





*The Song  
of  
Songs*

A DIVINE ROMANCE

TITUS CHU

The Song of Songs:  
A Divine Romance,  
by Titus Chu

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# CONTENTS

Preface	9
Introduction	11
1. The Song of All Songs	15
2. Black but Comely	35
3. A Lily of the Valleys	57
4. The Banqueting House	75
5. The Covert	93
6. Seeking Him Night After Night	115
7. Up from the Wilderness	133
8. The Streams	161
9. The Myrrh	187
10. "My Beloved"	211
11. The Prince's Daughter	231
12. Awaiting His Return	265
Note Pages	290
Key to Hymns Cited	303



# Preface

Among all the books of the Bible, the Song of Songs is the unique book that focuses on how we can experience Christ as our life and grow in our relationship with Him. It is so fitting that such a book is a love story between a young maiden and her beloved—a beloved who is also her king—for our relationship with the Lord Jesus ultimately is one of love. It even seems that the seeker in the Song of Songs has no life apart from her beloved—no schooling, no family, no hobbies, no job; her only occupation, from the standpoint of the king, is to seek to know and to love him, and to become fully one with him. What a picture of how we should love and pursue our Lord today!

In his exposition of this book, Brother Titus is helping us see how we can enter into the experiences pictured in the Song of Songs. For this reason he often refers to the king in the Songs of Songs and the Lord Jesus interchangeably. Similarly, he often refers to the seeker in this book and to us as believers in Christ interchangeably.

The NASB is the primary translation used in this book. However, quite often other translations are used to give the desired sense for a particular verse. When that is the case, we give, after

the verse reference, the citation for the translation used, whether the verse is pulled out from the text or within another paragraph.

Portions from a number of different hymns are quoted in this book. All of these hymns may be found in the hymnal, *Songs and Hymns of Life*. The full reference for each, including its page number in that hymnal, is provided at the back of this book in the “Key to Hymns Cited” section on page 303.

The messages that provide the basis for this book were given by the author in 1974 in Taipei, Taiwan, during a gathering for seekers and lovers of the Lord, to help them in their growth in life and in their love for the Lord. They are translated from the original Chinese.

The chapters contained in this book were originally published in 2003 as Part Two of *The Journey of Life*. This book is an extensively revised presentation of the same messages.

– *The Editors, December 2018*

# Introduction

In these messages we shall consider our Christian experience as portrayed in the Song of Songs. Every sentence in the Song of Songs portrays a spiritual experience. If we identify with what is shared, it indicates that we have had the experience. If, however, we are puzzled by what is shared, it indicates that we have not yet entered into that experience. Even so, all of us can learn from this book, and any who desire a deeper experience of the Lord need to spend time in the Song of Songs.

## A Book for Our Entire Life

The Song of Songs is a book that reveals all the experiences we must go through in our Christian life. It is impossible for us as believers in Christ to avoid the experiences revealed in its eight chapters. No matter how deep, how excellent, or how rich our experiences are, they all can be found here. Moreover, no matter how heavy our spiritual burden is or how wide-ranging our spiritual work is, all the relevant spiritual principles can be found in this book. These eight chapters are so rich that every

verse and every sentence can be applied to our situation and can become our help.

As we follow the Lord, this book serves as a wonderful guide. It shows us where we are in our spiritual experience, what experiences we should have, and how we can go on. It can greatly help us to have a strong pursuit of Christ. The Song of Songs also reminds us that we are not yet spiritually mature; rather, we must continually give ourselves to the Lord and renew our consecration to Him so that He can take us on stage by stage.

We are easily satisfied. If we receive a little blessing, or enjoyment, or experience, we are satisfied, and if there is a little impact or effect from our serving, we are satisfied. We are unable to contain too much blessing from the Lord. He reveals Himself to us according to the capacity of our vessels and according to the extent of our experience, but we must confess before the Lord that our vessels are too small; we are not able to contain all the blessing He desires to pour out upon us. May the Lord enlarge us and lead us to grow!

Often we are not clear about the things that happen to us on the path of our journey towards spiritual maturity. Sometimes the Lord appears to us and we do not recognize Him. Sometimes God disciplines us and we do not realize it. Sometimes we do not know why we are in the dark and have lost the Lord's presence. At other times we do not understand why we are in the heavens experiencing the riches of the Lord. All of these situations indicate that we still have far to go, and that we must pay a further price to go on with the Lord. This is why He says,

*“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,  
That you will not arouse or awaken my love  
Until she pleases.”*  
– Song of Songs 3:5

The Lord must wait until we please.

A normal, seeking Christian should labor on the Song of Songs. We should be familiar with it and pay the price to experience all the riches revealed in it. If we are equipped in this way, we will be able to work with the Lord in our environment. We will understand when “the day dawns” and “the shadows flee away,” and we will be able to thank and praise the Lord rather than be bewildered or stumbled. We will be able to tell the Lord, “Thank You for this time and this situation. It has not been in vain, and neither have my tears been shed in vain.”

## The Central Focus: Christ

The Song of Songs is timeless. It is always fresh. After we finish its first chapter, we may think we already possess the experience revealed there. However, every time we return to read it again, we feel refreshed and more attracted than before. This book brings us to Christ as the center of God’s eternal purpose. All of God’s working is focused on Christ. God wants us to gain only Christ, to experience only Christ, and to enjoy only Christ. This is a book about “only Christ.” It shows us how Christ can become our subjective experience. That is the reason this book is so valuable.

May the Lord bless our study of this wonderful, heavenly, romantic book!

## Song of Songs 1:1-4

*The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.*

*“May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!  
For your love is better than wine.  
Your oils have a pleasing fragrance,  
Your name is like purified oil;  
Therefore the maidens love you.  
Draw me after you and let us run together!  
The king has brought me into his chambers.  
We will rejoice in you and be glad;  
We will extol your love more than wine.  
Rightly do they love you.”*

# The Song of All Songs

## A Life That Is the Song of Songs

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

The Song of Songs is the story of human lives. It begins with, “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.” The songs spoken of here are, in fact, human lives. We each have our own life, and that life is a song. In particular, every saved person’s life is a song before the Lord, for it is impossible to have a relationship with the Lord that is without any spiritual “music.”

The experience of a normal Christian before the Lord is the song of songs. There are countless songs in the world, and everyone is pursuing and composing one of these songs. However, our Lord leads us to the most valuable song—the song of experiencing God. Some people are pursuing money, so money becomes the song of their lives. Some are pursuing power, and thus power becomes their song. We Christians need to enjoy the song that is above every other song, the song of songs.

Each of us has our own pursuit, our own plan, and our own

desire. In this book, however, the Lord tells us we should only evaluate our lives according to our relationship with Him. Only a life spent loving the Lord is a valuable life; only a life spent loving the Lord has eternal value; only a life spent loving the Lord is a life full of enjoyment; only a life spent loving the Lord is the song of songs. Others are pursuing the joy and the songs of their lives, but the Lord tells us, “Without Me, without My song, without My music, your life is void and empty. It has no value before God, and eventually no meaning on this earth.”

## A Precious Experience

The Song of Songs depicts the work of the cross in a very striking way. However, the initial experience depicted in this book is not that of the cross but of our experience of Christ as a wonderful song. When we meet an unbeliever, we feel that the song within us is much sweeter and much more wonderful than their song, for the song within us is the song of songs. Such a feeling is normal for a Jesus lover. In contrast, if we don't know we have a song within us, it indicates that our relationship with the Lord is not healthy.

When we see saints who love the Lord and give everything to Him, we know they have their song of songs within them. As Jesus lovers ourselves, we should realize that we have our own song of songs. If we don't have a healthy relationship with the Lord or with the church, we may feel that the Lord is more gracious to others than to us. We may feel that their Lord is sweeter to them and that their song is more pleasant. But if we have a healthy relationship with the Lord, we would say, “The Lord is not only yours; He is also mine. The value of my Lord is not less than yours. The Lord is your lover and He is mine, too. I have a song within me, and it is my song of songs.”

Praise the Lord that there is no respect of persons with Him. We should not despise ourselves. We should not feel that we do not possess the gifts or talents that others have. We should only care for our relationship with the Lord. If there is love between us and the Lord, we will feel we have the most beautiful song, one that is special to us. As long as such a relationship of love exists between us and the Lord, no matter what song we like or what song we pursue, we will find that the Lord is our song of songs, for He is the most precious One to us.

## The Lord, Our Song of Songs

The Shulammitte's experience of the Lord in chapter 1 is her song of songs. In chapter 8, she is still experiencing the Lord as her song of songs. No matter where we are, how many years we have followed the Lord, or how young or mature we are spiritually, as long as we are a normal Christian, we should have the Lord as our song of songs. To live a life as a lover of the Lord is to pursue the song that is above all songs.

Brothers and sisters, we should let Christ be our total satisfaction throughout our Christian life. Our situation may change, the stages of our human life may advance, and the way we serve and work may vary. However, we have to remember that the Lord is always the center and reality of everything. When we follow the Lord and give everything to Him, He gives us nothing but Himself. Even at the end, we will receive nothing from the Lord but Himself. In the beginning, He was everything to us, and in the end, He will still be everything to us. Life without Him is completely meaningless.

