Romans 6:2-7, *“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”*

Our *eternal union* with Christ began the very moment we were “*baptized into the body of Christ.*” The word *baptism*, used by Paul, implies “*identification,*” not the ordinance of water baptism. In the Old Testament economy, men were *baptized* as a means of *identification*. Priests were *baptized* as a means of *identification*. Even the nation of Israel was “*baptized unto Moses*” (1 Corinthians 10:2). Even in the New Testament, John *baptized* his followers as a means of *identification*. This is the reason Jesus was *baptized* by John. Jesus *identified* with the message of John – “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*”

In Romans 6:2-7 Paul teaches that everything that happened to Christ *physically* in His death, burial, resurrection happens to believers *spiritually* the moment they receive Jesus Christ by faith -

- *First*, believers *identify* with Christ’s *death* when they “*die to self*”, in repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ.
- *Secondly*, believers *identify* with Christ in burial in that they are “*baptized* (plunged, immersed) *into the body of Christ*” the moment they believe on Christ.
- *Thirdly*, believers *identify* with His *resurrection* as they are “*raised in the newness of life*”.

The debt of sin is immediately cancelled. The blood of Jesus Christ is placed to our account. Jesus Christ, our propitiation, satisfies the holiness and righteousness of a just God (1 John 2:1-2). The righteousness of Christ is imputed to we who believe. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote, “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin*” (Romans 6:6-7). This new relationship with Christ is an *eternal union* as Paul explains, “*Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 6:8-11).

Paul continues his argument by asking the question, “*How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*” How can we suffer the wages of sin *again* when Jesus

Christ has already paid the wages in full? This glorious doctrine of the “*new birth*” demands that an *eternal union* be established between Christ and believers. We who were “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:2) have been *quicken*ed (made alive) by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that we shall never die! This is further taught by Jesus when He said, “*I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*” (John 11:25-26).

Our glorious *union* with Christ is the result of God’s grace. We did nothing to deserve it; we can do nothing to keep it. It is God’s grace alone - plus and minus nothing! This does not suggest, however, that the believer is free to live without *consequence* of sin. Paul continues his teaching on this doctrine of justification in Romans 6:12-22 by teaching the need for believers to *yield* to the Holy Spirit so they might be fruitful and productive.

Paul explains that before we were saved we were the “*servants of sin*”; we belonged to our father the devil. Upon receiving Christ by faith, we became “*servants of righteousness*”. The basis for our relationship is the *eternal union* between Jesus Christ and believers. We have been made “*free from sin,*” NOT “*free to sin*”.

Allow me for a few more moments to expound upon one more aspect of our *eternal union* with Christ. One of the most overlooked passages of the Word of God is found in Romans, “*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness*” (Romans 6:17-18). Let us examine four (4) aspects of truths contained in these two verses –

- *First*, Paul states the need for true “*doctrine*” to be delivered. A person must *hear* the Word of God in order to be saved. Romans 10:17 states, “*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”
- *Secondly*, not only is there a need for true doctrine, but a person must “*believe*” that doctrine. A person must not only *hear* truth, but they must also *believe* in the truth of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 15:3-4; John 3:16-18; Romans 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:15).

- *Thirdly*, this belief must be accompanied by *faith*. Romans 10:9-10 states, “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*”
- *Fourthly*, there will be a *definite change* in the believer’s life. A person who has truly exercised faith in Christ will hunger and thirst for righteousness. There will be an evidence of repentance. In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians he wrote, “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Let us now revisit the “*Song of the Shulamite*”. In Song of Solomon 2:16 the Shulamite refers to the shepherd as he who “*feedeth among the lilies.*” She longs for his *nearness*. The Shulamite can find no happiness, peace, or serenity apart from him. The same is true of saints. Believers can never be totally content as long as we are separated from Christ. Paul addressed this dilemma as he wrote the following words to the Philippians believers – “*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you*” (Philippians 1:24).

We are exhorted in God’s Word to set our affections on the things above. Paul wrote, “*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory*” (Colossians 3:1-4). As we set our affections on *things above*, the *things of the earth* will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

The Shulamite sings to her beloved in the hope that he will soon return for her. She cries, “*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.*” Though brokenhearted by their separation, her load is lightened by simply thinking about him. She cries out for him to return when “*the shadows flee away*”. She pleads with him to leap over the

mountains as a young roe or hart. The “*mountains of Bether*” is an interesting play on words. “*Bether*” literally means “*separation*”. The Shulamite’s statement in effect means, “*Come back again sometime in the cool of the evening, when the shadows have flown away. Return unto me with the speed of a young stag over the mountain that separate us.*”

Chapter 3

The Sorrowful Search of the Shulamite

Song of Solomon 3:1-5

- 3:1 By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.
- 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 The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?
- 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.
- 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.

- 3:1 *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.*
- 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 *The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?*

In the third chapter of the Song of Solomon, we find the young maiden enduring a restless night. She is lying upon her bed, vexed in spirit. She cannot sleep. She cries out, "*I sought him, but I found him not*" (3:1). Have you ever awakened with a troubled spirit? Have you ever opened your eyes in the middle of the night and wondered why? Have you ever wished for just a few more minutes of uninterrupted rest? Have you considered that the Holy Spirit is urging you to awake to spend some quiet time with the Lord?

So often the affairs of life thwart us from communing with God. It seems that the devil delights in frustrating us from enjoying the time to study, pray, and worship. Study, prayer, and worship are three of the most important aspects of our spiritual lives; yet they often seem the most neglected.

In order to avoid such interruptions, Jesus often rose up early in the morning to pray. During the day, His ministry attracted multitudes. He was difficult for Him to be alone to pray. David also rose up early for this reason. The psalmist David wrote, “*O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee where I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me*” (Psalm 63:63:1-8). Jesus and David were not the only ones who worshipped in the early morning hours. Isaiah wrote, “*With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will seek thee early...*” (Isa. 26:9).

The Shulamite was not easily dissuaded, however. She rose from her bed and searched for her darling shepherd. When the Spirit of God stirs our heart in the middle of the night, we too ought to rise from our slumber and seek His face! Oh, the blessings we miss when we choose the *pillow* over *prayer*? It is good advice that we follow the Shulamite’s example and rise up.

On this occasion, however, the Shulamite was unsuccessful in her first attempts. The places she sought affected the results of her search. A brief examination of where she searched will reveal why.

- *First*, she sought for him in the darkness of “*the night*”. It is always *dark* wherever our Lord is not found. Distance from Christ suggests *darkness*; for He is the Light of Life (John 8:12).

- *Secondly*, she sought him in the “*city streets*”. The *streets of the city* depict the large masses of the city. Having traveled in Israel, I can tell you that the city streets are extremely crowded. Our Lord is not always to be found simply because there is a large crowd assembled. There are many large congregations in churches, but the size of the congregation does not guarantee that God is in their midst. Some churches worship in “*spirit*”, but not in “*truth*”.
- *Thirdly*, she sought him in the “*broad ways*”. The way to the Lord is never along this path – “*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat*” (Matthew 7:13). My friend, the way of the world will not lead to Christ.
- *Fourthly*, she sought him among the “*watchmen*”, but alas, her searching was in vain. Unfortunately, there are some “*professing*” Christians who of no help. The *lost* cannot direct others to Christ.

There are many Christians who live frustrated lives. Many have *left* their first love, *lost* their joy, and *live* in a backslidden state. David fell prey to this doleful dilemma. Listen to the description in David’s own words as he relates his painful experience of falling out on God –

“Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes” (Psalm 119:40-48).

While there are many reasons why believers lose their joy, notice that David alludes to three (3) joy-robbers in this passage: *reproach*, *oppression*, and *waywardness*.

- *First*, David confesses that he knew the meaning of *reproach*. God's Word clearly teaches that believers who live godly will suffer *reproach* and *persecution*, "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (2 Timothy 3:12). The writer of the Book of Hebrews testifies of Moses, "*By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward*" (Hebrews 11:24-26). Sometimes the floods of *reproach* seem to overwhelm us. Many believers grow weary of well doing. It is in these moments that we need to spend time in prayer, in the study of God's Word, and in worship of God.
- *Secondly*, oft times saints are *oppressed*. David described one of his bouts with *oppression* in Psalm 119:131-139 - "*I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments. Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name. Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.*" In times of oppression believers need the tender touch of God's mercy more than ever. His Word must order our steps. We must allow the Word to strengthen us to resist temptations. Has the "*face of the Lord*" shone upon you lately? Have you shed tears as "*rivers of waters*"? Someone said, "When your tears are mingled with prayer, you never cry alone."
- *Thirdly*, one of the most obvious reasons we have loss of joy is because of *waywardness*. In Psalm 119:174-176, David wrote, "*I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.*" Unconfessed sin hinders our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. David confessed he had gone astray, "*I*

have gone astray like a lost sheep.” Wayward Christians do not desire communion with God. It has been said, “Nothing shuts the mouth of a believer more than unconfessed sin!”

Is restoration possible for such backslidden believers? What remedy is available for the sin-sick saint? What can be done for those who suffer *reproach, oppression, and waywardness*? David gives a clear answer to these questions in Psalm 120:1-7, “*In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me. Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto thee? Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper. Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.*”

Did you see the remedy? The remedy for such sickness is “*confession.*” David cried unto the Lord in his distress, and the Lord heard his repentant cry. He asked for forgiveness, “*from lying lips and a deceitful tongue,*” and God answered his prayer. In Psalm 121, David wrote, “*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night, The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: she shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.*”

God is plentiful in mercy. He commands us to “*call unto Him*” (Jer. 33:33), and He promises to hear and answer us when we do. Looking unto Jesus is the only way to have joy, peace, and contentment. While it may be helpful to confide in fellow saints, there is no substitute for consulting with Christ. Psalm 118:8 makes it clear, “*It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.*”

2:4 *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.*

The Shulamite searched for her beloved in the *night*, in the *city streets*, in the *broad ways*, and among the *watchmen*, but she did not find him. Then she proclaims, “*It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth....*” (Song of Solomon 3:4). She made this joyful discovery only after she “*came to an end of herself.*” She could do nothing in her own strength. Her search was in vain. But when she *came to the end of herself*, she found her beloved shepherd.

There is a similar story in Luke 15. The Prodigal Son received his inheritance, went to a far country, and squandered all of his inheritance on riotous living. But notice verse 17 – “*And when he came to himself*”. This was when he made the decision to return to his loving father. When he came to himself, he realized how foolish he had been. There are many believers who are miserable and suffer needlessly because of waywardness. They will not have the joy they once had until they “*come to the end of themselves*”, repent, and confess their sins unto the Lord.

The same principle is true regarding salvation. Sinner friend, Christ cannot be found on your terms. You can only be saved on His. Jesus said, “*No man can come to me, except my Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day*” (John 6:44). Christ will only reveal Himself to those of “*a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart*” (Psalm 51:17). Those who come to an end of themselves will always find the Lord Jesus Christ; for He desires to be found. You have His Word on it!

As the Shulamite recalls finding her beloved, she magnifies the Lord! There are three (3) important things that the Shulamite did upon finding “*him whom her soul loveth*”. These flashes of delight happened almost simultaneously. She says, “*I found him*”; “*I held him*”; and “*I brought him*”. Let us examine her reactions briefly.

- *First*, after much searching in all the wrong places, she finally *found* her beloved. However, it was he who drew near to her! How graciously our Lord Jesus Christ will do the same for us! When believers sincerely seek the Lord, He will be found.
- *Secondly*, the Shulamite asserts, “*I held him...*” She was so thrilled to find her beloved that she grabbed him and determined to never let him go. What is your estimate of the Lord’s value? What can be inferred by her “*holding him*”? There

are many ways we may “*hold*” the Lord. We *hold* the Lord by giving Him preeminence in our lives. He deserves our very best, not our leftovers! We *hold* Him by abstaining “*from all appearance of evil*” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Renouncing even the appearance of sin in our lives is a demonstration our love and desire to *hold* Him in fellowship. God is a loving, gracious God; but He is also a “*jealous God.*” The Lord will not play second fiddle in our lives. He deserves, desires, and often demands *preeminence*. He is not difficult to *hold*, for He desires to be *held*.

- *Thirdly*, the Shulamite proudly proclaims, “*I brought him....*” Anyone who has found the Lord instinctively wants others to know Him. It is a natural response for a new believer to tell others about Jesus. It is our privilege to proclaim the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ! Jesus is the only *way, truth, and the life* (John 14:6). Christ must be “*brought to the world.*” The Samaritan woman at the well found Jesus, and He forgave her of her sin. Immediately she *brought* Him to her village, and told others about Him. Many were saved because she *brought Him*. Christian friend, have you “*brought Jesus*” home for your family to meet? God desires all believers to “*find Him*”, “*hold Him*”, and “*bring Him*” to others.

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.*

This is the second time the Shulamite charges the “*daughters of Jerusalem*”. We remind you that this verse serves as the “*keynote*” of the Song of Solomon. The Shulamite explains to these women that there is a “*time for love*”, but it should not be “*aroused by carnal means.*” True love is not something to be bought or sold. True love is something that must be nurtured. Genuine love begins in the heart.

The Shulamite charge to the “*daughters of Jerusalem*” a second time serves as a reminder to Israel that they had sinned against the Lord by marrying “*strange women*” and engaging in the worship of pagan idols. This was largely due to King Solomon’s worldly philosophy of life. He had lusted after the things of the world, and the nation of Israel followed his example.

Just as the Shulamite had searched in the *darkness of night* for her beloved, so King Solomon had searched in the *darkness of paganism*. He desperately searched for something that would satisfy his cravings. Just as the Shulamite had searched in the *city streets*, so Solomon sought *contentment* in the crowds of his kingdom. Just as the Shulamite had searched in the *broad ways* for her shepherd, so Solomon had searched in the *world* for wine, women, and song in the hope that his thirsting for peace could be quenched. Finally, when Solomon “*came to the end of himself*,” he found what his soul had been searching for. After a life of vanity, Solomon realized the ultimate duty of man, “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Chapter 4

The Seduction of the Shulamite

Song of Solomon 3:6-4:6

- 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?
- 7 Behold his bed, which Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.
- 8 They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.
- 9 King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.
- 5 Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.
- 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.
-
- 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?*
- 7 *Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.*

- 8 *They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.*
- 9 *King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.*
- 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.*
- 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.*

In our next section of the Song of Solomon, we see the *arrival* of King Solomon, arrayed in all of his glory, into the city of Jerusalem. What an entrance he makes! The Shulamite inquires, “*Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?*” (Song of Solomon 3:6). The majesty of this spectacle is magnificent! The Shulamite had never seen such a glorious sight as this, having spent all of her life in Lebanon.

She immediately recognizes the *chariot* of King Solomon (3:7). She was astonished by its splendor, surrounded by sixty valiant soldiers of Israel. It was made of the finest wood of Lebanon, which she easily recognized as wood from her own country. Upon the chariot bed were pillars of pure silver, and its bottom made of finest gold. The chariot was covered in purple – the color of royalty. The Shulamite also notices something else. She notices, “*the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem*” (3:10b). This statement refers to the tapestry of fine needlework that was supplied “*in love*” by the daughters of Jerusalem. One can only imagine the detail and meticulous attention given to each stitch of embroidery for this regal chariot.