This book begins with the declaration, "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's." Here we see that Solomon's song is the song of songs. This entire book is of Solomon. All of the stages

of life it portrays, all of the experiences it portrays, and all of the serving it portrays are related to Solomon. This indicates that every stage we pass through is the Lord, every experience we have is the Lord, and every service we offer is the Lord.

## Losing the Song of Songs

Whenever we lose the sweetness of our relationship with the Lord, we have fallen. If we lose our first love toward the Lord, we cannot tell others we have the song of songs. If our focus becomes our serving life or our need to be equipped in the truth instead of the Lord Himself, then we have lost our song of songs, for other things, even good and necessary things, have taken His place. Only if we live before the Lord can we tell others that we have the song of songs.

What kind of life does the Lord want us to have? He desires that we have a life of the song of songs. Although in these eight chapters the Shulammite experiences failure and weakness, these experiences all occur, under His sovereignty, as a part of this song. The Lord desires that we would always be able to tell others, “I have the song of songs. My Lord is the best. My Lord is the fairest. He is all and in all. My serving is according to the Lord I love. My prayer and labor are according to the Lord I love. My life and breath are according to the Lord I love. Today everything I have is according to the Lord I love.” Such a person is one who lives in the reality of the song of songs.

Can we tell others that we live in the song of songs? If not, we are not in a normal and healthy situation before the Lord. Perhaps in the past we have advanced through a number of the stages of spiritual experience portrayed in the Song of Songs. However, if the Lord is not our song of songs at this moment, we can no longer say we have a place within this book.

## The Kisses of the Lord

*“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.”*  
– *Song of Songs 1:2, KJV*

The first words from the Shulammitte’s mouth in this book are, “Let him.” She does not tell us who this “him” is because to her there is simply no need to do so; there is only one “him”—the king she loves, the one who fills her heart.

Our Christian experience begins with a longing: “Let Him kiss me!” This longing is the beginning of our love toward the Lord. What a beginning! It does not originate from us, but from the Lord. Perhaps after we were saved we went to some meetings but lived a religious life. However, when we finally turn from our religious living there will appear a “Him” who causes us to cry, “Let Him! Let Him!” Now we are touching “the Him” in the universe. We will suddenly feel that our life is full of Him. We don’t even have to say, “My Lord,” but only “Him,” because we feel it needs no explanation. When we have Him, our life is different. We are in love with the Lord and we possess His love, so it just seems that there is no need to explain.

One who does not love the Lord may say many things, but what he speaks is just so many empty words. In contrast, one who does love the Lord is simple and is very clear. When he talks about the Lord he is full of feelings: “He is so precious. He has ravished my heart. I miss Him.” You don’t have to tell such a one how often or how long he should pray, because he always feels it is good to say, “Oh, Lord, I love You.” When he goes to school, he will say, “Lord, I love You.” When he goes to work, he will say, “Lord, I love You. I desire that You would kiss me with the kisses of Your mouth. I long to see You face to face. We are bound together. Oh, Lord, I want to consecrate everything to You.”

This should be our experience all our life. We should live in this feeling all our days: “Let Him.” We do not have to explain who He is. He is the One who has ravished our heart. We have, with Him, an unspeakable, sweet, and sublime relationship.

## Only Him

*“For your love is better than wine.”*  
– *Song of Songs 1:2*

In the first part of this verse the seeker spoke of “him,” but now she says “your.” In this lover’s world, there is only “him,” “you,” and “me.” Our “Him” is the Lord, and our “You” is also the Lord. What we want is “Him”—the Lord—and “You”—also the Lord. This thought is similar to what the psalmist says:

*Whom have I in heaven but You?*  
*And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.*  
– *Psalms 73:25*

The Song of Songs begins with the seeker’s request—“Let him”—and continues with her testimony—“for your.” Concerning the Lord we love, we can testify, “I have but one world. Whether in my testimony or in my prayer, I am focused on the Lord. Besides Him I have nothing in my life, for His love is better than wine.”

## Nothing Better

Wine represents something that used to satisfy us and give us enjoyment. We all had some kind of wine that we thought was

the best thing in our lives. However, now we feel, “Lord, Your love is better than any wine I have ever had. When I have Your love, everything I experienced before fades away.”

How do we live this life of the song of songs? We have to ask ourselves, “Do I still have any wine that is better than His love?” If we have a healthy pursuing life, we will have a deep feeling that there is nothing better than the rich love of the Lord. No matter how attractive or glorious something in the world may seem, the Lord’s love is so much better. Whenever we touch the Lord, we can testify, “Lord, Your love is better than any wine on this earth.”

## Appearing to Us in His Love

Our Lord cannot reveal Himself to us all at once. If He did, we would not be able to stand before Him. He is too perfect. For example, He is holy and righteous. Eventually, as we come to know Him further, we will experience His judging. But if we had experienced all His judging at the time we begin to pursue Him, we would have died not only spiritually but also physically. In the same way, if He were to reveal His glory to us all at once, we could not survive. When the Lord appeared to Isaiah, he said, “Woe is me, for I am undone!” (Isa. 6:5, Heb.). The Lord cannot fully reveal Himself to us when we are just beginning to love Him, so He appears to us in His love. Thus, at the beginning of our Christian life, our first experience is of His love. In this love He attracts us and draws our hearts to pursue Him. When we pray to Him just a little, “Let Him kiss me,” He comes immediately.

This beginning is so good: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!” But it is not followed by, “For you yourself are

better than wine.” Instead it is followed by, “For your love is better than wine.” This is because, at this stage, we are not yet touching the Lord Himself; we are only touching His love. When we are weak and ask for forgiveness, the Lord tells us, “I love you; I forgive you.” Since we have a very limited capacity at this point, the Lord can only allow us to touch His love. We still do not know how rich He is. At this stage, we have yet to discover the riches of His person.

This shows us a basic principle: if we want to enjoy the Lord Himself, we need to pay a price to spend time before Him. How much we see of Him depends on our capacity. The vision and experiences we can receive depend on our measure of life. The more we grow, the more He will show us who He is and how boundless He is. We need to have a yearning for more growth in life. Eventually, the Lord will bring us into the experience not only of His love but of Himself directly.

## The Anointing Oils

*“Your oils have a pleasing fragrance.”*

*– Song of Songs 1:3*

The oils here signify the Lord Himself as the One who has passed through the processes of incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection. When we are still young in the Lord, He is very tender toward us. He gives us His love, and we enjoy Him as the God who has passed through every process. He then becomes the oils to anoint us and blend with us. It seems that He forgets His holiness, His glory, His honor, and His might and becomes a humble One, entering into our spirit for our enjoyment just to blend with us. During this process we enjoy Him and experience Him as the anointing oils, and He infuses Himself into us.

## Like Ointment Poured Forth

*“Thy name is as ointment poured forth.”*  
– *Song of Songs 1:3, KJV*

The book of Philippians tells us,

*Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.*  
– *Philippians 2:8–9*

These verses show us that “your name” in 1:3 actually refers to the Lord’s work. As a result of His work, He has the name that is above every name. Hence, His name refers to His work.

Initially, when we began to love the Lord, all that we sought was the enjoyment of His love. Gradually, the Lord constituted Himself into us. During this time, He was so tender. He did not come to us as the shining light to judge us. He came to us with His tender love so we could experience the anointing oil within. Even in our weakness, we still could experience His tender compassion, dealing, leading, and guiding. He continued to work in us so that we could know His work of redemption and salvation accomplished on our behalf. Eventually, we came to know the Lord who loved us, went to the cross for us, died for us, resurrected for us, and who now lives in us to become our life. Now He is our joy, our satisfaction, our enjoyment, our supply, and our strength. What we experience now is the work of the Lord in His name, a name that is “like ointment poured forth.” Even so, at this point our experience still has not touched the depths of who He is.

## Loved by the Virgins

*“Therefore do the virgins love thee.”*  
– *Song of Songs 1:3, KJV*

When we had no heart for the Lord, we only had friends for companions. At that time, we could talk to our friends about all sorts of things, such as movies, sports, and our plans for the future. When we began to love the Lord, however, we learned that there were so many others who loved the Lord just as we did. These are the virgins. They are chaste and pure. They care for nothing else but loving the Lord. Those who have not touched the Lord can only do such things as gossip and reason together. In contrast, those who have touched the Lord can not only touch Him; they are also able to touch others' love toward the Lord.

## With All Who Love the Lord

Brothers and sisters, when we serve together with others without touching the Lord ourselves, our service may keep us occupied, but we will not know much genuine companionship with those who serve with us. However, if we do touch the Lord as we serve, we will find many saints who love the Lord as we do, and we will appreciate them as the virgins who are our companions.

Before, although we had friends, we were lonely because we were not built together with them. When we had only friends, we would get together when we had a common interest, but when that disappeared, we went our separate ways. In contrast, once we found the virgins, we found genuine fellowship. At the same time we also discovered that we were not the only one who loved the Lord, followed Him, and gave Him our all. Rather, many

others were doing so as well. We turned from the individual enjoyment of the Lord's love to a corporate enjoyment of the Lord's love with all the other virgins.

## The Reality of the Church

These virgins are the reality of the church. No one can see the church apart from the experience of Song of Songs 1:3. We may talk about the church, but it will not be real without the virgins. The church is real to those who are attracted not only by the Lord but also by the brothers and sisters; it is real to those who treasure not only the Lord but also the brothers and sisters; it is real to those who desire to fellowship not only with the Lord, but with all the other saints. They no longer live an individual life, for they are pursuing the Lord together. A virgin who is living such a life can testify, "Lord, the virgins love You."

## Five Basic Characteristics

Those who love the Lord can never forsake the five characteristics found in verses 2 and 3. First, the Lord's seekers are always under the Lord's attraction. Second, they always seek to know the love of the Lord. Third, they seek the Lord Himself as the processed One, as the anointing oil with a pleasant fragrance. Fourth, such ones always appreciate the Lord's work, as seen in the Lord's name being an ointment poured forth. Fifth, they also love the church and appreciate the saints. As a result, the church is manifested.

The experience of these five basic characteristics is the beginning of our life of loving the Lord and the basic element for our lifelong pursuit of the Lord. No matter where we are in our

growth in life, we must continue experiencing these five items in an ever deepening way.

## With the Other Saints

*“Draw me; we will run after thee.”*

*– Song of Songs 1:4, KJV*

This verse indicates that when the Lord draws us, others will also follow Him with us. Brothers and sisters, when we are with the virgins, we must respect our influence on others’ pursuing of the Lord. We are so crucial that when we live, everyone lives, and when we die, everyone dies.

A real lover of the Lord is bound to others. Such a one knows that “Draw me” will result in “We will run after you.” His experience before the Lord becomes the blessing of the saints, and the experience of the saints becomes his blessing. The seeker of the Lord prays, “Please draw me. If You want us to follow You, You have to draw me, for if You draw me, we will all run after You.”

Brothers and sisters, the principle remains the same until the end of this book. In these eight chapters, it is always “me” and “we.” We cannot experience these eight chapters alone; rather, we need the other virgins. That is the principle of “Draw me; we will run after you.”

## The King of Love

*“The king has brought me into his chambers.  
We will rejoice in you and be glad;  
We will extol your love more than wine.  
Rightly do they love you.”  
– Song of Songs 1:4*

“The king,” “his chambers,” and “love” are mentioned here. The ruling in our life changes when we know Christ. Because of love, we now have the King in our heart. He has authority over us because of His love.

When we became Christians, at first we felt free to be self-centered and walked where we wished. But from the day we began to love the Lord and consecrated ourselves to Him, we began to fear God. No one can be taught to fear God, for the fear of God comes from one’s love for Him. The more we love Him, the more we fear to offend Him or do wrong before Him. This authority He has over us comes from His love.

The person we love is our king. When we love the Lord absolutely, the Lord is our absolute King. The Lord’s ability to rule in our life depends on how much love we have for Him. If we give ourselves to Him without any reservation, He will be our King in every way.

Whatever we love is our king. If movies ravish our heart, then movies are our king. If novels ravish our heart, then we are giving novels the right to rule over us. However, if the Lord has ravished our heart, then spontaneously He is our King. As the hymn says, the change of authority from everything else to Christ comes from

*Not a sense of right or duty,  
But the sight of peerless worth.*

If the love of the Lord touches us, we will tell Him, “Lord, You are my King.” In contrast, if we are in the realm of duty, it means we have left the Lord as our first love.

In a good sense, to follow the Lord is easy. We don’t need to gnash our teeth and consecrate ourselves. We only need to touch His love. Spontaneously we will say, “O Lord, I have to have You as my King. My heart is Yours.” When the Lord’s love is abundant in us, this love will cause us to grow in life in the most natural way, and we will spontaneously live a life of taking Him as our King in everything.

## The King’s Chambers

According to 1:4, our King brings us into “his chambers,” that is, a place where we can fellowship with Him and enter into a relationship with Him that is beyond words. When we have this kind of fellowship with the Lord, we can’t describe it to others, but only to Him. This is the experience of the chambers. The more we have this experience, the more we are able to walk in the way of the Lord. As those who love the Lord, we will each have our own unique experience of the King’s chambers. Our experience in this regard is for no one else. In this place, the Lord reveals things that are only for us and Him to know.

If we abide in this experience, remaining in the inner chamber of our spirit, we will grow in our relationship with the Lord. In contrast, we cannot grow if we are always busy in the outer court. We must be in His chambers and have this special relationship with Him, for only then can we really follow Him. We must not focus so much on our works, but instead, spend more time in the King’s chambers.

The experience of the King’s chambers is progressive. The more we have this experience, the more we are blessed. It is here

that we touch the Lord and He touches us, that we enjoy Him and He enjoys us, and that we are with the Lord and He is with us. This intimacy is beyond words, and it is inexhaustible.

The love between the Lord and us is not for us to show to others or to brag about. Rather, we should always have a secret life of being in love with the Lord. We should have something that is just between the Lord and us and not for anyone else, a secret fellowship with the Lord, experiences with Him that we cannot open to others. Such experiences are something special and are not to be revealed; rather, they must remain hidden.

Sadly, there are not many who keep such secrets with the Lord. Some may not have a close relationship with the Lord to begin with, while others may be intimate with the Lord but have no real secret with Him. Still others may have such a secret experience with the Lord but reveal it rather than keep it hidden. This shows that we are often more interested in works than in the Lord Himself.

In contrast, if we are living a healthy Christian life, we should have a secret with the Lord that is only between us and Him, a love between us and Him that is beyond outward manifestation, for the love we have and the words we tell Him are not for others to know. May the Lord save us and bring us into His chambers more and more.

## Rejoicing with the Other Saints

According to Song of Songs 1:4, when the king draws “me” (singular) into His chambers, the result is that “we” (plural) “will exult and rejoice in you”; “we” (plural) “will extol your love more than wine.” Because we have had the experience of being in the Lord’s chambers, others are glad and rejoice in the Lord.

This indicates that our individual, hidden experience in the King's chambers affects others. Instead of being alone, we are attached to others. As a result of our experience of the chambers, we have an expression and manifestation that causes the other virgins to be glad and rejoice in the Lord.

If we have the experience of the Lord's chambers, we will not need to shout or talk too much; we will give others the feeling that we are like a bride on her honeymoon. We will be joyful, buoyant, and full of life. If we are like this, it will bring others to the Lord and even cause them to extol the love of the Lord.

Who can help others to love the Lord? Only those who are in the experience of the Lord's love. If we are permeated with His love and are enjoying a sweet relationship with Him in our spirit, it will be easy for us to help others love the Lord. Those who meet us will realize that the love of the Lord is better than wine. Our fresh enjoyment in love causes others to rediscover this love for themselves. It is not so much our speaking that renders real help to others but our being in life, for it is a person in life who affects others. Because of us, others will say to the Lord:

*“We will rejoice in you and be glad;  
We will extol your love more than wine.”*

## Loving the Lord Rightly

*“Rightly do they love you.”  
– Song of Songs 1:4*

What marks a virgin is that she loves the Lord rightly, meaning her love is without any other wish, expectation, or condition. Thus, a true virgin follows the Lord without any condition, serves the Lord without any condition, and lives in fellowship

with the Lord without any condition. To her, joy cannot replace the Lord Himself; even the Lord's very presence cannot replace the Lord Himself. Such a virgin is so obedient to love the Lord that she has no request for anything. Besides the Lord, she desires nothing else, and she loves nothing else.

If the saints in a church are concerned only for the Lord and for enjoying Him, they love Him rightly. However, often believers do not love the Lord rightly but instead have many conditions to their love. When a church is short of loving virgins, the saints will have many conditions that must be met before they will submit to the Lord or give themselves to Him. For a church to be healthy, it needs many saints who love the Lord rightly! The more saints there are in a church who love the Lord in this way, the more life and freshness there will be in that church life.

The building up of the church does not depend on workers but on lovers of the Lord. When such lovers come together, the church can be built up. In contrast, struggling with others to gain some advantage will only harm the church. For example, if we feel we must fight to be the "prince's daughter" (7:1), we may stumble other virgins whom we consider to be in competition with us for that honor.

God desires to gain a group of people as virgins who love Him rightly. Such virgins do not have any plans for themselves. If there are many virgins in a church loving the Lord rightly, He will have a church as a whole that is loving Him rightly, and it will be easy for that church to be built up. The question is, how many of us rightly love Him? How many of us love Him without any requests, reservations, or conditions? How many of us have such a pure love toward the Lord?

There are so many workers and so few lovers in the church! We like to compare ourselves with others: "Which of us is more manifested? Who is the leading one?" It is a fallen situation when we become mere workers.

We are so focused on our work that we train others to work rather than help them to love the Lord. It seems that we can tolerate people not being in the Lords' presence but not the collapse of our work. Our focus is on the work more than on the saints' love relationship with the Lord. The Song of Songs shows us that anything besides loving the Lord is unnecessary. Real service comes out of our love to Him. May the Lord raise up more lovers in the church, those who are only for Him!

## The Need for Virgins

Brothers and sisters, I have a heavy burden. May God have mercy upon us to open our eyes! May we see how the church needs virgins who rightly love the Lord! Such saints have no plans for their future and are not interested in any position in the church. They don't want anything for themselves; they simply focus on the Lord. If He says, "Stop," they stop. If He says, "Go," they go. If He says, "Pay the price," they pay the price. If He says, "Leave all," they leave all. Because they rightly love the Lord, every other consideration and expectation is laid aside.