King Solomon’s *crown* especially impressed the young maiden. It was a special crown given to Solomon by his mother, Bathsheba, on the day of his espousals. Notice, the word “*espousals*” is *plural*. This indicates that Solomon had more than one wife. Some who hold a *two-character view* of the Song of Solomon claim this Shulamite was actually Solomon’s first wife. They argue that she was his only true love, and that he maintained a monogamous relationship until much later, possibly after the death of this Shulamite.

This is not possible since we find that on this day he wore a *crown* given to him on the “*day of his espousals*” by his mother. The story of Solomon’s coronation is

recorded in 1 Kings Chapter One. Solomon was not David's only son, nor did David desire to appoint Solomon as his successor. David actually wanted to appoint Absalom to succeed him, but Absalom was tragically killed. When Adonijah, another son of David, conspired to usurp his throne, he was too old and feeble, to prevent it. At this point, God intervened by sending the Prophet Nathan to Bathsheba. Nathan warned her of Adonijah's plans. Nathan and Bathsheba confronted David and convinced him to declare Solomon as his successor. At this point in his life, David had no preference, so he abided by their wishes and anointed Solomon as his successor. Bathsheba was delighted that her son, Solomon, would succeed David. This is the reason that she gave Solomon such a magnificent crown.

What a contrast we see in the *coming* of Solomon to the *coming* of the shepherd in Song of Solomon 2:8-9. The shepherd's *coming* had no pageantry. There were no crowds along the street to cheer his procession. He had no throng of valiant guards, nor chariot constructed of fine wood and encrusted with gold. No, the shepherd came without all of these things. However, there was something the shepherd had that Solomon did not. The shepherd had a sincere, genuine love for the Shulamite. This is why he came for her. This is why he approached her "*leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills...like a roe or a young hart*".

What a beautiful depiction of the *coming of Christ*. The reason why Christ came was because of His great love for mankind. God's Word declares, "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...*" (1 Timothy 1:15). Again we read in John 3:16-17, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*"

Like the lowly shepherd, Jesus knew humility. Isaiah prophesied His birth as he wrote, "*Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and*

acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:1-6).

Luke described the humble birth of Jesus in this manner, *“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came unto them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:1-12).*

Jesus was born without *form* or *comeliness*, and His *coming* to this earth was so common that He was even denied a room for his birth. Instead, Mary gave birth to Jesus in a lowly cattle stall. Like the simple shepherd, Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes. Only Mary, Joseph, and a handful of common shepherds celebrated His *coming* on that blessed night. Yet, the lowly child would become the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He will reign forever, and of His kingdom, there shall be no end. Let every child of God proclaim as the Shulamite, *“Behold, the King” – “Behold, the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.”*

- 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.*
- 2** *Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bare twins, and none is barren among them.*
- 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** *Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.*
- 5** *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.*
- 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.*

In Chapter 4:1-6 we find the “*voice of seduction.*” Solomon, in eloquent exchange, attempts once more to sway the Shulamite to become his bride. What a *sweet talker* Solomon was! In this passage he addresses her loveliness. He speaks of her *fairness*. He compares her *eyes* to the eyes of doves. He describes her *hair* as “*a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.*” One preacher said, “No doubt if a husband compared his wife’s hair in such a manner today, he would end up in a great deal of trouble!” In Solomon’s day, however, this was considered a compliment. He says her *teeth* are like “*a flock of sheep, even shorn, which came up from the washing.*” Solomon says that her *lips* are as “*a thread of scarlet*”, and her *speech* is “*comely.*” He compares her *temples* and *neck* to the “*tower of David*”. He describes her *breasts* as “*twin roes which feed among the lilies.*” Such poetry was intended to sweep the Shulamite off of her feet, but it did not succeed! The Shulamite remained undaunted by his wiles.

Oh, the *subtlety* of Satan! Like Solomon, the devil employs a variety of tactics to entrap believers. For this reason Paul exhorted saints to “*walk circumspectly* (cautiously), *not as fools, but as wise*” (Ephesians 5:15). The devil is devious, deceptive, and deliberate. Paul warned the church of Ephesus and urged them to be prepared for spiritual warfare. He wrote, “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,*

against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:10-13).

There is a story in Acts Chapter 13 that illustrates how shrewd Satan can be. Paul, Barnabas, and John had preached in Seleucia, Cyprus, and Salamis. When they departed, they journeyed through unto Paphos, where they encountered a sorcerer named Bar-jesus. Accompanying this sorcerer was a “*prudent man and deputy of the country*” whose name was Sergius Paulus. Sergius Paulus desired to hear the Word of God, and he compelled Paul and his companions to talk to him. When Paul attempted to preach to the deputy, the sorcerer tried to disrupt him. Satan used Bar-jesus in an attempt to prevent Sergius Paulus from hearing and believing on Jesus Christ as Saviour.

In response to the false prophet’s interference Paul boldly rebuked him. “*Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord”* (Acts 13:9-12). He exposed the sorcerer by calling him a “*child of the devil*”. Satan often uses people to “*pervert the right ways of God.*” Paul wrote, “*Lest Satan should get an advantage on us: for we are not ignorant of his devices”* (2 Corinthians 2:11). Paul warned the Corinthians to beware of the devices of Satan. His devices are subtle and sundry.

In 2 Corinthians Paul warned the Corinthians of the *wiles of the devil*. He warns the Corinthians to beware of Satan and the many false prophets of their day. He writes, “*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent (Satan) beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, who we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him”* (2 Corinthians 11:3-4). He continues by cautioning them, “*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles*

of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

There is a great need for passionate preaching against sin and Satan. The devil is alive and well, and he is as subtle as ever in his attempts to the cause of Christ. Satan is a deceiver and a liar. He will use any methods at his disposal to discourage, defeat, and deter the testimony of believers. This is why Peter so adamantly instructed the saints in Asia Minor. Christ commissioned him to “*strengthen the brethren.*” In his First Epistle he fulfills this commission by exhorting and encouraging the scattered, suffering saints in Asia.

Listen to Peter’s encouragement as he writes, “*The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:1-7).*

Notice the warning he gave them in the very next verse regarding the devil, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*” (1 Peter 5:8). He begins his warning with a divine imperative – “*Be sober, be vigilant*”. To be *sober*, means “*to be serious-minded; to take a realistic approach to life; to be intelligent concerning the stratagems of Satan.*” Dwight Pentecost wrote, “An individual who takes no cognizance of the nature and character of the world, one who is unmindful of the purposes and attacks of our adversary, the devil, can afford to live in a lighthearted or flippant way. But for one who sees life as Jesus Christ sees it, there must be an entirely new attitude, an entirely new outlook characterized by sobriety.” Believers must maintain a constant *vigilance* in order

to against the assaults of the Wicked one. This is the reason why the Apostle Paul educated the Ephesians to “*put on the whole armour of God.*” As soldiers of Jesus Christ, we must never underestimate the devil. He is a master deceiver, and he is relentless in his endeavors to damage our witness.

Peter calls the devil our “*adversary*”. An *adversary* is someone that vehemently opposes us. Satan never rests in his attempts to thwart the cause of Christ. Therefore, saints should not rest in their vigilance and sobriety. Satan is shrewd and capable of camouflaging his attacks. The first mention of Satan is in the Garden of Eden, when he came as a *serpent*, seeking to lure Eve into moral decay. Sometimes Satan disguises himself as an “*angel of light*”. At other times, he throws caution to the wind and attacks as a “*roaring lion*”, striking fear in the hearts of even some children of God. In Peter’s case, Satan *personally* attacked him. How frightening Peter must have been when Satan personally attacked him! We must remember, though the devil is powerful, he is not all-powerful. Neither is he omnipresent. The devil can only be one place at a time, though he does have an army of demons (*fallen angels*) who assist him in hindering the cause of Christ. Let us be grateful that “*greater is He (Christ) that is in you, than he (Satan) that is in the world*” (1 John 4:4).

Solomon can be viewed as a type of the devil. Repeatedly he attempts to seduce the Shulamite to be unfaithful. Likewise, Satan is relentless in his attempts to seduce saints to be unfaithful to God. The devil cannot prevent us from going to heaven, but he makes every attempt to prevent us from leading others to Christ. For the Christian, the world is not a “playground”; it is a “battleground!” We are called to be “*good soldiers of Jesus Christ*” (2 Timothy 2:3). The Word of God describes this present world as “*evil*”. Believers must keep a constant vigil. Listen to Paul’s admonition to the saints, “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.... Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplications for all saints*” (Ephesians 6:10; 18).

Chapter 5

The Shepherd's Song of the Shulamite

Song of Solomon 4:7-5:1

- 4:7 Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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!
- 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.
- 12 A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
- 13 Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,
- 14 Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all aloes, with all the chief spices:
- 15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.
- 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.
- 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.

- 4:7 *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.*
- 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.*

- 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.*
- 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!*
- 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.*

In verses 7-15, we read the “*Shepherd’s Song of the Shulamite*”. As we examine this song, we should consider both its context and spiritual implications. The context of this song reveals the shepherd urging the Shulamite to leave Jerusalem and come back with him to the home they have planned in the country. He describes the splendor of Lebanon, noting especially the majestic view from atop Amana, Mount Shenir, and Mount Hermon. He beckons her to come away with him, citing several reasons. In this poetic discourse, the shepherd sings praises of the Shulamite’s *loveliness*. The praises found in the “*Song of the Shepherd*” could only emanate from a heart of genuine love.

This song serves Israel as an example of Jehovah’s love for them, and it serves the New Testament believer as a foreshadowing of Christ’s love for the Church. As born-again believers, every member of the Church is espoused to Christ. Regardless of our sundry shortcomings and imperfections, Christ loves us! As the shepherd expressed his love of the Shulamite, “*Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee*” (vs. 7), so Christ loves us in spite of our infirmities. One day the Church will be presented without spot, wrinkle, or blemish (Ephesians 5:27). But how, with all of our imperfections, can the Lord present us “*without spot*”? The Apostle Paul sheds light on this doctrine in Ephesians 5:25-32:

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a

man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Paul teaches that believers are “*united with Christ*”, and he illustrates this unity by the husband and wife relationship. Just as a man and a woman become *one flesh*, forever united, so an eternal union is established between the Saviour and saint at the moment of salvation. The believer is baptized into the body of Christ and united eternally with Him. The believer is spiritually born into the family of God.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul writes, “*Therefore, if any man be IN CHRIST, he is a new creature...*” In Colossians 1:27 he writes, “*To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ IN YOU, the hope of glory.*” We have already discussed how this *eternal union* is clearly taught in the Book of Romans where Paul writes, “*.... How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized INTO Jesus Christ were baptized INTO his death? Therefore we are buried WITH him by baptism INTO death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life. For if we have been planted TOGETHER in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified WITH him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin*” (Romans 6:2-7).

All that happened to Christ *physically* in His death, burial, and resurrection occurs *spiritually* to believers when they place their faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. Though difficult for our finite minds to grasp, the principle of an *eternal union* between Christ and believers is clearly taught in God’s Word. Sinners are justified only “*by grace through faith*” in the Person and finished work of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:8-9). Redemption is made possible by the precious blood of Christ alone, not by silver, gold, or the vain tradition of men (1 Peter 1:18-19). The Holy Spirit unites believers with God and with one another the very moment they believe (1 Corinthians 12:13). One glorious day Christ will “*present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*” (Ephesians 5:27).

In verses 9-10, the shepherd addresses the Shulamite by two different names. *First*, he calls her “*my sister*”. It was not uncommon in those days for siblings to marry. However, the shepherd does not use the word “*sister*” to designate a sibling relationship. Rather, he uses this name as a *term of endearment* describing their union in a similar manner that saints use the terms *brother* or *sister* to address other believers. Such terms signify a *spiritual* bond that exists between them. There is no such thing as the “*Fatherhood of God*” or the “*Brotherhood of Man*”. God is not the *Father* of all, but rather the *Creator* of all. The father of the unsaved is the devil (John 8:44). However, when a person believes the gospel of Jesus Christ and calls upon the name of the Lord, immediately that person is born into the family of God. God becomes their Father, and they become *brothers* and *sisters* with all members of the family of God.

Secondly, he uses the word “*spouse*” to identify the Shulamite. This word is also applicable because they have been *espoused* (engaged) to each other. They had pledged their love and fidelity, and this espousal was as binding as the actual marriage ceremony. Their relationship was based upon mutual love and trust. Several times throughout the Song of Solomon the Shulamite refers to the shepherd as “*my beloved*”. Likewise, the shepherd calls the Shulamite “*my love*.” These terms of endearment are pregnant with meaning, as we shall later see in our study.

One object of the shepherd’s praise is “*the fragrance of her garments*” (4:11). This expression refers to the Shulamite’s *character*, not her *clothing*. The shepherd associates her purity with the “*smells of Lebanon*.” Her *conversation* (manner of living) is so impeccable and pure that it reminds him of the fresh, mountain air of Lebanon.

One of the reasons people travel on vacation to the mountains is so they can relax and resort in the freshness of the outdoor air. Urban life takes its toll upon people. Those living in heavily populated and polluted cities frequently desire to escape to the mountains where the air is fresh and clean, untainted by the putrid stench of industrial waste and exhaust.

In verse 9, the shepherd confesses that the Shulamite has “*ravished*” his heart. He mentions her *purity*, her *eyes*, her *neck*, her *lips*, and even her *words* (“*honey and milk are under thy tongue*”) as the reasons for loving her. In verse 10 he praises the “*love*” she has manifested for him. He says that her love is “*fair*” and “*better...than wine*”, and

he exclaims, “*and the smell of thine ointments than all spices.*” The shepherd’s heart has been so beleaguered by the Shulamite that nothing compares to her beauty.

The shepherd’s recollections of the Shulamite’s love for him remind us of a question once posed by Israel. In Malachi 1:2, they asked Jehovah, “*Wherein has thou loved us?*” They had forgotten how God manifested His love for them throughout the ages. God answered Israel by revealing several ways in which He demonstrated His love to the Jewish people. When is the last time you took inventory of the ways in which God has demonstrated His love for you? Let us consider the love of God.

God’s love for us is “*unconditional*”. This means that we did nothing to deserve it, and we can do nothing to deter it. There is nothing we can do to cause God to love us *more*, and there is nothing we can do to cause God to love us *less*. God loves us *unconditionally*. God does not love us because of who we are; God loves us because of who He is. God offers us salvation because “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8). God does not bestow salvation based upon our works, our goodness, or even our good intentions. Salvation is solely a work of grace by God the Father to undeserving mankind.

Sometimes God’s love is *tender*. Sometimes God’s love is *tough*. Several times in the Old Testament we read where God had to discipline Israel for their rebellion. Israel did not always demonstrate their favored position as God’s “chosen people.” They often failed as the representatives of His power and grace. Israel’s rebellion culminated in the rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah (Acts 10:43). The nation of Israel is today currently under judgment of God. They have been given the “*spirit of slumber eyes*” and are “*blinded in part...until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in*” (Romans 11:8-10; 25). Yet, according to God’s Word, He has not forsaken Israel (Romans 11:1-2; 11).

Isaac Asimov, a Jewish humorist, wrote in his book entitled, *Treasury of Humor*, “An old Jew fervently prayed in the synagogue, ‘Lord, 4,000 years ago, on the slopes of Mount Sinai, you chose the Jews as a peculiar people, a holy people, a nation of priests to bear the yoke of your holy Law and to serve as a witness to all the world. Lord, I’m deeply sensible of the honor, but Lord, enough is enough! Surely it is time you chose someone else!’”

Another old Jewish man is quoted as saying, “Lord, if this is what it means to be loved by you, then please love someone else for a while!” With *privilege* comes

responsibility. Light rejected is light removed. We must realize that God holds those who have received light accountable for the light they have received.

In the days of Malachi had backslidden. Nobody feels that God loves him or her when they are out of fellowship with Him. This is why the Jews posed this question to Jehovah, “...*Wherein hast thou loved us?*” (Malachi 1:2b). Throughout the Book of Malachi, God provides a 5-fold answer to Israel. The following list gives His answer to the Jews -

- ***God loved them enough to reveal His love (1:2-4)***
- ***God loved them enough to expose their sins (1:6-8)***
- ***God loved them enough to forgive them of unfaithfulness (1:9a)***
- ***God loved them enough to allow them the freedom to fail (3:16-4:2)***
- ***God loved them enough to care how they treated one another (2:14-17; 4:5-6)***

In similar fashion, God has manifested His love to New Testament saints. Let us briefly look at seven (7) ways that God has demonstrated His love for the Church.

- ***New Understanding***

God has given provided us a *new understanding* by His Word in order that we might comprehend His plan for the ages. God’s Word declares that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God and alone has made salvation possible through His death, burial, and resurrection (John 1:29).

- ***New Opportunity***

God has provided us a *new opportunity*. “*And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory*” (1 Timothy 3:16). While salvation has always been by grace through faith, the Old Testament saints looked *forward* to the coming of Messiah. The New Testament saints are blessed to look *back* at the cross of Christ. The Lord Jesus has broken down the middle wall of partition by His death. Hebrews 10:16-20 speaks of this “*new and living way*” provided by Christ.

- ***New Identity***

As New Testament saints, we have a *new identity* “*in Christ.*” The believer’s identity is the result of the union between Christ and His Bride, the Church. This union is illustrated by various figures in the Word of God. It is a “*Living Union*” (Ephesians 4:1-16); a “*Lasting Union*” (1 Corinthians 3-9-11); a “*Fruitful Union*” (John 15:1-15); a “*Joint Union*” (Romans 8:1-4; 14-17; 29-32); and a “*Loving Union*” (Song of Solomon 2:16; Ephesians 5:21-33).

- ***New Example***

The nation of Israel had the Mosaic Law as an example of righteousness and godly conversation. The New Testament Church has Jesus Christ as its “*Great Example.*” Peter declares, “*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls*” (1 Peter 2:21-25).

- ***New Enablement***

Not only we have *new life* in Christ, but also a *new enablement*. The New Testament believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit who empowers him or her to live for Christ. This important principle is revealed in a number of passages (Romans 1:16; 8:11; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 24). Yielding to the Holy Spirit allows us to *bear fruit* (Galatians 5:22-23). Paul instructed the Philippians, “*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13).

- ***New Sense of Balance***

The Law could never save sinners. The Law could only expose the sinfulness of man and reveal his need of a Saviour. Israel sought to impress God with their righteousness (Romans 10:1-10), but the righteousness of man is never enough. Man cannot be redeemed apart from the righteousness of Christ (Titus 3:5-6). When a person receives Christ as Saviour, His righteousness is imputed unto them. This was instructed by the Apostle Paul when he wrote, “*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

- ***New Vision***

The New Testament saints have a *new vision* that Old Testament saints did not have. One of the greatest blessings of God’s Word is that “*Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*” (1 Timothy 1:15). This is not the end of the story, however. Christ not only died for us, but He also *lives* for us! Today, Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour is also our “*Great High Priest*” seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for all who believe (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus told His disciples that He was going to “*prepare a place*” for those who love God. He promised to “*come again*” and receive them unto Himself (John 14:1-3). The New Testament saints have a *new help*, a *new hope*, and a *new home* because of Christ! Peter describes this *new home* as “*an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven*” (1 Peter 1:4).

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

13 *Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,*

14 *Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all aloes, with all the chief spices:*

15 *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*

The shepherd continues his song by employing a variety of figures to describe the beauty of the Shulamite. Though the Song of Solomon was primarily written to address

the spiritual infidelity of Israel, the saints of today can also glean from its content. In order to fully appreciate such applications, we are inclined to view the Shulamite as a type of the New Testament Church. As a matter of application, the shepherd may also be viewed as a type of Christ. In so applying, we see the heart of Christ for His Bride in these verses of the shepherd's song to the Shulamite.

It is interesting that both the shepherd and Solomon described minute details of the Shulamite. In Chapter 4 Solomon spoke of her *eyes, locks of hair, teeth, lips, speech*, and even her *temples*. What poetic language he used to describe her exquisite beauty! It is amazing that Solomon could describe this lowly maiden in such detail! Husbands could learn a great deal from this royal suitor. Many husbands have difficulty describing what their wives wore on their wedding day!

The same meticulous attention is revealed in the *Shepherd's Song*. He not only portrays the Shulamite's beauty, but he also provides details of their loving relationship. He reminds us that their love is not superficial. Their relationship is based upon true and unbridled love. Their love is genuine, not plutonic. What an example for couples considering marriage! One of the main contributors to the ever-rising divorce rate is a lack of sincere, genuine love between husbands and wives. Marriage relationships must be based upon true love; not carnal lusts. True love does not waver during difficult times. Couples should spend time getting to know one another *before* entering into marriage, but this process should not stop after the wedding. Husbands and wives should continue by becoming experts in marriage. They should find out what pleases their spouse. Their marriage should be so important that they work daily at maintaining an intimate relationship.

This is good advice in our relationship with Christ as well. We ought to desire to please Him in every aspect of our lives. Our relationship with Christ should be important enough for us to work at keeping it pure. Paul boldly testified, "*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and*

the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;” (Philippians 3:7-10).

Lasting relationships are based on knowledge. As people learn about each other, bonds are formed. The more we learn about Jesus, the more we love Him. The more we love Him, the closer we will desire to obey Him. Jesus said, *“If you love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). He also asked a heart-searching question, *“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* (Luke 4:46). He truly is a *“friend that sticketh closer than a brother”* (Proverbs 18:24).

There are some people who *profess* to know Christ, but in reality, they only *deceive* themselves. James exposed their foolishness when he wrote, *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh in the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”* (James 1:22-25). James also wrote, *“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works...But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”* (James 2:18, 20).

There are some who are so disillusioned that they think they can actually hide their sin from God! *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do”* (Hebrews 4:13). After Adam and Eve sinned, they heard the *“voice of the Lord”* in the garden. They were afraid so they hid themselves in the bushes. Friend, God knew exactly where they were; God knew precisely what they had done; and God knew who was to blame.

God asked Adam three (3) questions that revealed how much He loved Adam. God always takes the initiative to restore the backslider. Let us briefly examine the questions that God asked Adam -

- ***God asked, “Where art thou” (Genesis 3:9)***

God never asks questions for information. Since God is omniscient, He knows everything about everything. The reason God asked Adam this question was to provoke a response. Before fellowship could be restored, Adam had to realize his carnal condition. For the very first time, Adam knew the conviction of sin. He lost his innocence when he disobeyed God. His disobedience manifested itself in rebellion against God's command, "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" (Genesis 2:16-17). When God asked Adam where he was, He did so in order that Adam might recognize his sinful condition. As a result, Adam said, "*I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself*" (Genesis 3:10).

- **God asked, "*Who told thee that thou wast naked?*" (Genesis 3:11)**

The *second* question God asked was designed to further enable Adam to deal with his lack of spirituality. This question prompted Adam to make a decision. Instead of answering the question posed by God, "*Who told thee that thou wast naked?*" he chose to excuse himself by blaming others. The answer to the second question is obvious. It was *God* who revealed Adam's sin. When God created Adam, "*[God]... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*" (Genesis 2:7). The Holy Spirit within Adam not only allowed him to fellowship with God, but also brought conviction from God when he sinned.

Adam's conscience condemned his actions. We find this reflected in Genesis 3:7a, "*And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked*". When they realized something was wrong, they attempted the great "cover-up". God's Word reveals, "*...they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons*" (Genesis 3:7b). Mankind has been trying to cover his nakedness ever since! God wanted Adam to realize that both his guilt (conviction) and his fear (hiding) was the result of sin.

- **God asked, “What is this thou hast done?” (Genesis 3:13)**

The *third* question is extremely important in regard to *restoration*. God not only wanted Adam to realize that his *conviction* and *fear* were the result of disobedience, but God also wanted Adam to *confess* his sin. Fellowship can never be restored apart from *repentance* and *confession*.

We previously mentioned David’s sin. He attempted to conceal his adultery with Bathsheba; he tried to cover up his iniquity by bringing her husband home; but when his plans failed, David attempted a third time to cloak his wicked ways by having him killed in battle. For more than a year David was miserable until Nathan *confronted* him. Under extreme conviction, David *confessed* his sin, and God forgave him.

God wanted Adam to *confess* his sin so that He might forgive him and restore the fellowship that was lost. The Apostle John provides us with God’s remedy for sin - “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:9).

If you have not invited Jesus into your heart as Saviour, you can do so right now. Jesus said, “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28). John pledges, “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (John 3:36). You can experience the joy and contentment of sins forgiven simply by realizing your need of a Saviour, repenting of your sins, and calling upon the name of Jesus Christ by faith. Listen to the wonderful words of the Apostle John who wrote, “*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world*” (1 John 4:15-17).

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.*

In this verse we find the Shulamite's invitation for the shepherd to come into her garden. The metaphor, "garden", depicts "*a place of fellowship or communion.*" It reminds us of the beautiful fellowship that existed between God and man before the fall. In Genesis 2:15 we read that Adam was placed in this garden to dress and keep it. God allowed Adam to name all the animals (v. 19-20). God had compassion upon Adam, so He created a "*help meet*" for him (v. 20). Adam called her, "*Woman, because she was taken out of Man*" (v. 23). There was no shame in this dispensation of innocence (v. 25). All things were as they should be - man in a perfect environment, in a perfect state of purity, and in perfect harmony with God.

In Song of Solomon 4:16 the Shulamite invites the shepherd into her *garden*. Many have spiritualized the meaning of this invitation. They conclude that there is something suggestive in her proposal. We disagree. The only thing suggestive is that she longed to fellowship with her beloved. She anticipated the day when they would be united forever.

As we earlier stated, every New Testament saint should long for the coming of Christ in a similar manner. Jesus said that He would come again, but He did not say when He would come. The Word of God reveals that God will give a crown to those who love His appearing, "*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: an not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*" (2 Timothy 4:8).

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.*

Song of Solomon 5:1 provides us with the shepherd's response to the Shulamite's invitation, "*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.*" The shepherd does not hesitate in his reply. The shepherd's answer is simply, "*I'm coming!*" For the second time he refers to his lovely Shulamite as "*my sister, my spouse.*" This clearly identifies the shepherd as the speaker. His statements, "*I have*

gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk,” indicates one of two possible responses. It means either “*he has prepared himself to come*” or “*he is coming*” to the garden to gather his spices, eat honeycomb, and drink wine and milk. In either case, it is obvious that he eagerly accepts her invitation!

In the latter part this same verse, the Shulamite rejoices that her beloved shepherd has accepted her invitation. She bursts forth in melodious rapture, unable to constrain herself. She exclaims, “*...drink abundantly, O beloved!*”

Chapter 6

The Sadness of the Shulamite

Song of Solomon 5:2-6:3

- 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.
- 3 I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?
- 4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.
- 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?
- 10 My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.
- 11 His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.
- 12 His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters washed with milk, and fitly set.
- 13 His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.
- 14 His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.
- 15 His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

- 16 His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.**
- 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.**
- 2 My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.**
- 3 I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.**

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.*

In this section we find a sad and melancholy song sung by the Shulamite. She does not sing this song *to* her beloved, but rather *about* her beloved. It is a song of sadness. Perhaps Solomon penned these verses as he considered his own apostasy when he was consumed by lusts of the world. Perhaps he remembered the time when he took his eyes off of God and focused them upon the temporal things of this life. Whatever the case, this song is reflective of a broken heart. Such was the plight of the Shulamite when Solomon took her away from her beloved shepherd.

Notice that the Shulamite first speaks of “*sleeping.*” Many times in Scripture we are exhorted to “*awake*” out of sleep. Spiritual *sleepiness* refers to a believer out of fellowship with God. During such times, there is no peace, no contentment, and no joy. When a child of God is backslidden, there is no rest, refuge, or relaxation. Let us be thankful that the Lord does not forsake us even during such times. Instead of forsaking us, He manifests His longsuffering and grace toward us. God always takes the initiative to restore us to fellowship. Sometimes He rebukes; sometimes He chastens; and sometimes He gently nudges. Regardless, His efforts are always motivated by His mercy, grace, and unconditional love for us.

The Lord clearly announced His intentions in dealing with Israel, “*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end*” (Jeremiah 29:11). It is comforting to realize that even when we are forgetful of Him, He is still mindful of us.

Let us briefly mention some examples of how God dealt with saints in order to restore them. In Luke Chapter 22, we find the story of how Peter denied Christ three times. The Lord had previously predicted Peter's denial in Luke 22:31-34. Notice that even though Christ foreknew Peter's actions, He tenderly assured him that He had prayed for him, that his "*faith fail not*" (Luke 22:32). After Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, His prediction of Peter was realized. Peter denied the Lord thrice as he sat at the campfire of sinners. Following his third denial, the rooster crowed, "*And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, 'Before the cock crow, thou shall deny me thrice.'*" (Luke 22:60-61). With just a simple LOOK, Jesus caused conviction to grip the heart of Peter. Peter ran away in tears. After the resurrection of Christ, the Lord asked for Peter by name. He finally met Peter and company on a fishing bank. There the Lord spoke to Peter and ultimately commissioned Him to "*feed the flock of God*".

Another example of God's initiative in restoring the backslidden is found in the story of Jonah. Jonah chose to run away from God's call upon his life, and he headed in the opposite direction. God had told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach the Word. He did not want to go. Many accuse Jonah of being afraid, but this is not the reason he went to Tarshish. In Jonah 4:2 we find the real reason why Jonah did not obey God's command, "*And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.*"

In this passage, Jonah declares five (5) attributes of God:

- *Thou art gracious*
- *Thou art merciful*
- *Thou art slow to anger*
- *Thou art of great kindness*
- *Thou art able to repent of evil*

Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh because he knew God would forgive the Ninevites if they repented of their sin. Jonah had his own agenda. He hated Nineveh because of their persecution of the Jews. He wanted God to judge them, and he wanted no part in helping them escape the wrath of Jehovah God. Sadly, Jonah had not realized his own sinful actions.