May the Lord anoint these words so that we can love Him rightly! And may the Lord gain a group of people to love Him rightly in the churches today! Only then can the churches be built up.



## Song of Songs 1:5-11

*“I am black but lovely,  
O daughters of Jerusalem,  
Like the tents of Kedar,  
Like the curtains of Solomon.  
Do not stare at me because I am swarthy,  
For the sun has burned me.  
My mother’s sons were angry with me;  
They made me caretaker of the vineyards,  
But I have not taken care of my own vineyard.  
Tell me, O you whom my soul loves,  
Where do you pasture your flock,  
Where do you make it lie down at noon?  
For why should I be like one who veils herself  
Beside the flocks of your companions?”*

*“If you yourself do not know,  
Most beautiful among women,  
Go forth on the trail of the flock  
And pasture your young goats  
By the tents of the shepherds.  
To me, my darling, you are like  
My mare among the chariots of Pharaoh.  
Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments,  
Your neck with strings of beads.  
We will make for you ornaments of gold  
With beads of silver.”*

# Black but Comely

## Exposed by the Lord's Shining

*“I am black, but comely,  
O ye daughters of Jerusalem,  
As the tents of Kedar,  
As the curtains of Solomon.”  
– Song of Songs 1:5, KJV*

After experiencing an intimate fellowship with the Lord, the seeker begins to know who the Lord is, who she herself is, and where the brothers and sisters are. If we do not have the experience of progressing in this way, we should realize that something is wrong with our spiritual condition before the Lord.

At first, when she saw the daughters of Jerusalem—signifying those who are saved but who do not seek after the Lord—and the virgins living in the church life—those who do love the Lord and seek after Him—the seeker did not realize her own blackness, nor did she see the blackness of others, for the simple reason that everyone was black. One day, however, she was brought into the king's chambers, and at that point she began to

realize that she herself was black. Originally, she didn't feel that she was that sinful, but now she realizes that she is indeed a fallen sinner. Now she has the realization, "Lord, I am black. I cannot do anything for You, nor can I function in the church life."

One who never touches the Lord often justifies himself, but one who does touch the Lord will instead condemn himself. When we were not in the light, we did not see that we were black. We thought that our hearts were not black because we often prepared food for the love feast; our hands were not black because we served; our feet were not black because we followed Him. Actually, we were black to the point that we did not see our true condition. We may acknowledge that we harbored a little blackness in this or that area of our life, yet we still denied that we ourselves are entirely black.

The seeker's experience in the King's chambers shows us that only when the Lord shines upon us will we realize just how black we are. When He shines upon us in a particular area of our life, we truly see that part of our being is black. Therefore, the Lord must shine upon us in all aspects of our life; only then will we realize that all that we had previously regarded as acceptable and commendable is nothing but utter blackness. Even our love to the Lord may come out of a heart that is black.

When the Lord shines upon you, you will realize that in your inner being you are "black as the tents of Kedar." Yet, the more you see your blackness, the more you will also see your inward loveliness in the Lord, and you will realize, "I am black but comely." Actually, your inner loveliness in the Lord corresponds to the blackness that you realize in yourself. The more you realize you are black, the lovelier you will be before the Lord. You may feel weak and vulnerable when you are under the shining of the Lord, but it is in such a weak and vulnerable state that you are lovely and appreciated by God.

On the one hand, you are like the tents of Kedar, black in-

wardly and outwardly, having nothing of beauty. On the other hand, you are like “the curtains of Solomon”; that is, you are of fine linen. You are lovely because Christ’s righteousness is your covering. On the one hand, you consider yourself to be so poor. On the other hand, when you see the salvation in Christ, you feel that you are so rich and beautiful. This is the result of being with the King in “His chambers.”

## Desiring to be Hidden

*“Do not stare at me because I am black,  
For the sun has burned me.”*  
– *Song of Songs 1:6, NASB, Margin*

When the Shulammitte becomes aware of her blackness, she does not want others to look upon her. Often, when the Lord begins to attract us, we seek the attention of others. When someone is zealous for the Lord as a new believer, he often desires to be manifested and appreciated by others. However, those who truly love the Lord and follow the Lord avoid the attention of others, for they are aware of who they are in themselves.

After her fellowship in the King’s chambers, the Shulammitte became manifested among the daughters of Jerusalem. This happens also in our experience when the brothers and sisters begin to notice that something has changed in us, that we are different because of our time with the Lord. However, the seeker’s feeling is, “Do not stare at me.” She feels she is too ugly to be looked at. She could tell others about the beauty of the Lord, and she could also tell them about her shamefulness before the Lord, but at this point she realizes that she is fallen, black, and vulnerable, so she seeks to remain hidden.

The statement, “For the sun has burned me,” indicates that

her feeling of being black was caused by the Lord's exposing. The light of the Lord shines like the sun, and you feel tender and exposed after He has done such a work; you can no longer dare to be proud. All who live in such a fellowship with the Lord will warn others not to take notice of them. When the Lord truly looks upon you, you will no longer care about others saying "Amen"; you will only live before the Lord, and you will see that you are responsible to Him alone.

## The Keeper of the Vineyards

*"My mother's sons were angry with me;  
They made me caretaker of the vineyards,  
But I have not taken care of my own vineyard."  
– Song of Songs 1:6*

As one who loves the Lord and receives a burden to carry out something before Him, the seeker has a vineyard of her own. If you have an intimate relationship with the Lord, you will also have your own "vineyard"—something that you feel God has committed to you.

This verse indicates, however, that when you rise up to take care of your own vineyard, you will come into contact with your "mother's sons," that is, the leading brothers who stand for the Lord as the responsible ones in the church life. They take the responsibility in the church, so they are involved with whatever you feel you are committed with. However, if their focus is on the work, rather than on Christ Himself, it will be easy for them to be angry with the Lord's lovers.

When you have an intimate relationship with the Lord and He shines upon you, you will find that you become burdened for the vineyard. At that point, the Lord looks upon you. His

shining not only makes you realize that you are black, but also causes others to see you as black. They feel that you are not willing to cooperate with them, and you feel that you yourself could not function in any place, for they are angry with you. When you did not have a special relationship with the Lord and were without His shining, you had no problems with these brothers, for you just went along with whatever happened in the church life. Once you have a special relationship with the Lord, however, you will find no rest, for in carrying out your burden you will encounter these brothers.

### “Where Do You Feed Your Flock?”

*“Tell me, O you whom my soul loves,  
Where do you pasture your flock,  
Where do you make it lie down at noon?”  
– Song of Songs 1:7*

Here she has a prayer, “Lord, please tell me, where do You pasture Your flock? Others have asked me to serve in some matters, but I feel uneasy about it. I want to labor according to my burden, but the brothers don’t agree. Oh, Lord, where do You pasture Your flock?”

Our vineyard represents what the Lord has committed to us; it is a place where we work. The seeker feels that she has her commission from the Lord, and she also focuses upon her relationship with the Lord. Outwardly, she may seem to be very busy in tending the vineyard and caring for others, but if the work is not from God or if it is not carried out in an intimate relationship with the Lord, it will be in vain. A true lover of the Lord will ask, “Tell me, You whom my soul loves, where do You pasture Your flock?” so that he may know how to work with the

Lord. How we all need to have such a prayer, rather than just pay attention to our work!

### “Where Do You Make It Rest?”

In this verse the seeker also asks the Lord where He makes His flock to “lie down at noon.” Noon is the “full” time of a day, as Proverbs 4:18 states:

*But the path of the righteous  
is like the light of dawn,  
That shines brighter and brighter  
until the full day.*

To “lie down” means to rest. Therefore, this verse indicates that the seeker desires to enter into something further with the Lord. She is not satisfied to just have a little service or some outward activities for the Lord. She is also longing for rest; not merely to work, but to enjoy the life supply of the Lord, even to the fullest extent.

She is also hungry for the Lord’s supply and is seeking full satisfaction in Him. Before this, she was trying to carry out something of her own work before the Lord, and therefore she was frustrated. Now she tells the Him, “Lord, they made me keeper of the vineyards, and they were angry with me. I could not go anywhere, and so I have come to You. You whom my soul loves, please tell me, where do You pasture Your flock? Where do You make it lie down at noon? Lord, bring me to the full rest in You.”

If you truly love the Lord, it will not matter what work is assigned to you. When the brothers have their own feelings and opinions about what you should be doing, and you also have

yours, it will leave you feeling confused as to how to function, and you will appear to have a problem with authority. The real issue, however, is not what you should be doing, but whether you have the Lord as your supply and rest. Therefore you will have an inner cry to the Lord, “You whom my soul loves, please tell me, where do You pasture Your flock? Where do You make it lie down at noon? The problem that I need to solve is not to figure out how I should be laboring, but how to gain the supply of Your grace. I do not need to determine which vineyard I should be laboring in, but where I can find the full rest. Where are the supply and the rest? That is what I need to find.”

## The Flocks of the Companions

*“For why should I be like one who veils herself  
Beside the flocks of your companions?”  
– Song of Songs 1:7*

The “companions” here are those who surround her and are constituted with a rich ministry in the Lord. However, if these serving ones are not careful in their serving, those whom they serve could become their own flock, rather than the Lord’s flock.