In the remainder of the story, we see how God made the first move to restore Jonah. God used a great fish as His instrument in the process. On his way to Tarshish, Jonah fell asleep. A great storm arose, and the sailors cast the wares overboard in order to lighten the ship. The shipmaster came to Jonah and awakened him. The captain rebuked Jonah for sleeping instead of praying. Even the shipmaster knew that God was merciful, kind, and gracious (Jonah 1:6). The sailors cast lots in order to find out whose cause it was for this evil storm that had come upon them. The lot fell upon Jonah. The sailors were afraid, and they questioned him of his actions. Ultimately, Jonah was cast overboard, and a great fish swallowed him (Jonah 1:10-17); but in the depth of the turbulent sea, and in the belly of the fish, Jonah *repented* of his sin and *prayed* unto the Lord his God. God heard his plea, honored his prayer, and fellowship was restored (Jonah 2:1-10). Jonah went to Nineveh and preached, and the greatest revival in the Word of God ensued.

Let us examine one more example of God's longsuffering. It involves the life of the Prophet Elijah. Elijah had won a mighty contest on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). He called fire down from heaven and slew the Baal prophets of wicked Jezebel, queen of King Ahab. It was shortly after this great victory that Elijah faced severe opposition. Jezebel threatened his life with the same death that he had inflicted upon her prophets. Fearing the wrath of Jezebel, Elijah ran away as fast and as far as he could. Finally, frustrated and fatigued, he wallowed in self-pity beneath a juniper tree.

Elijah requested that God take his life, but God fed him by the brook instead. God always finds a way to *restore* us to fellowship with Him. Elijah thought that he was the only one left standing for God, but the Lord revealed to him that 7,000 had not bowed their knee to Baal. When Elijah's physical strength was recovered, he was led to the

mountains and into a cave. It was there that the Lord finally spoke to him in a “*still, small voice*” (1 Kings 19:12). Fellowship between the Lord and Elijah was *restored*.

God loves to *restore* the down trodden and fearful. He delights in encouraging the discouraged. Truly, God is *gracious, merciful, and slow to anger, kind, and able to forgive evil* (Jonah 4:2). Our Heavenly Father always makes the first move to *restore* us when we fail. Dear friend, is God speaking to you in a “*still, small voice*”? If so, find a quiet place right now and go to the Lord in prayer. He has promised in Jeremiah 33:3 to hear and answer us when we call upon Him. He even pledges to “*show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*”

In the Song of Solomon 5:2 the Shulamite confesses, “*I sleep, but my heart waketh...*”. There is never peace if there is no fellowship with God. The Holy Spirit will not allow His children to straddle fences between spirituality and carnality. The Shulamite has a difficult time sleeping because her heart is wide-awake. Notice that she is able to *discern* whose voice it is that stirs her. She knows well that it is her beloved.

As children of God, we are the *first* to know when our heart is not right with Him. The Holy Spirit that *seals* and *fills* also *convicts* us when we are wrong. How tenderly the Lord beckons us to repent, confess, and allow Him to reign in our lives. The God who *beckons* could very well *command*, yet He continually manifests His grace in our lives. The God who knocks *could* very well *knock down* the doors that we shut, but still, He patiently urges and caresses us. The God who *speaks* so tenderly could very well *curse*, yet He lovingly, tenderly, and compassionately compels us to open unto Him.

The Shulamite recalls the words spoken by her beloved, “*Open to me.*” In like manner, every child of God clearly understands when the Lord is pricking their heart, drawing them back into the fold of sweet communion. While some may deny they are backslidden, it is not difficult for others to identify them. There is nothing more miserable than a carnally minded Christian. They are negative about everything. Often they become withdrawn, depressed, and downright hateful. They do not want to be around anyone, and no one wants to be around them.

The lesson in Song of Solomon 5:2 closely resembles the lesson found in Revelation 3:20. Christ is pictured outside of the church of Laodicea. He knocks on the door, desiring to be let inside. The Laodiceans had excluded Him from their worship.

The same has happened in many churches today. Jesus knocks on the door and says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” But alas, many do not wish to let Him in.

There are many different reasons why this happens. Some fear that total commitment is far too great a price to pay. Some prefer the church to be a social club instead of a place of worship. Some have become so self-sufficient, self-reliant, and so rich and increased with goods, that they no longer felt that they need Christ. Such was the case with the Laodiceans, and most likely, such was the case of Israel during Solomon’s reign.

The shepherd uses four (4) different names to address the Shulamite. He calls her “my sister”, “my love”, “my dove”, and “my undefiled”. These four names are all terms of endearment, and they depict specific truths of our relationship with the Lord as well. Let us briefly examine each one of these names.

- *First*, the shepherd calls the Shulamite “my sister”. Every child of God is an heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17), having been adopted into God’s family (Romans 8:15). Members of the church are *brother* or *sisters* of Christ, as well as joint beneficiaries to all He is promised by the Father.
- *Secondly*, the shepherd calls the Shulamite “my love”. As the Shulamite is the object of the shepherd’s affection, so saints are the objects of Christ’s. Hebrew 12:2 asserts that for the joy that was set before Him, Jesus Christ endured the cross, despising the shame. Who was His joy? Those who are saved constitute His joy! Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). We are saved “for Christ’s sake” (Ephesians 4:32).
- *Thirdly*, he calls the Shulamite “my dove”. A dove depicts purity. It is a meek, gentle white bird. When a person is saved, they are justified, sanctified, and glorified in the sight of God. Since we have been washed in the blood of Jesus, there remains neither blemish nor spot. We are perfect in the sight of God because we are clothed in His pure righteousness.

- *Fourthly*, the shepherd calls the Shulamite “*my undefiled*”. She is without flaw in his sight. His love for her is so strong that he sees absolutely nothing defiled. As children of light, saints too are *undefiled* in the sight of God. Our beauty is based upon the imputed goodness and righteousness of Christ Jesus our Saviour.

The remainder of the shepherd’s response illustrated how earnestly he desires to come to her, “...*for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.*” Likewise, the desire of our Lord to condescend to our needs is without limit. He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). If fellowship with the Father is broken, we may rest assured that He will do whatever is needed to restore us.

- 5:3** *I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?*
- 4** *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.*
- 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.*
- 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.*
- 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.*
- 8** *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.*

Let us continue as we examine this melancholy *Song of the Shulamite*. Perhaps she only dreamed this story, and perhaps not. Regardless, she recalls her beloved shepherd as he beckoned her to open the door. Her reaction reveals just how *sleepy* she was. At first, she refuses to get out of bed to open the door. She makes excuse saying that she has already prepared herself for sleep. She complains that walking across the dirty floor will only defile her clean feet.

There are several applications that can be made at this point. The Lord has given clear instruction, “*If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me*” (Luke 9:23). Nowhere in Scripture are we taught that the Christian

life is a life of leisure! There is much work to be done, and there is a great need for laborers to join in the work. It appears in this account that the Shulamite was more concerned about *comfort* than she was about *communion*. Likewise, Israel had fallen *asleep spiritually*, so it is quite possible that God gave them this story to reveal the widespread *apathy* among the nation.

There are believers in the Church who are just as reluctant to respond to the beckoning of God in their lives. The Shulamite may be seen as foreshadowing of the *apathy* that today exists among New Testament believers. Some church members seem to be “*Christians by convenience*”. Some claim to be a Christian only when it serves their own purposes. In the early Church, it was dangerous to profess Christianity. There was a definite “*reproach*” or “*cost*” involved with publicly claiming the name of Christ. The many martyrs identified in the Book of Hebrews evidence this truth. I believe that a time is swiftly approaching when there will again be grave consequences for acknowledging faith in Christ. In some areas of the world this has already begun.

Just as there can be no *regeneration* without *repentance*, there can be no *fellowship* without *discipleship*. Salvation is based on *condition*, not *conduct*, but let us not underestimate the importance of *conduct*. A person can be a Christian without being a disciple. The term “*disciple*” means to be a “*follower*”. John the Baptist had disciples, but they were not Disciples of Christ until they received Him by faith and followed His teachings. Discipleship depends upon our *conduct*. There is a cost for discipleship. Christ said, “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*” (Matthew 16:24).

Christians must constantly be vigilant against spiritual *sleepiness*. *Sleepy* saints are insensitive to the voice of God. Israel had fallen *asleep* spiritually. Little by little, the Jews involved themselves in the pagan practices of the heathen. Backsliding is a *gradual process*. Believers do not deliberately choose to fall out of fellowship with God, but over a period of time, even the most devout saint can be lulled to *sleep*. Some believers deceive their own selves (James 1:22). Other people may detect a difference in your spiritual *sleepiness* before you are willing to admit it. This is the reason why Paul exhorted *spiritual* believers to help brothers who had been overtaken in a fault (Galatians 6:1). Backsliders are content to let others in the church do all of the work. They will let

others do the witnessing, the visiting, the teaching, the bus routes, the youth ministry, etc. It becomes easy to fabricate excuses in order to justify their lack of involvement. May God help us to guard our hearts, remain sensitive, and keep the fires burning until He comes!

In verses 4-6, we find an interesting custom practiced in the days of King Solomon. Key locks were not used on doors of houses, so a hole was bored through the door. A bar lock was used to secure the door from inside. This lock prevented the wind and wild animals from opening the door. A bar lock did not, however, prevent intruders from gaining access, so a security bar was used at night to keep outsiders from opening the door. This security bar was located near the top of the door, so one could not unlatch it by reaching through the hole.

In our story, we find that the shepherd called upon the Shulamite, but she did not answer. As in such cases, a man customarily would reach through the hole of the door and place a small amount of *myrrh* upon the bar lock. Whenever the lady awakened, she could smell the sweet fragrance and know that someone had called on her during the night. The shepherd followed this custom, and he reached his hand through the hole. The Shulamite recalls seeing the shepherd's hand and confesses, "*My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.*" The word "*bowels*" literally means "*emotions*". The Shulamite's bowels were stirred at the sight of his hand, but by the time she arose from her slumber, he had gone. Only the sweet fragrance of her beloved was left behind!

This story provides New Testament believers many applications. How many blessings have we failed to claim because we chose to *slumber* and *sleep*? Scripture is replete with exhortations for us to "*awake*". Time after time the Lord has put His hand into the "*hole of our heart*" to stir our "*bowels*". In Acts 16:14 the Lord "*opened the heart*" of Lydia, a seller of purple. In Luke 24:45 the Lord "*opened the understanding*" of the disciples and caused their hearts to burn within them.

The Shulamite frantically cried out for her beloved, but he gave no answer. She had been selfish; she had been complacent; she had become satisfied to sleep and to slumber. Instead of opening the door, the Shulamite had waited until a "*more convenient season*" (Acts 24:25). Her "*bowels were moved*" when her beloved placed his hand

through the hole of the door, but alas, she had waited too long. Her beloved was now withdrawn and could not be easily found.

We may assume that this was not the first time the shepherd had called on the Shulamite. It seems likely that prior attempts had also proven unfruitful. There was something different that occurred on this occasion, however. This time the Shulamite spied his hand as he reached through the door. The sight of the shepherd's hand stirred her heart and prompted her to arise from her sleep. As she stumbled in the dark, she smelled the sweet myrrh dripping from the lock. She opened the door and discovered that her beloved was not there! In an act of desperation, she scurried outside to search for him. She called out his name, but there was no answer. Though the Lord is easy to be found, we will not find Him on a schedule of our own making. We will only find Him on His Divine, Sovereign terms (John 6:44).

Notice what happens in the seventh verse. The watchmen find the frantic Shulamite alone and vulnerable in the darkness. They smite her and persecute her. They strip her of her veil. She is treated as a common harlot of the streets. How sad was her plight this dark and dreadful night! My friend, it is always *dark* and *dreadful* when we choose *comfort* over *communion* with God. The life of a backslider is not easy. Solomon writes, "*The way of transgressors is hard*" (Proverbs 13:15). God is loving, compassionate, and longsuffering, but He is also "*jealous*" (Exodus 20:5). He desires and deserves the *preeminence* in our lives (Colossians 1:18).

This terrible ordeal reveals the consequences of *spiritual sleepiness*. Recall the Shulamite's excuses. She said, "*I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?*" Now she says, "*...I am sick of love.*" What happened to exact this change of heart? It has been aptly said, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." In the case of the Shulamite, she realized how much she missed communing with her shepherd. She searched for him in the night, running from place to place fearing she might never see him again. Notice the charge the Shulamite issues to the "daughters of Jerusalem" at this time, "*O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.*" She wants more than anything to find her beloved shepherd!

- 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?*
- 10 *My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.*
- 11 *His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.*
- 12 *His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters washed with milk, and fitly set.*
- 13 *His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.*
- 14 *His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*
- 15 *His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.*
- 16 *His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

In verse 9 the “daughters of Jerusalem” respond to her in chorus, and twice ask the same question. We may infer by this repetition that the question is of great importance. They inquire of the Shulamite, “*What is thy beloved more than another?*” How would you answer if someone asked you of Christ, “*What is thy beloved Jesus Christ more than another? What makes Him better than other gods or religions?*” Peter instructed the saints how to answer such a question, “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*” (1 Peter 3:15).

In verses 10-16 the Shulamite gives a clear response to the inquiry of the “*daughters of Jerusalem*”. She answers them by providing a detailed description of her beloved shepherd. This description reveals her estimate of him. *First*, the Shulamite says, “*My beloved is white and ruddy.*” These colors speak of his *inward* beauty, not his *outward* appearance. This description may be applied to depict our Lord Jesus Christ as well. Isaiah prophesied that Messiah would have, “*no form or comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him*” (Isaiah 53:2). There is an intrinsic beauty in Christ; a beauty realized only through the eyes of faith. He is *white* in that He was pure, innocent, and spotless, untainted by the sin of man. He is “*white*” in that He is the righteous, holy, and perfect Son of God. God’s Word declares that He is made unto us “*wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Jesus is “*ruddy*” because of the bloody sufferings He was subjected to by His enemies. The Lord was “*ruddy*” because a crown of thorns was placed upon His head. He was “*ruddy*” because He was beaten with many stripes upon His back. Christ was “*ruddy*” because He was nailed to an old, rugged cross; and pierced with a spear by a Roman soldier. Truly, the Shulamite’s beloved is a type of our *white* and *ruddy* Lord! Christ was “*white*” in His glory when transfigured before Peter, James, and John, yet at the same time; He was “*ruddy*” as He identified with man, the descendants of Adam whose name literally means “*red earth*.”

Secondly, the Shulamite boasts of her beloved shepherd as the “...*chiefest among ten thousand*.” She says that there is none like him. To the Shulamite the shepherd is the fairest among all men. Does not such a description accurately portray our Lord? Paul described Christ in a similar fashion, “*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;*” (Philippians 3:8-10).

Paul’s desire to know Christ was so overwhelming that nothing else mattered! Is Christ the “*chiefest among ten thousand*” to your soul? The Word of God is replete with affirmations of His majesty. In Psalm 89:27 the psalmist writes, “*Also I will make him (Christ) my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.*” Philippians 2:9 states, “*Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.*” The writer of Hebrews says, “*Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*” The word *chiefest* literally means “*standard-bearer; tallest and comeliest of the company.*” Truly Christ is the “*chiefest among men.*” He was “*lifted up as an ensign*” on the cross (Isaiah 11:10). Jesus spoke of drawing all men unto Himself, “*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*” (John 12:32). Yes, Jesus Christ is the “*fairest of ten thousands to my soul.*”

Thirdly, the Shulamite ascribes the worth of her beloved by in a series of ten separate similes. She culminates this vivid word portrait by shouting, “*He is altogether lovely.*” Let us look at these descriptions and draw some parallels to Christ.

- **“*His head is as the most fine gold*”**

In this comparison she portrays the preeminence of her beloved shepherd. Gold depicts *wealth, weight, and worth*. The Shulamite willingly submits to her shepherd as her lord. Of Christ it is recorded, “*...in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*” (Colossians 2:9). He is the Head of the Church, “*And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven*” (Colossians 1:18-20). Truly, the Lord Jesus Christ is as “*gold,*” yea, the “*most fine gold*”. He deserves our submission to His divine Headship.

- **“*His locks are bushy and black as a raven*”**

You will recall that earlier the Shulamite spoke of her own “blackness”, “*Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me*” (Song of Solomon 1:6). The women of the palace were critical of her tanned skin. The Church is not yet perfect, “*without spot or blemish.*” In this present, evil world we yet possess a “*blackness of deformity*” because we maintain the *fleshly* nature of humanity. The term, “*blackness*” used by the Shulamite to describe her shepherd does not denote the same meaning. The use of the word in this passage is used to describe the “*blackness of beauty*”. The beauty of the raven is found in its deep, dark color, perfectly black and perfectly beautiful.

As a point of contrast, John writes in Revelation 1:14 that the hair of Christ is *white*. This depicted His *eternality* as the “*ancient of days*”. In the Song of Solomon, the Shulamite describes her beloved’s hair as “*black and bushy*” to

illustrate his *youthfulness*. Christ is both eternally *ancient* as well as eternally *youthful* since He is ageless, timeless, and eternal.

- ***“Eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set”***

The eyes of doves are keen, fair, and clear. They are chaste and kind. Doves delight in rivers because they can see their reflections in the water. The Shulamite in essence states that her beloved is chaste and kind as well.

Like a dove, Christ desires to see His reflection in us. The Word of God exhorts saints to be *conformed to the image of Christ* so that others may see Him in us and by our good works glorify God. Our eyes should be as Christ’s eyes; washed with milk and clean; without prejudice; without envy; without respect of persons. Our eyes should be *“fitly set”*. Christ’s eyes are without deformity; without iniquity; without guile.

Christians should see others as Christ sees them, with compassion and love. We should never view life through worldly eyes. We know that *“All things work together for good to them that love God”* (Romans 8:28). The ways of the world are contrary to God’s ways. John writes that one day the world will see the eyes of Christ as a *“flame of fire”* (Revelation 1:14).

There is nothing that will not be manifest in His sight for *“all things are open and naked unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do”* (Hebrews 4:13). As we yield ourselves to the Spirit, we will see others differently. His eyes view the weak, the poor, the weary, and the sore with tender compassion. His eyes are ever watching over His own. As the song writer penned, *“If His eyes are on the sparrow, then I know He is watching me.”*

- ***“His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers....”***

Cheekbones provide garnishing for a person’s face. As the Shulamite spoke of the shepherd, she was compelled to speak of the attractiveness of his cheeks. Just as cheekbones garnish a person’s facial appearance, so our Lord garnishes our spirit. Jesus Christ is perfect *sweetness*. Just one small glimpse of

Christ will brighten the darkest heart and sweeten the meanest temper. Are you bitter or resentful about something in your life? Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. He can sweeten the most embittered heart.

- ***“His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh”***

How soothing the shepherd’s words were to the Shulamite! She speaks of his words, no doubt because they were loving and tender to her. His words were not angry, mean-spirited, or degrading.

And what of Christ’s words to man? Are not His words like “*sweet smelling myrrh*”, able to heal like the *Balm of Gilead*? David declared that the words of the Lord were “*More to be desired are they (words of God) than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb*” (Psalms 19:10). In another psalm he wrote, “*How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*” (119:103). In Psalm 34:8 David wrote, “*O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*” To know Christ is to know the *sweetness* of God!

- ***“His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl”***

Speaking of her shepherd’s hands, the Shulamite does not say his hands *have* rings of gold, but rather his hands *are* as gold rings set with the beryl. One of the greatest treasures of the world is fine jewelry. My wife loves for me to bring her rings, bracelets, or necklaces from different countries. Of course, I do not know too many women who do not enjoy such things. Much value is placed upon gold, silver, diamonds, and other fine stones. The Shulamite uses the figure of “*gold rings set with beryl*” to characterize her beloved’s *hands*.

As one views the shepherd as a type of Christ, one can better understand this comparison. The *hands* of our Lord Jesus Christ are as valuable as *gold* to those who are hurting. During His earthly ministry, the *hands* of Jesus reached out to many in need. His *hands* provided healing to the sick, bread to the hungry, and sight to the blind. Peter reached out for the *hands* of Jesus when he was

sinking in the Sea of Galilee. The *hands* of Jesus held children brought to Him by their parents. And let us not forget how Jesus revealed His nail-scarred *hands* to Thomas.

Today the *hands* of Jesus Christ remain outstretched as He compels all sinners to come to Him. Listen to Jesus' words as He invites you to come, "*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28). Have you heeded this call? Have you received the "*outstretched hands*" of Jesus Christ and claimed Him as your Lord and Saviour?

- ***"His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires"***

The word "*belly*" may be translated as "*bowels*". This is the same word used in verse 4. It literally means "*emotions; affections*". In essence, the Shulamite says that the shepherd's *affections* for her are like "*bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*" Ivory is a very strong substance, and *sapphire* is a very bright, sparkling gem. Sapphire increases the value of the jewelry by its beauty. The affection that Christ has for us is greater. God's Word declares, "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13).

- ***"His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold"***

The Shulamite declares that there is no weakness in her beloved. His legs are stately and strong, like pillars of marble set upon the surety of fine gold. What a foreshadowing of Christ! "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*" (Hebrews 13:8). The Father said of the Son, "*with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*" (James 1:17). Often men change their behavior and attitude, but not so of Christ. The "*ways of the LORD are equal*" (Ezekiel 18:25). The LORD is no "*respector of persons*" (Romans 2:11).

- ***"His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars"***

The Shulamite says to look upon her beloved is like looking at the majestic mountains of Lebanon covered with beautiful, tall, strong cedar trees. There are no trees in the Middle East that compare to the cedars of Lebanon. Lebanon's cedars excel in beauty, stature, and worth.

David spoke of the Lord in all of His excellence. He says that there is none like Him! In Psalms 8:1 David wrote, "*O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.*" Isaiah wrote, "*I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me...*" (Isaiah 45:5). There is none so excellent in the entire universe.

- ***"His mouth is most sweet"***

In this tenth description the Shulamite speaks of the *sweetness* of her shepherd's mouth. Obviously, she is completely consumed by his excellence. We have already discussed the *sweetness* of God's Word. God's Word exhorts us to taste its sweetness, "*O taste and see that the Lord is good!*" (Psalm 34:8).

As saints grow in grace and knowledge of Christ, His Word becomes more and more precious to us. Believers are constrained to conform to Him. Paul taught the importance of renewing our minds with the Word of God in Romans 12:2, "*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.*" "*Renewing of your mind,*" means that His will becomes our will, and it is manifested in our lives. As we reflect upon the correlation of these comparisons, we too are compelled to say of Christ, "*He is altogether lovely. This my beloved, my friend*" (Song of Solomon 5:16).

- 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.*
- 2** *My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.*
- 3** *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.*

In response to the Shulamite's portrayal of her shepherd, the "*daughters of Jerusalem*" ask another question, "*Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy beloved turned aside? That we may seek him with thee.*" These daughters were so impressed by the Shulamite's testimony of the shepherd that they wanted to know him as well. They recognized something special about this one described so intimately, passionately, and lovingly. God's Word gives a similar record of a testimony of Jesus Christ. After hearing the testimony given by Phillip and other disciples, certain Greeks came to Phillip and said, "*Sir, we would see Jesus.*" Likewise, the "*daughters of Jerusalem*" desired to see the Shulamite's shepherd. They were compelled to know the object of her affection.

The Shulamite replied, "*My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of the spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.*" At the beginning of the fifth chapter, the Shulamite exclaimed, "*I sleep, but my heart waketh.*" Her heart had been awakened in the middle of the night by thoughts of her beloved. The Shulamite had become insensitive to her beloved because of separation. Her spirit was vexed. The shepherd made the first move to restore their broken fellowship. The Shulamite recognized his voice and said, "*...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*" (Song of Solomon 5:2).

In her *spiritual sleepiness*, she at first grumbled in reply, "*I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?*" (Song of Solomon 5:3). Graciously the shepherd persisted in an attempt to restore her. He continued to compel her in gentleness and kindness. She confessed, "*My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him*" (Song of Solomon 5:4). Seeing his hand compelled her to open the door, but by the time she did, he had gone. Let us be glad the story does not end here! Song of Solomon 6:1-2 reveals the rest of this intriguing story.

At last, the Shulamite finally realizes where he may be found; "*My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies*" (6:1-2). The Shulamite breaks out in joyous refrain, "*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine:*

he feedeth among the lilies” (6:3). What an illustration of God’s amazing grace!
Though vile and unworthy, He is our Beloved still!

Chapter 7

The Sovereign to the Shulamite

Song of Solomon 6:4-7:9

- 6:4 Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.
- 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 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.
- 7 As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.
- 8 There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.
- 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.
- 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?
- 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.
- 12 Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.
- 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.
- 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.
- 2 Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.
- 3 Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.
- 4 Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim; thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.
- 5 Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.
- 6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

- 7 This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.
- 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;
- 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.

6:4 *Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.*

In this passage, King Solomon returns to the scene. He once more attempts to persuade the young Shulamite to be his bride. He initiates the conversation with a song. He says, “*Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.*” This is the language of a king, not a commoner. According to A. Moody Stuart, the city of *Tirzah* was once the royal city of an ancient Canaanite king, and afterwards it was used, for a time, by the kings of Israel. It is believed *Tirzah* literally means “*pleasant*”, and the city and location were probably known for their beauty.

6:5 *Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me...*

As the king addresses the Shulamite, he makes an interesting comment in the beginning of verse 5 - “*Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me.*” What does this suggest? How could this lowly Shulamite overcome such a powerful king? Perhaps her outward beauty had overcome his heart. Perhaps he was so consumed by her charm that he was rendered powerless.

Let us make application to the effect *sin* has on us all. *Sin* can render us powerless if we dwell on it for any length of time. *Sin* originates in our *minds*, works its way to our *hearts*, and culminates itself in our *actions*. There are three stages of sin - *lust* (enticement), *conception* (conscience decision), and *action* (commitment). This is the teaching of James 1:13-16, “*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is*

tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

The Word of God admonishes believers to guard their hearts - *“Keep your hearts with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a forward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil”* (Proverbs 4:23-27).

In order to guard our *hearts* and *minds* we must avoid temptation. Paul writes, *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:6-7). Notice that *“peace of God through prayer”* is vitally linked to *“the guarding of one’s heart and mind”*. When our minds are set on things above, we will be less prone to yield to temptation. This is the key!

This was the exhortation that Paul gave to the Philippians, *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”* (Philippians 4:8). As the beauty of the Shulamite *overcame* King Solomon, the majesty of Christ enables us to *overcome* temptation to sin.

Another application that can be made is that Christ may be overcome much in the same manner as Solomon. Let us briefly look at three (3) ways Christ may be overcome.

- ***The Lord Is Overcome by the Fall of Man***

The Word of God teaches that man is inherently sinful. Romans 3:10-18 records the blackness of man’s sinful heart, *“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and*

bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes."

This 14-fold indictment issued by Paul reveals man's *total depravity*. Mankind is sinful, vile, and utterly unable to redeem himself. As a matter of fact, the following two verses of Romans Chapter 3 read, "*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that ever mouth may be stopped, and ALL the world may become GUILTY before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin*" (Romans 3:19-20). The Law could never save sinful mankind. The reason the Law was given was to reveal man's sinfulness and need of a Saviour.

Man's problem is not one of *conduct*; it is one of *condition*! Man inherited a sinful nature from Adam, the federal head of mankind. Romans 5:12 teaches, "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*" Man is not a sinner because he sins; rather, man sins because he is a sinner! Our Adamic nature lusts after earthly things. Because of the *Fall of Man*, fellowship between God and man was severed. The only way God and man can commune as before is for man to be *regenerated*. Man's greatest need is to be *born-again* (John 3:3-7). Though many people are religious, they are still lost without Christ. Religion cannot save any more than the Law. Man has righteousness, but his brand of righteousness is the wrong kind. Man's righteousnesses are as "*filthy rags*" in the sight of God (Isaiah 64:6). The very *best* man can do is still the best *man* can do, and man can never *do enough* to save himself!

With this in mind, let us consider how Christ has been overcome by the fall of man. What is the reason Christ came into the world? The answer is clearly explained in 1 Timothy 1:15, "*...Christ Jesus came into the world to SAVE SINNERS!*" What motivated Him to leave Heaven to come to this world in flesh and live an obscure life in a small country called Israel? What motivated Jesus to tolerate public humiliation and scorn; be subjected to sinful men who beat Him and mocked Him and nailed Him to a cross of shame? The reason is that He was "*overcome by the fall of man*" (Hebrews 12:2). Only Jesus Christ could provide a means of reconciliation for sinful mankind.

Only Christ alone stands in the gap and makes up the hedge for lost sinners (Acts 4:12). Only Christ alone could bear the sins of the world and nail them to the Cross (Colossians 2:14). Only Christ alone conquered death and hell and is “*declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead*” (Revelation 1:18; Romans 1:4). Only Christ alone could be an acceptable sacrifice to God as the One and Only Son of God. Peter wrote, “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit*” (1 Peter 3:18). Truly, Christ was *overcome by the fall of man*, and because of His innate love, He willingly laid down His life for the whole world (1 John 2:1-2).