Originally the church life was very satisfying to this seeker, but now she doesn’t know where she should go; she feels that there is no place for her. These “companions” care about everyone else, yet they ignore her. This is why she ends up wandering beside the flocks of the companions of the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, if you do not have a relationship with the Lord, you will never experience this. You will simply be a daughter of Jerusalem in the church life, going to meetings just like a sheep in someone else’s flock. Once you develop a rela-

tionship with the Lord, however, you will see the Lord's "companions," His co-workers. They all have their flocks which they have taken good care of. But how do you feel? If they ask you to be a sheep in one of their flocks, you feel you can't, for you belong only to the Lord. Yet, you also realize that you are not able to take care of anything on your own. Eventually, all that is left for you to do is to wander alongside the flocks of the companions.

When we begin to love the Lord, we all have the feeling that we don't know what it is to cooperate with others and to fellowship in the Body. Actually, our wandering alongside the flocks is the result of being too subjective. We have touched the Lord a little, and so we think we know how to follow the Lord. In reality, we still have a great lack, for we have only experienced the shining of the Lord; we have not yet experienced the working of the cross.

This is why we feel, "Where is the right place for me? Where can I function?" Not until we experience the Spirit's breaking will we realize that others are experiencing exactly the same thing that we are experiencing. Because we are so subjective and we do not see this, we only see our own situation. Therefore we are not able to cooperate with others or to receive the direction in the body of Christ.

## Wandering

Although the seeker feels that she is wandering because of her perplexity in the church life, she doesn't lose sight of the most important thing: focusing on her relationship with the Lord, and on her nourishment and rest in Him, rather than on her work. The seeker is still regulated by her experience in verses 2 and 3. The Lord has attracted her and captured her by His beauty. Apart

from Him, she realizes she cannot have nourishment or rest. Although her attitude about serving has caused her to wander, she is still able to go on because of her desire for the Lord. If not for this, her Christian life might stop at this point.

If we are in a normal spiritual condition before God, we will not easily be occupied and trapped with work. Instead, we will spend our time seeking the Lord. However, if we are caught by our work, we will not be able to go on with Him and grow properly. Only when we focus solely on the Lord are we able to grow in a normal way.

In the church life, we should never try to keep someone by using him to do things. Although for a time this may seem effective, we should not think that we can use this way to perfect the saints. In particular, if we seek to establish someone in the church life by giving him some kind of responsibility before he has really touched the Lord, we are actually placing a stumbling block in front of him.

For example, if a high school student is asked to serve in children's service, he will come to the Lord and pray seriously. Because he realizes he lacks experience, he will look to God to grant him the ability to serve properly. This service will probably strengthen his attachment to the church life, but as he grows and becomes more experienced, this service will no longer satisfy him. At that point he may disappear from the church life.

Instead, when we are seeking to help people, we need to bring them to the Lord's presence so that they can learn to have a direct relationship with the Lord Himself, rather than to merely do an outward work. We need to help people live before the Lord, for what matters is not our work but our relationship with the Lord. Although doing some work can satisfy a certain need for a time, nothing can replace the Lord Himself.

Thus, the prayer of the seeker in this section of the Song of Songs is very good. Although she is wandering as one veiled

beside the flocks of the Lord's companions, not knowing what her portion is, she still is seeking the Lord Himself with all her heart. We need to pray over and over, "Please tell me, Lord, where is the fullest rest and the richest nourishment? I am not satisfied, nor am I at rest. How can I enjoy You more? How can I know You more?" We need to be like her, knowing that all the supply and rest are from the Lord Himself. It is only by holding fast to the Lord Himself that we can go on, even when we are wandering.

### "Go Forth"

*"If you yourself do not know,  
Most beautiful among women,  
Go forth on the trail of the flock  
And pasture your young goats  
By the tents of the shepherds."  
– Song of Songs 1:8*

While she is struggling in this way, the Lord has mercy upon her. She knows that her nourishment of life, her hope, and her rest can only be found in the Lord Himself. Therefore, no matter how difficult or uncertain things are outwardly, she still is able to go on by relying on the Lord.

The Lord answers her prayer by calling her the "most beautiful among women," and telling her that she should "go forth on the trail of the flock," or "follow in the footsteps of the flock" (NKJV). The Lord takes care of her according to her concern in her condition. Every time we come to the Lord in this way, He seems encouraged and moved by our predicament and sees us as the "most beautiful among women." The Lord knows where we are, and He understands our complaint: "I have kept other's

vineyards, but my own I have not kept, and I don't know where to pasture my young goats." He knows that our not knowing what to do is because of our love for Him. He also knows that outwardly we are weak and self-centered, but inwardly we are, nonetheless, still lovely to Him. Therefore He says, "You are the fairest among women, and everything is fine. If you do not know, go forth in the footsteps of the flock." The Lord doesn't mention anything about our work in His response. When we love the Lord, we are easily occupied with our work, and we want to do something for Him. His desire, however, is to save those who love Him from such work.

"The footsteps of the flock" here are plural in number, signifying the spiritual walk of all believers. From the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost throughout all of church history, the real followers of the Lord have demonstrated their love in the midst of persecution, sacrifice, and even martyrdom. Today, many are still following in this way to love the Lord. We need to trace these steps ourselves and continue along this way that the saints have trod before.

The principles of spiritual growth will never change. Just as the Lord helped Peter, James, John, Paul, and many other saints to grow in life in the New Testament age, so will the Lord lead us today. Therefore, when we are wandering alongside the flocks of our companions and feeling depressed, one very good, practical help can be to read biographies of those who have loved the Lord before us. The story of their experiences with the Lord will supply us and help us through our difficulties.

We need to realize that the Lord's nourishment and rest for us can be found not only through our pursuit of the Lord directly, but also from the spiritual experiences of other brothers and sisters. Today the flock has gone quite a distance, leaving many footsteps for us to follow. What we need to do is to go forth in these footsteps of the flock.

It is wrong to think that today we are the peak of the Lord's work and that what the saints did before is of little importance. We may be laboring at a different stage in the Lord's recovery of His testimony, but the principles of life have not changed. To follow the Lord, we need to learn from the life experiences of those who are ahead of us and who have gone before us. If we are faithful and willing, we will experience what these saints have experienced before. Thus, we have to receive from those who have gone before and learn what they have learned before us. The Lord wants to save us from work into life, and in just the same manner that He has shepherded His lovers in the past, so will He shepherd us today.

When we begin following the Lord, we often go astray by mixing other things in with our love of the Lord. Even our pursuing of Christ can become mixed up with some kind of work. Therefore we must go forth in the footsteps of the flock, which is the way of life. In our following of the Lord we will never have to face situations that no one has confronted before. Thus, we can often experience a breakthrough by receiving the riches of those who have passed on in this way before us.

## The Shepherds' Tents

*“And pasture your young goats  
By the tents of the shepherds.”  
– Song of Songs 1:8*

The mention of the “shepherds” here is in the plural. If it were singular, it could refer to the Lord, but this is not the case. The shepherds in verse 8 actually refer to the “mother's sons” in verse 6, who are the frustrating ones. You may be unable to obey “my mother's sons” and may argue with them, feeling they are

just slightly ahead of you in the church life and are not qualified to give you directions. You may also question why they don't let you function according to your burden.

The Lord's answer here is very particular—He tells her to live under the authority in the church. If the Lord is the great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4), the brothers are the shepherds to whom the Lord has given responsibility (1 Pet. 5:2). If the Lord builds up the church (Matt. 16:18), so do the brothers (Eph. 4:16). You cannot look down upon these shepherds, thinking that they are just “other children of my mother.” You should not feel that they are on the same level as you are. You have to see that they are the shepherds appointed by the Lord. When you say, “O daughters of Jerusalem,” you are joyful to be among them. But when you say, “My mother's sons were angry with me,” you are actually complaining about the Lord's arrangement. The Lord seems to be saying, “Don't think that you can be independent and do what you desire just because you have your particular burden, commission, and vineyard. You still need to pasture your young goats by the shepherds' tents. You cannot carry out something independently from the brothers.”

We must learn that every shepherd has his “tent.” The Lord allows us to work, but He does not allow us to work individually, apart from others. To work properly for God, we need to be by the shepherds' tents and be related to these tents. We cannot try to carry out our burden independently, according to our own way and opinion. We have to learn to bring our burden to the brothers, bringing to the church what the Lord has committed to us. Then we will truly be able to care for others. We should pasture our young goats by the shepherds' tents.

Those who begin to follow the Lord should pursue the growth in life personally on the one hand, and on the other hand they should also know the footsteps of the flock. The footsteps of

the flock grant us confidence that our labor is of the Lord. The Lord has not called us to follow Him on our own, and He will not ask us to leave the rich supply in the church. Even when we have some “young goats” to take care of, we need to pasture them by the shepherds’ tents.

I worship the Lord very much when I come to this section. Before we touch the Lord, we can say “Amen” to almost anything in the church life. As we touch the Lord and begin to pursue Him, however, we also begin to feel burdened about some particular matter, and at that point we wander astray. At such a time, we may treat the more experienced brothers condescendingly as being merely our “mother’s sons.” We thank the Lord that, rather than rebuking us for being proud and selfish, He gently adjusts us, saying,

*“If you yourself do not know,  
Most beautiful among women,  
Go forth on the trail of the flock  
And pasture your young goats  
By the tents of the shepherds.”*

Therefore, if we truly love the Lord, we will treasure the experiences of those who have loved Christ before us. We may love the Lord and yet say, “What relevance do Madame Guyon and John Wesley have for us today? They are out of date as far as the Lord’s move is concerned.” If this is our feeling, we may end up missing the footsteps of the flock.