- ***The Lord Is Overcome by a Sinner’s Prayer***

Romans 3:21-31 reveals all that is necessary to understand God’s plan of salvation. Since man is inherently sinful and cannot save himself, Christ came to this world to be our propitiation (that which satisfies a holy, righteous God) by offering Himself as our Substitute in death. Romans 3:26 reveals that God is righteous and just and the justifier of them who believe on Christ. Romans Chapter 5 teaches there is only one method of salvation – “*Therefore, being justified by FAITH, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Our salvation is based upon the *finished work* of Jesus Christ, not our own good works. What He did by his death, burial, and resurrection cannot be duplicated. He alone is “*The Way, the Truth, and the Life*” (John 14:6). There is none other. As we have previously stated, “*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).

A sinner’s prayer of faith for forgiveness still *overcomes* Christ. He cannot resist saving the soul that exercises faith by obeying the truth of the gospel message of Christ. Listen to the Word of God as it instructs us how sinners who desire to be saved overcome Christ.

- **John 6:37** - “*...him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*”
- **Romans 10:9-10** - “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be*

saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

- **John 3:36** - *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life....”*
- **Acts 16:31** - *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”*
- **1 John 5:4-5** - *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that BELIEVETH that Jesus is the Son of God.”*
- **Revelation 22:17** - *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”*

These verses and many more provide clear teaching that sinners who believe, repent, and call upon His name for salvation *overcome* Christ. Have YOU *overcome* the Lord? Why not *overcome* Christ this very moment? By faith invite Jesus into your heart; claim Him as your Saviour right now!

- ***The Lord Is Overcome by a Saint’s Submission***

Paul wrote, *“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”* (1 Corinthians 4:2). There are three *stages* involved in salvation: *past*, *present*, and *future*. Paul instructed the Corinthians concerning these *stages* - *“Who delivered us from so great a death [past], and doth deliver [present]: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us [future]”* (2 Corinthians 1:10). We learn from this verse that a believer is *positionally* sanctified; *progressively* sanctified; and *prophetically* sanctified. The moment we are saved, we are *positionally sanctified* (set apart). This means that we have been delivered from the *penalty* of sin (*justification*). We are *progressively sanctified* (delivered from the *power* of sin) as we grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord (*sanctification*). Finally, we will be *prophetically sanctified* (delivered from the very *presence* of sin) the moment we are *“caught up”* and *“changed”* as described 1 Cor. 15:51-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 (*glorification*).

As we have previously noted, saints are exhorted to *“be transformed by the renewing our minds”* and *“conformed to the image of God’s dear Son”* (Romans 12:1-2).

Paul admonished believers to live *separated* lives (2 Corinthians 6:1-16). In 2 Corinthians 7:1, Paul continues, “*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God* (progressive sanctification).” We conclude, therefore, that Christ is *overcome* by our *submission* to His sovereign authority. Every time we yield in submissive obedience, He joyfully gives us the desires of our heart (Psalm 37:4). It is a sobering thought to consider how many blessings we have forfeited because of our lack of submission.

Christ is *overcome* by the *fall of sinful man*, so He came to seek and save that which was lost. Christ is *overcome* every time a *sinner’s prayer* is offered for salvation, so He continues to cry out for sinners to come, “*He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out*” (John 6:37). Christ is *overcome* by the *submissive obedience of saints*, so He promises to draw near to those who draw near to Him (James 4:8). No wonder the Shulamite rejoiced to know that she belonged to her beloved, and he belonged to her (Song of Solomon 6:3; 7:10). Can YOU say the same about Christ? If not, receive Him as your Saviour right now. Invite Him into your heart. “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31).

- 6:5b***thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.*
- 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.*
- 7** *As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.*
- 8** *There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.*
- 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.*
- 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?*

As the king continues, he describes the Shulamite’s outward beauty. He speaks of her *hair*, *teeth*, and *temples*. He refers to her as the “*choice one of her that bare her.*” He notes how that she is blessed in the sight of the “*daughters of Jerusalem*”, yea, even the queens and concubines praise her beauty!

In verse 10, something very special is revealed about the Shulamite that we must consider. Let us remember, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...”* (2 Timothy 3:16). If the Church is to profit from this wonderful Song, common ground must be found to make application to New Testament saints. The *“daughters of Jerusalem”* speak the words recorded in verse 10. Verse 9 reveals how the Shulamite was extolled by the women of Solomon’s palace, *“...the daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her”*. Verse 10 is but a continuation of verse 9. It simply continues the words spoken by these women. They praise her by asking, *“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?”* It is interesting to notice the manner in which they celebrate her beauty.

Let us make application here to the Church. The Word of God exhorts believers to *“watch and pray”*; *“to redeem the times”*; to understand the urgency of the moment because *“the time is at hand”*. The word *“time”* refers to the day when Jesus will return for His Church, as He promised (John 14:1-3). In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 we read, *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*

This wonderful event called the *Rapture* is illustrated in type in the story of Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 24:61-67). Abraham sent a servant to find a bride for his son, Isaac. The servant took several gifts as incentives, but ultimately a woman would have to exercise *faith* in the servant’s message to become the bride of Isaac. A young maiden named Rebekah chose to exercise such faith. She left her home, family, and land to go to her perspective groom, not knowing her future. One day, Isaac walked in a field. He looked up and saw a caravan coming. Rebekah dismounted her camel and *went up to meet her bridegroom* whom she had never seen. Isaac received her as his wife, and he loved her the rest of his days.

Imagine what a glorious time it will be when the Lord Himself shall descend for His Bride, and the Church will go up to meet Him in the air! It might be that the angelic

host will also say, “*Who is she (Church) that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?*”

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.*

12 *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.*

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.*

I once read a story of a preacher who spoke to a group of unbelievers at a university gathering. They were a cerebral group that included college professors, doctors, and other intellectuals. It was said that many of their theological ideas were completely ridiculous, though they thought they made perfect sense. After speaking to the group, the preacher’s friend asked, “What do you think you accomplished by going to that group?” The preacher replied, “I don’t know that I accomplished much, but I was certainly scriptural. I went down into the *garden of nuts!*”

There are three *gardens* mentioned in the Song of Solomon. Each of these gardens is mentioned during a different season of the year. In Song of Solomon 4:12, we find the *first* garden in the *spring* of the year, full of flowers and tender grapes not yet mature. In Song of Solomon 5:1, we find a *second* garden in the *fall* of the year, full of spices and ripe fruits. In Song of Solomon 6:11, we find the *third* garden in the final stages of *winter*, when the days are their coldest, and people anxiously anticipate the arrival of spring. It is during this time of the year that we find the Shulamite coming into the garden of nuts. She notices the first signs of spring as evidenced by her words, “*the fruits of the valley...the flourishing of the vine... and budding of the pomegranates*” (Song of Solomon 6:11).

Following the Ascension of Christ, the disciples tarried in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Ghost. Their period of waiting must have seemed similar to anticipating the arrival of spring – a time of rejuvenation and resurrection. They anxiously awaited the Promise of the Father, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

They had been saddened by their separation from the Jesus, and they longed for a Comforter to soothe their troubled souls.

The Shulamite exclaimed in verse 12, *“Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.”* One preacher well stated, “The Word of God is a garden; a whole garden of unopened nuts. There are innumerable kernels in the Word of God waiting to be opened and enjoyed by the Bride of Christ.” In verse 13, we read, *“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.”* What an illustration of God’s children! As we walk in the Spirit, others will see Christ in us, the hope of glory. They will see a *“company of two armies,”* both the saved and the Saviour. Do those you come into contact with daily see Christ and you linked together by the Spirit of God? Paul wrote, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20).

- 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.*
- 2** *Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.*
- 3** *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.*
- 4** *Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim; thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.*
- 5** *Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.*
- 6** *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!*
- 7** *This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.*
- 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;*
- 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.*

In these opening verses of chapter seven we find the consuming effect that the Shulamite’s beauty has had on King Solomon. Solomon paints a full-length portrait of

her physical charms. He uses metaphors of familiar *cities* and a stately *palm tree* to describe her. He expresses his desire to *hold her* tightly in his arms. He only imagines her embrace since she has never yielded to his compelling invitations. He imagines her *breasts* as clusters of fruit; her *breath* as sweet as apples; and the flavor of her *kisses* to the very best wine.

All of these descriptions reveal the heart of one intoxicated with sensual, carnal desires. He repeatedly coaxes her to abandon her beloved shepherd. Let us again be reminded of the historical significance of this story. It was written primarily for Israel who had committed spiritual adultery. The events of this story serve as an object lesson to the Jews. However, there are ample lessons for believers today as well (Proverbs 4:23). The devil desires nothing more than to persuade saints to be unfaithful. Satan, like Solomon, will spare no expense to accomplish his goal.

Chapter 8

The Sweetness of the Shepherd

Song of Solomon 7:10-8:4

- 7:10** I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.
- 11** Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 3** His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.
- 4** I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.

7:10 "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me."

This is, perhaps, the most wonderful statement in the Song of Solomon! As we examine this verse, let us rejoice in its doctrine. In response to the king's enticements, the Shulamite announces once and for all that she belongs to her beloved and no one else. No temptations in the world can persuade her to be unfaithful to him. May God help us to live such consecrated lives as Christians!

Again we remind our readers of the wonderful union that is formed when a person is born again. A new relationship with Christ is established and an eternal union is formed. This oneness or union is clearly illustrated in the marriage relationship. In Genesis 2:24 we read, "*Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*" Divorce is never an "easy out" as some today deem it. Jesus spoke of divorce by issuing the following statement, "*And he*

answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: And they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:3-6).

The Shulamite addresses her relationship with her beloved. In verse 10 the Shulamite provides specific truths that may also be applied to the relationship that exists between Christ and New Testament saints. Let us examine four (4) parallel truths between the Shulamite and the shepherd and Christ and believers.

- ***Our Relationship Is Personal***

The *first* parallel truth is found in the beginning of the verse, *“I am my beloved’s”*. Notice the personal pronouns used in this verse - *“I”* and *“my”*. Just as the relationship between the Shulamite and shepherd was *personal*, so our relationship with Jesus Christ is *personal*. Christ is no benefit to a person unless He is *personalized*. No one is saved apart from heart felt repentance and faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10).

There are some folks who think that they are saved simply because their parents or grandparents were saved. This is not scriptural. Nowhere in the Word of God is it taught that you can be saved apart from belief in Christ. Salvation is *personal*; it is only possible only by individual repentance and faith. Listen to what God’s Word says concerning salvation:

- ***John 6:44-47***

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

- ***Romans 10:9-10***

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

- **Romans 10:13**

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

- **Romans 6:17-18**

“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you. Being then made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness.”

- **John 3:36**

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

- **John 6:37**

“...and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.”

- **John 3:16-18**

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

- **Romans 14:11-12**

“For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

- ***Acts 4:12***

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

Dear friend, have you *personalized* Jesus Christ? Have you called upon Him to save you? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ now and be saved.

- ***Our Relationship Is Present***

The *second* parallel truth in Song of Solomon 7:10 is that our relationship is *present*. Notice the Shulamite uses the *present* tense – “*I am*”. She did not say that she “*was*” or “*would be*”. She boldly proclaims that she presently belongs to her beloved shepherd. The same is true of every child of God. Paul wrote, “*There is therefore, NOW, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.*” How wonderful to know that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ began the very moment we trusted Him as our Saviour!

Of course, our salvation is not yet complete. As we already mentioned there are three *stages* of salvation – *past, present, and future*. “*But we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us [past] from so great a death, and doth deliver [present]: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; [future]*” (2 Corinthians 1:10). When we trusted Christ we were delivered (past) from the penalty of sin. As we grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are delivered (present) from the power of sin. Finally, when Christ comes back for His Bride, the Church, we will be delivered (prophetic) from the very presence of sin. Our relationship with Christ began the very moment we were saved (justification); continues as we live in this present, evil world (sanctification); and will last for all of eternity (glorification).

- ***Our Relationship Is Possessive***

The *third* parallel truth is that our relationship is *possessive*. Notice the use of the possessive pronoun “*my*”. The Shulamite considered her relationship with the shepherd a valued *possession*. She realized that it was unique from other relationships. The same

is true of the relationship between Christ and New Testament believers. God's Word clearly teaches this principle - "*What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Sinners can only enter into a relationship with Christ *by faith*. When Jesus died upon the cross, He paid the debt of sinners in all dispensations. His blood is sufficient to purchase *our* sinful souls from the slave market of sin (1 John 2:2). Christ willingly became *our* Substitute as He took *our* place in death. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus Christ is not *your* Lord, *your* Saviour, or *your* God IF you have not entered into a *personal, present, and possessive* relationship with Him.

Talking with a group of Jewish leaders, Jesus provided clear teaching about spiritual Fatherhood - "*Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do you not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear [literally means bear to hear] my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it*" (John 8:42-44). God becomes our Father only when we are born into His family.

There is a distinct difference between the children of God and children of the devil. One difference is the *existence of light* (Matthew 8:12; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5-9). A person can only be saved if they receive the *light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ* (2 Corinthians 4:4). Another difference is *obedience to light* (Ephesians 2:2; 5:6; Colossians 3:6). Those who have been born again chose to obey the light revealed by God. Only the Spirit of God can reveal *light*. Believers ought to desire to continue to obey light after salvation. This is why Paul exhorted saints to offer themselves a living sacrifice unto the Lord "*which is your reasonable service*" (Romans 12:1-2). Another difference is the divine illumination of *light*. Only by the Holy Spirit can we comprehend the Word. The natural (unsaved) man cannot understand the Word

because they are spiritually discerned. The believer is saved from the wrath to come. However, the child of the devil is in danger of the *wrath to come* (Ephesians 2:3; 5:6; Colossians 3:6).

- ***Our Relationship Is Passionate***

The *fourth* parallel truth of our relationship is *passion*. The word, “*beloved*”, is a term of endearment. The Shulamite realized something very special about her beloved. She acknowledged that he had redeemed her from an awful existence filled with sorrow, heartache, and pain. Her hopeless existence in the beginning of the book revealed she was an outcast even to her own family.

The same is true of every man born of woman. In our mother’s womb we were “*shapen in iniquity*”; we were born enslaved by the shackles of sin. Man is born without hope, helpless, and hell-bound. But God in His infinite mercy and grace meets our need! By the death of His Son, God has provided for the *spiritual needs* of all mankind. Isaiah 53 reveals the manner in which Jesus came into this world, “*He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.*” How gracious of Christ to bear the sins of the whole world upon the cross and taste death for all men! Hallelujah! What a Saviour! How our hearts should rejoice with the songwriter, who wrote,

*“Oh, the love that drew salvation’s plan.
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man.
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span...On Calvary!
Mercy there was great and grace was free.
Pardon there was multiplied to me.
There my burdened soul found liberty...At Calvary.”*

There is much meaning in the little word, “*beloved*”. It is not a word chosen frivolously. The passion revealed in this word should inspire us to feel the same about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As we examine the second half of *Song of Solomon* 7:10, there are even more blessings contained in this wonderful verse. The Shulamite continues her wonderful announcement by saying, “*...and his desire is toward me.*” How wonderful to know that the “*desire*” of the Creator of the entire universe is “*toward us*”! Surely, David must have been thinking the same thing when he penned Psalm 8:4,

“What is man that thou are mindful of him...?” Oh, the greatness of God’s love toward mankind! - *“...his desire is toward me.”*

The word, *“desire”* literally means *“to stretch forth; to long for.”* This precious word indicates that everything God does is motivated by his *“love toward usward.”* Every suffering, every testing, every blessing, every circumstance of our life is only possible because of God’s *permissive will*. God is still on the throne and in control of the universe. Paul wrote, *“For by him [Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist”* (Colossians 1:16-17). Every thought He has of us is motivated by His *“desire is toward us.”* Jeremiah wrote, *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end”* (Jeremiah 29:11). God’s *“desire”* is that we enjoy the fullness of His blessings. He desires that we experience both *“peace with God”* (through salvation) and the *“peace of God”* (made possible by fellowship with God).