If we love the Lord and wish to follow Him in life, we must receive the experiences left for us by those who have gone before us. If we truly love the Lord, we cannot separate ourselves from the shepherds. We should recognize those whom the Lord has placed among us as shepherds. Then, we simply pasture our young goats by the shepherds’ tents.

## A Mare in Pharaoh's Chariots

*“To me, my darling, you are like  
My mare among the chariots of Pharaoh.  
Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments,  
Your neck with strings of beads.”  
– Song of Songs 1:9-10*

The Lord compares His lover to a “mare among the chariots of Pharaoh.” As for her ability, she is swift. As for her appearance, she is beautiful. But as for her personality, she is still very much in her own strength. She is lacking in both the humanity and divinity of the Lord, so she is very rough and wild in her pursuing.

In verse 10 the Lord refers to her cheeks, and how they are “lovely with ornaments.” The meaning of the Hebrew word for “ornaments” here is “cirlet, plait, turn (of hair or gold),” (Strong, #8448), that is, how we arrange our hair, often with some kind of outward ornamentation. The ASV translates it as “plaits of hair.” The beauty of our face is determined in large part by our cheeks. But hair that is properly arranged can help the appearance of our cheeks. Hence, in this verse we see that the beauty of the seeker is due to her ornamentation of herself, to how she arranges her hair. Some women know how to make their hair beautiful so as to make themselves more attractive. The one who loves the Lord, on the one hand, doesn’t want to be looked at, because she realizes she is black. On the other hand, she knows how to make herself beautiful so that her loveliness will be noticed.

It is common for those who are just beginning to love the Lord to act as if they are more spiritual than they really are, so that others would appreciate them. This is to try to enhance your loveliness with “ornaments.” However, the experienced saints

will quickly perceive when a person is just “making ornaments” and realize that it is not, in reality, the result of the Spirit’s work.

Actually, we are all good at making such ornaments. We know if we proclaim something in a certain way we will appear strong, or if we do something in a certain way we will appear to be spiritual. Therefore, saints at this stage in their spiritual life spend much time on producing such ornaments rather than pursuing the Lord. They try to exercise their will and emotion to be spiritual, as they consider it. Nonetheless, we don’t know yet how God will transform such ones, or what they will eventually express, for such outward beauty is the result of their own work; it does not come from the reality of their inward experience with the Lord.

## Strings of Jewels

*“Your neck [is lovely] with strings of jewels.”*

*– Song of Songs 1:10, ESV*

Here the seeker’s “neck” represents our ability to obey. In the Old Testament, God often said that the Israelites were a stiff-necked people (e.g., Exo. 32:9). No one who just begins to love the Lord feels that he needs to obey. Instead, we all have opinions inwardly, while outwardly we put on “strings of jewels,” making our necks appear beautiful. Thus, we appear to be submissive, but in fact our submission is not real, and if we are asked to obey, we cannot, for we still lack the capacity to understand the price our obedience would require.

During a prevailing conference, hundreds of saints may declare their consecration to the Lord. For the most part, these declarations are just “strings of jewels.” Until the day our consecration is tested by the Lord, we won’t realize how hard our

neck is. The seeker here appears to love the Lord, and she herself feels she loves the Lord, but in reality, that is not the case. Her appearing tender and submissive before others is just an outward string of jewels and is not out of the constitution of life. Before men she puts ornaments in her hair, and before God, she wears “strings of jewels.” No matter how her hair is plaited, however, or what she does to string jewels around her neck, God can perceive that she is still, at this point, just a “mare among the chariots of Pharaoh.”

## Plaits of Gold

*“We will make thee plaits of gold  
With studs of silver.”  
– Song of Songs 1:11, ASV*

The seeker had asked her beloved where he pastured his flock, and where he made it lie down at noon. However, the beloved’s answer here indicates that what she needs in her present condition is not nourishment or rest, but the work of the cross.

The Triune God will make you “plaits of gold with studs of silver.” The phrase “plaits of gold” in the original language refers to something that resembles a crown. It is a ringle, a crown with golden borders. This means you must let God work His life and nature into you. The result of God’s work in you becomes a little crown.

Sometimes you feel that a certain cross the Lord has measured to you is too heavy to bear and that you are treading the wilderness on barren, thirsty ground. However, after every suffering, a little more of the crown is developed in you. Besides the Lord, others around you can also see this crown, which indicates that you have grown during this period of time in your life.

However, rather than allowing God to work on us, we often make our own plaits, using the gift God has given us, so that others would notice our capability to carry out spiritual work or to minister in the church. Such service is superficial. What other people can see are your gifts, not God Himself. Although this may cause other saints to think that we are gifted and capable, we cannot fool God.

It is not wrong to be gifted, nor should we despise our gifts; the Lord doesn't ask the Shulammite to cut off all of her hair. However, we need to see that what God wants to do is to constitute our ministry, together with its gifts, with Himself, by weaving Himself into our natural abilities. What God cares for is not our gifts in themselves, but whether or not our gifts have been constituted with Himself as the crown of gold.

The Triune God wants to work in us. Since we like ornaments and we like to be well-known, God will make us plaits of gold. We made up our own hair before, but now God comes to "weave" His disposition into us. Before our spirituality and beauty were merely human, but now God comes to constitute His own beauty into us, enabling us to express His divinity. Then we will not merely be a lover of the Lord, but also someone who loves the Lord in union with Him.

The cross works on you with little sympathy, whether you feel you are willing for it or not. When God says, "We will make you plaits of gold," He will do it in a very fine way. He will deal with you to the point that you become exhausted and feel there is no way to go on. However, after "disheveling" your hair in this way, God will finally braid it back again, and you will find that something divine has been added into your being.

God doesn't work on you while you are sleeping, when you don't have any feelings; after waking up you don't suddenly find that a crown of gold has been woven into your hair. You will feel it when the Lord works on you. It is the process you go through,

the way of the cross, that produces the crown within you. The more work of the cross you experience, the more of the crown you will possess, and the more you will be able to truly help others and genuinely serve them.

In contrast, making your own plaits is like having a weapon that is not real and is not suitable for battle; it cannot stand up to any kind of challenge from the things that come your way. Moreover, the younger ones whom you serve will imitate you to make their own plaits. Then, when Satan comes to attack, their plaits will also just fall down. Unless you have something divine woven into your being through the work of the cross, you will not be able to help them.

God allows Satan to test all of His works; He allows him to attack those upon whom He has worked. If the plaits of your hair are not made with God's nature as the gold, then Satan will not seem to notice you. But just when you are willing to go on with the Lord a little, Satan will come to God to accuse you, and suddenly many things will happen. Do not be discouraged when this happens to you, for your experience through such difficult times will produce in you a golden crown.

Every time you reach a new peak in your spiritual growth, you need to be prepared for Satan's renewed attack, and you need to ask for the Lord's preservation. However, be assured that God will only allow Satan to attack you and test you according to your capacity. Those who lead, those who love the Lord more absolutely, and those who are more committed to the Lord will go through more sufferings. The result of such sufferings, however, will be the woven crown of gold (cf. James 1:12).

In the midst of this process you will often feel unclear, blocked, frustrated, depressed, or simply unable to go on. At such a time, however, the Spirit will constitute you, and the Triune God will work on you, bringing out a further expression of

the gold. The more constitution you have, the more plaits of gold; the more gold, the more expression of His glory.

When you see some saints in the church, you just feel they are shining and glorious and that there are many crowns upon them. This is the result of God's special work with them through the cross, by which He has made them plaits of gold.

## Studs of Silver

According to v. 11, the plaits that God makes for us have studs of silver. Silver signifies redemption (cf. Exo. 30:13), and so the phrase "studs of silver" refers again to the work of the cross. If you wish to follow the Lord and live before Him, He will make you studs of silver. In other words, He will let the cross work on you. God wants to separate His "mare among Pharaoh's chariots" from the world by making you studs of silver. God wants you to pass through the experience of His redemption and to gain redemption through grace. At this time you may be attached to the world, signified by "Pharaoh's chariots," due to your weakness, but He will save you gradually until you are completely separated from the world. Thus the Lord will both constitute His life into you for His divine, golden expression and also work on you by the cross in order that you might experience His redemption. In this way, He will eventually make you a part of His beloved bride who is able to really match Him.

Our experience will always be along these two lines: the line of nourishing and rest, and the line of the work of the cross. As we experience these two lines, God will be able to constitute us with Himself. We thank the Lord that He does not shame us or reject us for being a wild mare. May the Lord work in us so that we will have more hunger for His nourishing and for His rest.

Meanwhile, may we let the cross do its work to make us plaits of gold with studs of silver so that we can live before Him in complete union with Him.

## Song of Songs 1:12-2:1

*“While the king was at his table,  
My perfume gave forth its fragrance.  
My beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh  
Which lies all night between my breasts.  
My beloved is to me  
    a cluster of henna blossoms  
In the vineyards of Engedi.”*

*“How beautiful you are, my darling,  
How beautiful you are!  
Your eyes are like doves.”*

*“How handsome you are, my beloved,  
And so pleasant!  
Indeed, our couch is luxuriant!  
The beams of our houses are cedars,  
Our rafters, cypresses.  
I am the rose of Sharon,  
The lily of the valleys.”*

# A Lily of the Valleys

## The King at His Table

*“While the king sat at his table,  
My spikenard sent forth its fragrance.”  
– Song of Solomon 1:12, ASV*

This loving seeker makes mention of the Lord as the king twice in this first stage of her experience. The first time she mentioned him was in verse 4, where the king brought her into his chambers. This signifies that she took the Lord as her king because He brought her into His inner rest and satisfaction. In such an atmosphere she enjoyed His love. The second time she mentions the king is here in verse 12, where she tells us “the king sat at his table.” The seeking one has now experienced some work of the cross. The Lord has made her plaits of gold with studs of silver. She knows that God desires to work in her so that she can appreciate Christ’s riches in others. Now she is under His authority. Moreover, she is no longer self-centered in her seeking, as she was earlier in her seeking after Him.

We can also see her growth in the manner in which she men-

tions the king in these two verses. Previously, her focus was on herself, but now she does not say, “I was at the king’s table,” or, “The king brought me to his table,” but rather, “The king sat at his table.” This shows she has experienced a transfer from being focused on herself in her seeking to being focused on the Lord Himself. Praise the Lord for this precious transition!

Brothers and sisters, how do you come to the point where you can say, “The king is at his table?” That is, how can we know we have experienced a transfer from self-rule to the rule of the King? As we saw in the previous chapter, according to verses 7-11, there are four principles we must apply. First, we need to go forth “in the footsteps of the flock.” Second, we must “pasture [our] young goats by the shepherds’ tents.” Third, we need to let God make us “plaits of gold.” And fourth, with the “plaits of gold,” we need the “studs of silver.” These four principles determine whether we are those who can experience what is represented by the phrase, “The king is at his table.”

At this stage, when the brothers render you some help before the Lord, you will feel that it is the Lord who gains the satisfaction rather than you. It is not you who gain the enjoyment, but the Lord. You will yield more to the Lord, and He will be able to work in you more freely. Brothers and sisters, this is special. When you go forth on the footsteps of the flock, when you live by the shepherds’ tents, when the cross works in you and the redemption of Christ is applied within your being, you are changed, and a transition takes place. The king begins to rule in your heart, and you become the king’s enjoyment.

## The Spikenard

What does the king enjoy while he is at his table? He enjoys Christ; the enjoyment is Christ and the food is also Christ. Only

Christ can satisfy God. Because of this, it may seem that we are not important when we recognize that the king is at his table; we only accompany him. However, this is not true, for we are not told here what food was set upon the king's table. Rather, the seeker says that while the king was at his table, "My spikenard sent forth its fragrance." What Christ has accomplished is not the center here. Instead, what we have become as the result of His work is the center before God. Although it is the Lord who is at the table, we too are there as the result of His work. We are in union with Christ, and the Christ who is being worked into us is living within us and spreading out from us to be the fragrance to satisfy God.

This phrase, "My spikenard sent forth its fragrance," should fill us with joy. Earlier the Shulammitte said, "Your name is ointment poured forth" (1:4 NKJV). As we have seen, this indicates that our Lord is not only rich but is also processed. He became a man, suffered in His human living, shed His blood on the cross, was crucified, passed through death, and resurrected. He went to the cross and died for us. His work gives forth a fragrance, so that we can say of the Lord, "Your name is ointment poured forth." At this point in her experience, however, the Shulammitte can not only say, "Your name is ointment poured forth," but also, "my spikenard sent forth its fragrance" for the king's satisfaction, because she has become the result of His work. What a wonderful change is this!

## A Fragrance from Being Broken

We thank the Lord that He works in us and breaks us. At this point we are no longer what we were before. We are no longer those who are merely zealous for the Lord and who just want the Lord for our own enjoyment. Now we have experienced a

little breaking from His work upon us, and we also bear the marks of this work. As a result, we give forth a fragrance that the Lord truly appreciates, because it is the result of His working upon us.

We need to bear such a fragrance unto the Lord. It is not enough just to give something to the Lord and labor for Him. We also need to be dealt with by the Lord, for only as we are broken can this wonderful life flow out from within us. Only then can our spikenard give forth its fragrance, a fragrance that satisfies not only the saints, but also the King who is at His table.

However, we need to remember that it is the seeker who says this, not the Lord. As we begin to experience the work of the cross, we may feel we have already learned a great deal. After a little dealing, we may immediately declare that our spikenard gives forth its fragrance. While this may be true, it is not yet the full fragrance. Furthermore, we see here that while the king is the object of the fragrance, the seeker hasn't yet forgotten herself; she still feels that she is so precious and valuable. She testifies, "My spikenard sent forth its fragrance." The Shulammitte is still emphasizing herself and her own experience and is not yet completely lost in the Lord.

## A Bundle of Myrrh

*"My beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh  
Which lies all night between my breasts."*

*– Song of Songs 1:13*

If you experience something of the dealings and the breaking work of the cross, you will consider it very precious. When you touch the cross the Lord has measured to you, and when it works on you, you will be changed, and the fragrance of spikenard

nard will spontaneously flow out. You will begin to experience what it is to be in the heavenly places with Christ. At that time you will be able to provide God with some satisfaction, for you are more willing to allow the cross to do its work, and thus your person is being gained for the Lord.

At such a time you will have the testimony spoken of in this verse. Myrrh symbolizes death (cf. John 19:39). Thus, verse 13 reveals that the seeker considers the working of the Lord's death something to be treasured. Prior to this, she treasured the Lord's love above all else (1:2, 4). Now, though, her beloved has become to her a "pouch," or "bundle" (KJV) of myrrh that lies between her breasts. This indicates that she has come to touch the meaning of the Lord's death.

At first, our experience of the Lord is primarily one of love. We were drawn by the Lord's love and His loveliness. We saw that the Lord was worthy of our pursuit. Gradually, however, we discovered that the death of the Lord is the realization of His love in us. Apart from realizing the death of the Lord, we cannot know the meaning of His love. How can we experience His love? It is by our dying together with Him. The more we die, the more we experience His love and the more deeply we experience the riches of His love. When we are put into His death, we are put into His love. If we are constantly living in the death of the Lord, we are constantly living in His love.

### "All Night"

The phrase "all night" indicates the period of time before dawn. In other words, the seeker is saying, "the Lord hasn't come yet. Before He comes, it is still night, and during this long night, I am willing to take this myrrh as the center of my life. Therefore, the death of the Lord is between my breasts."

## Between the Breasts

Brother Watchman Nee explained the breasts as representing faith and love (see 1 Thes. 5:8). Actually, we can also say the breasts represent the manifestation of the maturity of life. In the process of our growth in life we progress with faith and love through our experience of the Lord's death. In fact, the preciousness of the growth in life is with this death. If we experience the myrrh, we will grow in life and become more mature in life, and we will be able to stand more solidly before God. Therefore, in this verse the seeker testifies, "Lord, I need Your death." Watchman Nee expressed this thought in the lines of a hymn:

*I for greater power pray not;  
Deeper death is what I need.*

As we follow the Lord we need to value what He values and love what He loves. Only when we are committed to Him in a serious way will we be able to follow Him through the various, often difficult environments He measures to us.

One who does not know the cross does not yet really know what it means to love the Lord. When he touches something, he may shout, "Now I see it! Hallelujah, Amen!" Yet afterwards, he will still live his life in his own way. In contrast, one who truly follows the Lord realizes the meaning of "night" and has only one desire, that is, that the morning would dawn.

In fact, this entire age is a "night," a time of darkness, but few of us have the feeling that we are in the time of night. We think instead that we still have many hours of daylight left, and therefore the things of the "night" don't bother us. We feel very confident and capable and so do not really feel the need for the Lord's presence.

Only those who realize that they are in the night need the

Lord's death, represented by the myrrh. If you don't feel you are in the night, death does not have much opportunity to operate in you, so there will be little of the deeper working of the cross. A person who truly follows the Lord only desires the Lord's return. He lives only for the Lord. Since he realizes he is living in the night, earthly ties do not entangle him.

When Watchman Nee was just 22 years old he wrote a hymn in which he expressed his desire that his living and work would be able to pass through the fire and the Lord's examination before His judgment seat. Every day he felt that his living was for the Lord and His coming. He hoped what he had done in this life could stand the test before the Lord on that day. Because of this desire and this attitude, his beloved Lord was indeed, to him, as a bundle of myrrh lying at night between his breasts.

## The Henna Blossoms

*“My beloved is to me  
a cluster of henna blossoms  
In the vineyards of Engedi.”  
– Song of Songs 1:14*

Henna flowers are not overly conspicuous, but they do stand out among the green leaves of a vineyard. Thus, for the seeker to say that the Lord is “a cluster of henna blossoms” means, “I treasure my Lord in my heart, and He is so beautiful to me.”