Some people who have suffered find fault with God for their misery. Some people go so far as to even curse God because of their trials and tribulations of life. Job’s wife told him to curse God because of his trials and suffering, but Job was much too wise for such foolish advice. He said, *“What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”* (Job 2:9).

Friend, rest confidently in knowing that God’s *“desire is toward us.”* His longing (*desire*) is always for our good and His glory. It may be that God permits you to pass through a storm of life in order to draw you near to Him. Jeremiah revealed this principle to Judah. He wrote, *“For I know my thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end”* (Jeremiah 29:11). God’s *“desire toward us”* is always to *“give us an expected end”* – that we might enjoy the fulness and blessings of sweet fellowship with Him.

Peter taught on the topic of trials when he penned his First Epistle. Writing to the scattered, suffering saints of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, he wrote, *“Wherein ye greatly rejoice though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious*

than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6-7). We find at least four (4) principles of truth concerning trials -

- ***Trials Meet Our Needs – “if need be”***

Trials are *necessary*. Sometimes God allows trials simply to help us grow in grace. Sometimes God allows trials to prepare us for some particular ministry. Sometimes God allows trials to awaken us from spiritual sleepiness. One thing we know for certain, whatever God allows in our lives, it is to “*give us an expected end*” (Jeremiah 29:11). We can rest assured that trials are for our benefit and to glorify Him!

- ***Trials Are Varied – “manifold temptations”***

Trials are *varied*. This means that trials come in all shapes and sizes. The word, “*manifold*”, literally means “*variegated or multicolored*”. No matter what color, shape, or size the trial, whether great or small, God’s grace is always sufficient to enable us to bear the burden. We must remember that the end result is to “*bring us unto Himself*”. This is the clear teaching of God’s Word. God assured the Israelites, “*Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself*” (Exodus 19:4). Often God allows trials simply to reveal His tender loving-kindness and amazing grace so that we might trust Him more and more.

- ***Trials Are Not Easy – “in heaviness”***

Trials are sometimes *heavy*. Peter uses the word “*heaviness*” which literally means “*to experience grief or pain*”. This is the same word used by the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane as His sweat became as drops of blood (Luke 22:44). The *agony* that is experienced during trials provides us with a better understanding of God’s grace. Jesus suffered as no man ever suffered. The *heaviness* He endured before He was even nailed to the cross was more intense than our finite minds will allow us to comprehend.

Jesus knew before He ever left Heaven that He would come unto His own (Jews), and His own would receive Him not (John 1:11). He knew before the foundation of the world that He would be persecuted, mocked, arrested, and falsely tried by sinful men. He

knew before He was ever taken to Calvary that He would be beaten, spat upon, smitten, and ridiculed by evil men. He knew before He was ever crucified that He must become sin and die for sinful men if they indeed would be saved. Jesus knew that the Father would forsake Him, as He became sin upon the cross of Calvary. Jesus knew that a crowd of people sitting at the foot of His cross would laugh, mock, and ridicule Him. Our Lord knew all of this, yet He willingly laid down His life anyway.

No, my friend, trials are often incredibly *heavy*, yet God has promised us, “*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*” (1 Corinthians 10:13). There is no temptation that our Lord does not know about personally. Whatever our burden or trial, the Lord Jesus Christ is seated at the Father’s right hand as our Great High Priest for us. “*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*” (Hebrews 4:15-16). Yes, God knows that trials can often seem unbearable. This is why God said, “*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*” (Hebrews 13:5-6).

- ***Trials Are Controlled by God – “though now for a season”***

The greatest blessing we find in Peter’s teaching of trials is that they do not last forever! Praise God! Trials only last *for a season*. Often we think trials will never end! That is not what Peter said. Peter said that *trials* are *temporary*! Someone wrote, “When God allows his children to go through the furnace, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat!” Sometimes God has to reset the clock because of our stubbornness, but the Lord never allows us to suffer one minute more than necessary.

Peter later wrote in the same epistle, “*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a*

roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 5:5-11).

A wise, old preacher who had served the Lord faithfully for over fifty years was posed this question, “What are the most important lessons you have learned in all of your years of ministry?” The old preacher replied, “I have learned three things:

- ***“The world doesn’t know God”***
- ***“God wants the world to know Him”***
- ***“Those of us who know God should tell those who don’t all about Him.”***

Friend, God’s *“desire toward you”* is that you know Him. God wants you to know Him in the pardon and forgiveness of sin. God wants you to know Him in grace and knowledge. Paul summarized God’s *“desire toward us”* very succinctly when he wrote, *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior: Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

Listen once more to the words of Jeremiah as he pens God’s Words to men – *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your hearts”* (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

What wonderful doctrine is contained in Song of Solomon 7:10! -*“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.”* God’s greatest desire is without a doubt that *“all men be saved”* (1 Timothy 2:4). He has revealed this desire repeatedly throughout the Scriptures. Paul wrote, *“To wit, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself”* (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). James wrote, *“Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you”* (James 4:8). Jesus Himself announced, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but*

that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16-17). Yes, without a doubt, God’s *desire* is that all men be saved from the wages of sin.

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

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.*

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.*

The Shulamite is finally permitted to return to the “*fields and villages*” with the shepherd. Anticipating her *homecoming* or rather *homegoing*, she ponders about the place she and her beloved have planned to live together. She anxiously anticipates walking in the fields, rising at daybreak, and going to the vineyards to inspect the vines and pomegranates. She renews her vows or “*loves*” to her beloved shepherd. The Church should also anticipate such a homegoing. As we have noted several times already, the Lord Jesus will some day return to take us to a place He has gone to prepare for them that love God.

No wonder so many songwriters have written songs of that great and blessed day when we shall see Jesus. What a glorious day it will be when we are no longer hindered in our worship and walk with God. Undoubtedly, John had this thought in mind as he wrote, “*Even so, come Lord Jesus*” (Revelation 22:20).

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.*

In this first verse of the last chapter of the Song of Solomon, the Shulamite reveals intimate thoughts of her beloved shepherd. She hints at the difficulties that she has encountered to find complete fullness and fellowship with her shepherd. She dreams of a closeness found only in sibling relationships. She compares such a relationship to that of siblings nursing from the breasts of the same mother. She longs to kiss him without being despised by the world. Her earnest desire is to know the experience of unhindered communion with her beloved!

As we have previously stated, there are three great enemies of all believers – the *flesh*, the *world*, and the *devil*. Permit me, if you will, to share a few more thoughts concerning them. Like the Shulamite, our desire is to experience unhindered communion with our Beloved, but alas, such fellowship is extremely difficult. Our finite minds cannot comprehend the fulness of God’s amazing grace, His unfathomable love, or His tender mercy. God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and His ways are higher than our ways. Because we dwell in *earthen vessels*, we are incapable of enjoying complete and unhindered communion with God.

Paul often spoke of that blessed day when we will no longer be obstructed and opposed. He writes, “*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*” (1 Corinthians 2:9). To the same believers in Corinth he wrote, “*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known*” (1 Corinthians 13:12). To the Philippians he said, “*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not my self to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:10-14). Christians are exhorted to “*walk circumspectly*” and “*flee from temptations.*” Our *flesh* cannot be trusted! It is the enemy of every believer and often a source of great failure.

Another hindrance to our fellowship with Christ is the *world*. Everything in this present, evil *world* cries out in opposition to Christ. Christians are constantly besieged by the elements of evil. In John 16:33 Jesus warned His disciples, “*In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*” Jesus prayed to the Father on their behalf, “*And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept*

them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:11-16). We must be constantly reminded that this *world* is not our home. We are “*ambassadors of Christ*”, and as such we are just passing through the world in which we live (2 Corinthians 5:20).

The *flesh* and the *world* are not the only two enemies of the believer. The third and greatest adversary of every saint is the *devil*. Peter writes, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Peter 5:8-9). Since the creation of man, Satan has desired to frustrate the ways of God (Acts 13:10). He is an enemy to all who are virtuous, wholesome, and good. If the devil cannot prevent a person from being *saved*, he will try to prevent the believer from *servicing* Christ and advancing the gospel.

Every saint is in a battle against spiritual wickedness. As good soldiers of Jesus Christ we are exhorted to “*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand”* (Ephesians 6:11-13).

No wonder this lowly Shulamite desired to go home where she could enjoy unhindered, unobstructed, unfathomable communion and fellowship with her beloved. She simply wanted to live her life in peace and tranquility. One day the saints will no longer be hindered by the infirmities of the *flesh*. One day we will no longer be contested by the *world*. One day we will never again fall prey to our adversary, the *devil*. We will finally and eternally become what God has always desired us to be.

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.*

The Shulamite continues to contemplate her *homegoing* with her beloved. She speaks of the day when she will lead him by the hand, bring him to her mother's house, and drink the juice of her pomegranate. There is such tenderness and innocence reflected in her words. Oh, how she desires him to be a part of every facet of her life. Dear friend, do you desire to share every facet of your life with Christ, or have you partitioned off certain areas and reserved them for yourself only? Someone once said, "If Christ is not Lord of all, then He is not Lord at all!"

We often need to be reminded that Christ paid it all. He did not hold back any part of Himself. He wholly and completely gave Himself for the sins of the world. When a person is saved, they are bought with a price – the precious blood of Christ. We no longer have any right to live as before for we are not our own. We are the purchased possession of Jesus Christ who paid our sin debt. This what Paul taught when he wrote, "*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Just as the Shulamite desired to involve her beloved in every facet of her life, so we should allow Christ to be involved in every aspect of ours. Christ does not desire to be simply "*one of many*". He desires to be the "*One and Only*". In Colossians 1:18 we read, "*And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he (Christ) might have the preeminence.*" Christ not only deserves to have preeminence in our lives, but the Father has ordained that His Son should have it. As we grow in grace and knowledge, it becomes more and more obvious that blessings flow only as a result of giving Christ His proper place on the throne of our heart.

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

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

God is both loving and compassionate. Paul calls Him the “*God of all comfort*” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). The Shulamite yearned for the time when she and the shepherd could dwell together in the hills of Lebanon. She was a stranger in Solomon’s city. She longed to go home. Are there not times that we also groan within to depart this world and to be with our Lord in heaven?

Notice the Shulamite’s words, “*His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me*” (Song of Solomon 8:3). His “*left hand under my head*” is a beautiful phrase revealing genuine love and affection. God’s comforting grace for His children can be illustrated in such a manner. The grace of God is always poised to sustain us during times of difficulties. Like a loving husband, the Lord tenderly places His left hand under our head to soothe us. He manifests His love toward us the most during trials and tribulation. Paul learned this important aspect of God because of his many trials.

Notice what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians Chapter Twelve as a result of an infirmity that he called his “*thorn in the flesh*”. On three separate occasions he prayed for God to remove this infirmity, but the Lord did not. God could have granted Paul’s request, but He chose not to remove it. It has been said that sometimes God calms the seas, and sometimes God calms the saint. In Paul’s case, God elected to calm His saint. Metaphorically, God placed His left hand under Paul’s head and with His right hand embraced the Apostle and said, “*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness*” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

His “*right hand should embrace me*” is a beautiful illustration of the grace of God that sustains us in the midst of tribulations. The “*right hand of God*” is a common euphemism in Scripture that pictures God’s mighty power. The psalmist wrote, “*Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand*” (Psalm 20:6). “*O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory*” (Psalm 98:1). Jesus Christ sits at God’s *right hand* until the His enemies will be made His footstool (Psalm 110:1). In Psalm 118:15-16 we read, “*...the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the*

LORD doeth valiantly.” In Isaiah 62:8 the prophet exclaims, “*The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength....*” His “right hand” is not only characterized by *strength*, but also by *integrity*.

When we cry out in sincere heart-felt prayer, we will find comfort. In Psalm 138:3 we read, “*In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*” How lovingly our Saviour provides grace and strength enough to sustain the saint who calls upon Him! Jeremiah revealed a divine imperative for all saints to call upon the Lord, “*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not*” (Jeremiah 33:3).

As we endeavor to follow hard after the Lord, though hindered by the flesh, the world, and the devil, let us be comforted by the words of the psalmist, “*My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me*” (Psalm 63:8). Be courageous in knowing, “*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them*” (Deuteronomy 33:27).

As previously noted, three separate times in the Song of Solomon (2:7; 3:5; 8:4) the Shulamite *charges* the “daughters of Jerusalem” – “*I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.*” This “keynote” of the Song of Solomon reveals the predominant lesson that God wanted Israel to learn. Let us once again briefly discuss its meaning.

The Shulamite’s “charge” explains that love is a matter of *fidelity*, not *carnality*. Israel had fallen into the snare of the devil. They had committed spiritual adultery, so God provided them with a wonderful model of *fidelity* and *faithfulness* manifested by the Shulamite’s love for her shepherd. Though Solomon constantly tries to coerce the Shulamite to become his bride, the Shulamite refuses. Though relentless in his attempts to lure her from her true love, she remains steadfast in her resolve.

W. Twyman Williams wrote, “Love is not a thing to be bought or forced or pretended, but a thing to come spontaneously, to be given freely and sincerely.” William MacDonald wrote, “If Israel had followed this simple rule, it would *not* have been unfaithful to Jehovah.” This charge is repeated not once, but on three separate occasions. It is truly the “keynote” of the Song of Solomon.

New Testament believers should heed this charge as well. It is necessary for saints to “*walk circumspectly*” in order to prevent *infidelity*. Though the believer’s *relationship* with Christ is immutable, *fellowship* with Him is not. God’s Word is replete with warnings for believers not to *quench*, *grieve*, or *hinder* the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote, “*And grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Ephesians 4:30-32). It is a terrible thing when believers *grieve* the Holy Spirit by walking *as the world* instead of *separated from the world*. Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, malice, and an unforgiving spirit all characterize such carnally minded Christians.

If the saint grieves the Holy Spirit, communion and fellowship with the Lord is broken. Jude warned believers about the possibility of losing fellowship, and he exhorted believers by instructing them to “*Keep yourselves in the love of God...*” (Jude 21). In the same epistle, Jude gives the saints three important tips on how to prevent loss of fellowship with the Lord -

- **Look Upward** – “*...Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*” (Jude 21)

As we *look upward* in anticipation of the coming of Christ, we will be encouraged to live faithfully in accordance to God’s Word. We will not be sinless, but we should sin less as we *look upward* at Christ, the *Author and Finisher of our faith* (Hebrews 12:2).

- **Look Outward** – “*And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire*” (Jude 22-23)

After we *look upward* for Christ, we will be compelled to *look outward* toward others. Christ’s will becomes our will. Christ’s compassion for the lost becomes our compassion for the lost. We will desire to “*make a difference*” in the lives of others. Did you know YOU can make a difference in the lives of

others? What a privilege to be used of God in such a manner! What an honor is ours to share the great message of the Gospel pointing sinners to Christ! Jude writes, “*And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.*” There are countless souls hanging in the balance. It is both our duty and our privilege to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with as many as we can.

- **Look Inward** – “*...hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*” (Jude 23)

The garment spoken of by Jude is our robe of flesh that we wear. The flesh is a source of opposition to the cause of Christ, and it must be dealt with daily. The phrase, “*garment spotted by the flesh,*” is a vivid description that portrays a putrid picture of our carnal tendencies. It literally refers to “*undergarments soiled by human waste.*” Sin causes the believer to be rendered useless to the Lord. Jude exhorted the saints to *look upward* and *outward*, but he also emphasizes our need to *look inward*. As we *look inward*, we should judge and confess our sins. Looking in these three directions will enable us to better “*keep ourselves in the love of God.*”

Chapter 9

The Splendor of the Shulamite

Song of Solomon 8:5-8:14

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 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?
- 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.
- 10 I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.
- 11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.
- 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.
- 13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.
- 14 Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

8:5 *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?*

What a wonderful homecoming is pictured in the first part of this verse! As the Shulamite and the shepherd return home, the local villagers see them approaching, they ask the question, “*Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her*

beloved?” What a glorious foreshadowing is pictured of the Christian’s homecoming with Christ! One day soon, the *“Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16). A glorious *reunion* of all members of the Church will take place in the clouds as *“the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air”* (1 Thessalonians 4:17). After believers are translated or *“caught up”*, the Lord will take us to the *“place He has gone to prepare”* (John 14:1-3).

The Word of God teaches that the angels in heaven do not entirely comprehend the details of salvation, so they watch with great curiosity (1 Peter 1:12). When we are *“caught up together to meet the Lord in the air,”* we will be quickly *“changed in the moment, in the twinkling of an eye”* (1 Corinthians 15:52). Our corruptible, mortal bodies will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). As we enter Heaven, it is quite possible that we will appear as the Shulamite coming up out of the wilderness. Maybe the angels of glory will ask, *“Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?”*

8:5 *I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.*

As the two enter the village of Lebanon, the shepherd points out a familiar place, *“under the apple tree.”* This may refer to where they first fell in love. The shepherd then points out the place where the Shulamite was born. It is possible that saints too will be reminded where their romance with Christ began. He may possibly point out the nail prints in His hands and feet. It is possible that Christ will reveal His wounded side, as He did for Thomas. He may even remind us of the very place where we knelt in prayer and stood up as saints, saved by His amazing grace!

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.*

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.*

In this passage the Shulamite reaffirms her great love for the shepherd. She passionately and tenderly renews her vows to him. She is compelled to define “*true love*” by comparing it to the “*strength of death*” and the vehement heat of the “*coals of a fire, not easily quenched*.” She poetically paints a portrait of love that cannot be “*quenched by many waters nor drowned by floods*.” Finally, she declares that all the substance obtained by man is not worthy to be compared to the value of “*true love*”; she declares, “*...it would utterly be contemned*.”

The description that the Shulamite provides is a type of the love that the Lord Jesus Christ has manifested for the whole world. Nothing can compare to His great love wherewith He loves us. Paul provides believers with a foretaste of the Christ’s love when he wrote in the Book of Romans, “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 8:35-39).

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?*

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.*

Some may find this passage difficult to harmonize with the rest of the Song of Solomon. It would appear that the Shulamite recalls a previous decision made by her brothers. The words of verses 8-9 were actually spoken years before by her brothers when she was quite young. This is revealed by their words in verse 8, “*We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts*.” It seems that these brothers had previously agreed on the future of their younger sister. The brothers said that if their sister remained chaste and pure, (figuratively expressed by “*wall*”), they would reward her by building her a “*palace of silver*,” suggestive of giving her a silver dowry. However, if their sister became promiscuous and accessible (imagery of a “*door*”), they would “*inclose her*

with boards of cedar”, depicting that they would put her away in seclusion as a type of punishment.

In order for us to comprehend this storyline, we must understand something of Middle Eastern culture. Middle Eastern culture is quite different in many ways from that of the Western world. Middle Eastern women do not commonly enjoy the same rights and privileges as women in the United States, Canada, or Western Europe. This was clearly revealed in the war between the United States and the Taliban of Afghanistan in 2001. Women in Afghanistan were treated terribly by the Taliban, and were denied the most basic of human rights. Women there were not permitted to expose any part of their bodies publicly, and could be beaten by any man if caught doing so. Women were denied education, employment, and even the freedom of going outside their homes without a male chaperone.

Families of the Middle East often arrange marriages for their children, so the idea of the Shulamite’s brothers making such demands and decisions about their sister’s future is not uncommon. Westerners are often appalled at the “double standards” for men in the some Middle Eastern cultures. There seems to be fewer restrictions and consequences for them. Men seldom suffer repercussions for promiscuity. On the other hand, women convicted of adultery are severely treated, and the usual punishment is death. It is a blessing to know “*There is no respect of persons with God*” (Romans 2:11).

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

11 *Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.*

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.*

She knows full well that the villagers would question her reputation because of her ordeal. In these verses the Shulamite defends her reputation by giving testimony to all in attendance. She boldly confirms, “*I am a wall, and my breasts like towers*”. She does not hesitate to assert her chastity, purity, and fidelity. She says that despite Solomon’s relentless attempts to seduce her, she has remained pure and chaste. She

mentions a few of the many seductions used by King Solomon. She testifies that he tempted her with the vineyard at Baal-hamon, a vineyard so rich in harvest that tenants would pay him large sums of money for its yield of fruit. The Shulamite boldly asserts that even so great an offer as this did not provoke her to be unfaithful to the shepherd or to herself! She refused the king's offer, and chose rather to embrace her convictions without compromise.

Notice the beautiful way in which she articulates her testimony of fidelity and chastity, *"My vineyard, which is mine, is before me."* Simply stated, "Solomon could keep his wealth, his vineyards, his servants, and his fruits! I am not for sale! I have something worth far more than money can buy!" What an example for Israel and for every New Testament child of God! There is a great need for such steadfastness among the saints. Let us look at a just a few of the many exhortations for believers to be faithful to our Beloved Lord -

- **1 Corinthians 4:2** - *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*
 - **1 Peter 1:16** - *"Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."*
 - **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** - *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Where come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."*
- 8:13** *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.*

We now come to the last statement of the shepherd. In the presence of all in attendance, he proposes to the Shulamite. He asks her to accept his proposal of marriage, and fulfill his desire to be joined “*as one flesh*” with her. Marriage is a divinely ordained institution of God, “*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24). The institution of marriage has come under vicious attack in recent years. There are many liberals and infidels today who are trying to destroy the very basic principles and foundations of the marriage institution. Many support “same sex marriages” and “common law marriages”. Both of these are contrary to God’s Word.

Though these attacks on marriage are unfounded, they do fulfill prophecy. The Apostle Paul prophesied that in the “*last days*” such attacks would come. He gives a vivid description of the perverted and pernicious ways of the world during this time. In 2 Timothy 4:1-4 Paul also revealed the wickedness and depravity of the “*last days*”. Satan desires to destroy the Church by undermining the home. In order to preserve the sanctity of marriage and the integrity of the home, Paul gives instruction to the saints - “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth*” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

We find the “*latter times*” are characterized by both a “*departure from the faith*” and a “*forbidding to marry*”. We now live in a day when both of these prophecies are being fulfilled before our very eyes. There is a real need for a Heaven-sent revival in our land! It has become more and more acceptable in our society for couples to simply live together outside of the holy state of matrimony. Even many *professing* Christians seem to readily accept such living arrangements! It is apparent that there is a definite “*departure from the faith*” in our land.

The idea of ethics is oft spoken about, but rarely put into practice. It has become nearly obsolete in governments, corporations, schools, and even the local church and the home. It is becoming more difficult to find people willing to commit to anything, except themselves. In a world that practices tolerance of sin, the Song of Solomon rings loud

and clear. There is a genuine need for the Church to return to the “*old paths*” of God’s Holy Word! In the days of Judah’s treachery and waywardness, Jeremiah was commissioned to preach to the Jews. He announced God’s Word in scathing rebuke, “*Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls...Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet...*” (Jeremiah 6:16a; 17a). Judah answered, “*We will not walk therein...We will not hearken*” (Jeremiah 6:16b; 17b). Judah refused to walk in the old paths that their fathers walked, and they refused to worship as God had ordained.

God has not changed His mind about sin, and God has not changed His desire for His children be faithful and true. The wages of sin is still death (Romans 6:23). God’s way is immutable, it changes not. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). God has not changed His mind concerning spiritual infidelity, and He has not changed His mind about marital infidelity. God’s way is still “monogamy and marriage, not polygamy and promiscuity.”

8:14 *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*

Our study ends with the Shulamite’s reply to the shepherd’s proposal of marriage. In words full of meaning she enthusiastically exclaims, “*Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*” Her answer is quite clear. In essence she says, “Come quickly and claim me as your own!” Simply stated, the Shulamite says, “I do!”

Dear friend, have you said, “I do,” to Jesus Christ? With outstretched arms He proposes unto you. He invites you to come just as you are. He compels the lost sinner to come to Him for salvation. He desires nothing more than for “*all men to be saved*” (1 Timothy 2:4). As we close our study of this wonderful little book, The Song of Solomon, let us close with a few passages of the Word of God. In the following verses we can see just how much the “*Lord’s desire is toward you*” as God invites all who lost sinner to come to Jesus Christ for salvation -

- *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*
(Matthew 11:28)
Have YOU come to Jesus? He invites you to come right now!
- *“...him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out”* (John 6:37)
YOU have God’s Word on it!
- *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”* (John 3:36)
The choice is YOURS!
- The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*
Their reply was simple, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”* (Acts 16:30-31)
How can God make it simpler?
- *That if thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* (Romans 10:9)
Will YOU trust in Him today?
- *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (Romans 10:13)
Will YOU call upon Him right now?

“Make haste...and be like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices”

~Song of Solomon 8:14~

Chapter 10

The Song of Solomon

with

Speaker Designations

One of the difficulties in understanding the Song of Solomon is the frequent change of speakers throughout the course of the book. This chapter is designed to aid readers to better understand when these changes occur.

Preceding all of the sections of the Song of Solomon are the designations of both the speaker and addressee. These designations are not contained in the original KJV. They have been inferred from the verses or titles of address or from the second person pronoun used. There are a few occasions when no distinct method is available to identify the exact speaker or addressee. In such cases, the speaker or addressee has been identified by prayerful consideration and investigation.

The Song of Solomon

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

[Shulamite (in soliloquy)]

- 2** *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.*
3 *Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.*
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.*

[The Shulamite to the Daughters of Jerusalem]

5 *I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.*

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.*

[The Shulamite to the Shepherd (in soliloquy)]

7 *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, 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?*

[The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Shulamite]

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.*

[King Solomon to the Shulamite]

9 *I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.*
10 *Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.*

[The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Shulamite]

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

[The Shulamite at the King's table (in soliloquy)]

12 *While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.*
13 *A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.*
14 *My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.*

[King Solomon to the Shulamite]

15 *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.*

[The Shulamite to the Shepherd (in soliloquy)]

16 *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.*
17 *The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.*

[The Shulamite to the King]

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

[King Solomon to the Shulamite]

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

[The Shulamite (in soliloquy)]

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.*

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

[The Shulamite to the Daughters of Jerusalem]

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

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

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.*

[The Shulamite's Reminiscence of the Shepherd's Proposal]

8 *The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains,
skipping upon the hills.*

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.*

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

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.*

[The Shulamite's Reminiscence of Her Brothers (in soliloquy)]

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

[The Shulamite (in soliloquy)]

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

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.*

[The Shulamite to the Daughters of Jerusalem]

- 3:1 *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.*
- 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 *The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?*
- 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.*
- 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.*

[The Shulamite (in soliloquy)]

- 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?*
- 7 *Behold his bed, which Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.*
- 8 *They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.*
- 9 *King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.*
- 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.*

[The Shulamite to the Daughters of Jerusalem]

- 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.*

[King Solomon to the Shulamite]

- 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.*
- 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.*
- 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 *Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.*
- 5 *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.*
- 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.*

[The Shepherd to the Shulamite]

- 7 *Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.*
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.*
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.*
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!*
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.*
12 *A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*
13 *Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,*
14 *Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all aloes, with all the chief spices:*
15 *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*

[The Shulamite (in soliloquy)]

- 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.*

[The Shepherd to the Shulamite]

- 5:1a *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:...*

[The Shulamite (in soliloquy)]

- 1b *...eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

[The Shulamite to the Daughters of Jerusalem]

- 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.*
3 *I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?*
4 *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.*
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.*

- 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.*
- 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.*
- 8 *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.*

[The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Shulamite]

- 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?*

[The Shulamite to the Daughters of Jerusalem]

- 10 *My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.*
- 11 *His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.*
- 12 *His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters washed with milk, and fitly set.*
- 13 *His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.*
- 14 *His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*
- 15 *His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.*
- 16 *His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

[The Daughters to the Shulamite]

- 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.*

[The Shulamite to the Daughters of Jerusalem]

- 2 *My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.*
- 3 *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.*

[King Solomon to the Shulamite]

- 4 *Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.*
- 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 *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.*
- 7 *As a piece of pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.*

- 8 *There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.*
- 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.*
- 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?*

[The Shulamite (in soliloquy)]

- 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.*
- 12 *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.*

[The Daughters of Jerusalem to the Shulamite]

- 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.*

[King Solomon to the Shulamite]

- 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.*
- 2 *Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.*
- 3 *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.*
- 4 *Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim; thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.*
- 5 *Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.*
- 6 *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!*
- 7 *This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.*
- 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;*
- 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.*

[The Shulamite (in soliloquy)]

- 10 *I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.*

[The Shulamite to the Shepherd]

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

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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

[The Shulamite (in soliloquy)]

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

[The Shulamite to the Daughters of Jerusalem]

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

[Villagers Upon Return of the Shulamite and Shepherd]

5a *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?*

[The Shepherd to the Shulamite]

5b *I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.*

[The Shulamite to the Shepherd]

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.*

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.*

[The Brothers of the Shulamite to All in Attendance]

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?*

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.*

[The Shulamite Defends Her Virtue Before All in Attendance]

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

- 11 *Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.*
- 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.*

[The Shepherd to the Shulamite]

- 13 *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.*

[The Shulamite to the Shepherd]

- 14 *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*

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