Engedi was a place in the wilderness to which David fled to find shelter from Saul (1 Sam. 23:29). According to Watchman Nee, “Engedi” means “the fountain of the lamb.” To the seeker, the Lord is both a bundle of myrrh that lies between her breasts and a cluster of henna flowers in the vineyards of Engedi. On the one hand, we are waiting for the Lord and experiencing His

death to know Him in a deeper way; on the other, He is even now our shelter and our fountain of life in the wilderness of this dark age.

How should we live upon this earth today? Our living should be completely in the Lord. He is our fountain and life supply to quench our thirst and take care of our needs. He is also our shelter; we can trust in Him in any situation. When there is a difficult environment, we can hide ourselves in Him. What matters is not our strength, but that we can hide in Him and experience Him as our fountain, our life supply. We also live a life in which we experience Him in His death as “a bundle of myrrh that lies at night between our breasts.”

## “How Beautiful You Are!”

*“How beautiful you are, my darling,  
How beautiful you are!”  
– Song of Songs 1:15*

The king told the Shulammite earlier that she was the most beautiful of women (v. 8), meaning that she was special and manifested even among the other saved ones. However, now the king’s word is, “How beautiful you are, my darling!” She gives forth the fragrance of spikenard (v. 12), and she has also experienced His death, as signified by the myrrh (v. 13). She enjoys the Lord as her life supply and hides herself in Him (v. 14). These experiences draw forth the Lord’s appreciation.

We are often very shallow. When there is a cross for us, our feeling is that the Lord is beating us for something we have done wrong. We think, “He is disciplining me because I am bad. The Lord is breaking me because I am terrible. It is all due to my being such a difficult person.” However, the Lord says, instead,

“You are beautiful! Oh, you are so beautiful!” We think we are too terrible to match the Lord. But the Lord says, “Do not focus on your weakness, for I do not pay attention to your weakness, failure, and uncleanness. When you enjoy Me as your fountain of life and hide in Me, you are indeed beautiful.”

Brothers and sisters, what a precious praise this is! This verse is for those whose beloved is to them “a bundle of myrrh.” It is for the saints who not only are faithful as those in the night, but who also realize the beauty of the henna flower and live in “the vineyards of Engedi.” In particular, it is for those who consider themselves so weak that they can only rely on the Lord’s death and desire that the Lord would work in them more deeply.

Few of us can elicit such a praise from the Lord. We usually think that our experience of the Lord’s life is somehow adequate. But we should consider soberly before Him, how much do we really give the Lord? How much desire do we really have for the Lord? Or do we just focus on our work or on what others think of us? We need to remember that no matter how busy we are, we still have to live in the “night,” experiencing the Lord’s death to love Him in a deeper way. No matter how much we labor or how zealous we are, we still need to remain in Engedi, enjoying the Lord as our fountain and our shelter. Then the Lord will say that we are beautiful. May the Lord enlighten us and reveal His intent and pleasure to us.

## Eyes Like Doves

*“Your eyes are like doves.”*

– *Song of Songs 1:15*

To say that we have “eyes like doves” refers to both our spiritual insight and our purity. It means that we are pure, for the eyes

of a dove can only see one thing at a time; in the same way, we can only see the Lord. Moreover, one who is pure has spiritual insight, and one with spiritual insight finds it easier to be pure.

The first thing the Lord mentions in His praise of His seeker is that her eyes are like doves. Earlier, she pastured the young goats, so she was very busy. However, even then her eyes could only see the Lord; she could not see the Lord and her work at the same time. Thus, she simply followed the Lord according to her spiritual sight, rather than the outward situation.

If you truly follow the Lord, if you really walk in life, the Lord will ask you, “Do you have spiritual sight?” The first characteristic to become evident in a healthy Christian is that he has eyes like doves. Spiritual insight is the foundation of our following and serving the Lord. Without spiritual insight, we cannot serve the Lord in a healthy way. The better our spiritual sight is, the more we will have a healthy pursuing, and the more we will be able to lead the saints properly. In contrast, if we are spiritually “nearsighted,” God will not be able to speak clearly to us, nor will He be able to appear to us. When Eli was old, his eyes were dim, so there was no vision of the Lord through his service (1 Sam. 3:1-2). Without spiritual insight, we will not be able to serve properly.

We do not become pure as soon as we believe in the Lord. This is why we can see religion and politics being practiced even among us in the church. How can we be preserved from impurity? Once you make your own plans, consider your own benefit, or want to gain something for yourself, you lose your spiritual insight. If you are not willing to pay the price to follow the Lord, you will not have spiritual insight. The Lord will say, “Only when your eyes are like doves are you pure, and only when you have spiritual insight, can you stand before Me.”

A person with spiritual insight knows how to serve properly, for he makes his decisions not for his own sake, but with the

Lord alone in view. Without spiritual insight, we can only make decisions according to the outward situation. Some people like exciting meetings. If we possess spiritual insight, however, we will realize that many meetings, which from our point of view seem so good, are actually not profitable from God's perspective. If we have spiritual insight, we will consider and realize that it doesn't matter how exciting a meeting is. What is important is how much a meeting supplies the church.

As we gain spiritual insight we will be brought into another realm, one in which we touch the source of life, not merely the outward situation. If our eyes are focused solely on the Lord, we will not try to hold on to any spiritual thing, and we will not try to be spiritual. We will simply live in the spirit, and this will enable us to have the genuine spiritual discernment. Although our beauty and purity are not yet complete, and we remain weak and in need of the Lord's breaking work, we can still have eyes like doves. The way for us to follow the Lord is to possess such insight, such "eyes...like doves."

### "Our Couch is Green"

*"Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved,  
truly delightful.*

*Our couch is green."*

*– Song of Songs 1:16, ESV*

"Green" in this verse may also be translated "of grass." The couch being green here emphasizes the growth in life, for green is the color of life.

In verse 13 the Shulammitte had an experience of consecration, saying, "My beloved is to me a bundle of myrrh that lies at night between my breasts." By this time, it seems that she had

paid a price. When the Lord responded by praising her beauty, she realized that she had some initial attainment before the Lord. Now she is restful and full of life, so she declares, “Our couch is green.” She knows that the Lord is the One who is full of life and rejoices that there is so much supply, sweetness, and abundance of enjoyment in life between her and the Lord.

Such a person rests on the Lord’s faithfulness and in His rich supply. Psalm 23:2 says, “He makes me lie down in green pastures.” This indicates that it is life that provides us with the basis for our lying down. Why do we have rest? It is not because we have accomplished some labor, succeeded in some preaching, or attained some learning. Rather, it is because we have experienced the life of the Lord; it is because the Lord supplies us with His life. We have a life relationship with the Lord, so we can testify, “Our couch is green.”

Brothers and sisters, I am afraid that for many of us, our couch is rarely green. If we love the Lord and truly consecrate ourselves to the Lord we will say, “Lord, thank You that my couch is green.”

Although I have followed the Lord for many years, I never feel that my labor and service are sufficient. I never have the feeling I have accomplished much. My feeling is, “Lord, after so many years, why do I still feel like I am just beginning to love You?” It seems that after many years, there is still so much for me to experience. There will always be so much more for us to experience. We should always be able to say, “Our couch is green.” That means that we are full of life.

## The Beams

*“The beams of our houses are cedars.”*  
– Song of Songs 1:17

“Cedar” here refers to the perfect humanity of our Lord Jesus. In Solomon’s temple, there were two main kinds of wood, cedar and cypress (1 Kings 5:8). The expression of the church is through these two kinds of wood. At this time the Lord’s seeker realizes, “I live not only for the Lord, but also for the saints. I not only want to walk with the Lord in the wilderness, I also want to be built up in the church.” How can we build up the church? Actually, while the building cannot take place without us, we are not the most important element. Rather, the church is built up by means of the myrrh, signifying the Lord’s death, and the cedar, signifying the glorious humanity of Jesus expressed in us. Angels do not build the church. The church is built up with the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ. Speaking in tongues can’t build up the church. Only those with some constitution of the Lord’s humanity can build up the church. Hallelujah that the cedars are the beams of our house! When we are built up together, there is an expression of the Lord’s glorious humanity.

## The Rafters

*“Our rafters, cypresses”*  
– *Song of Songs 1:17*

What does cypress represent in the Bible? Cypress trees were planted beside graves, and therefore cypress wood indicates that, along with the Lord’s humanity, there is also death being expressed in us, the death produced through the work of the cross. If you are willing to let the cross work in you, you will express the Lord’s death. Although the cross puts you to death, you become a person who really functions, for your death helps manifest your function in the building.

Brothers and sisters, there are three things needed for the

building up of the church. First, our couch must be green—we must be full of life. Without life, there is no building up of the church, for life is the content of the church. In a healthy church we should be able to enjoy an abundance of life. Second, our beams must be of cedar—the humanity of the Lord Jesus must be constituted into us. We not only have a life relationship with the Lord, but we also have His humanity. Third, our rafters must be of cypress—we must experience the work of the cross. Only through the death of the cross can we be united and built together. These three matters speak of the seeker’s growth at the end of the first stage of her pursuing.

## A Rose and a Lily

*“I am the rose of Sharon,  
The lily of the valleys.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:1*

Here the seeker likens herself to two similar kinds of flowers found in two different places. The rose in this verse is actually a kind of wild lily, which is a common flower of very little value. “Sharon,” where this flower is found, represents the plain where God pastures His flock (1 Chr. 5:16). A lily of the valleys is also ordinary and unassuming, and, of course, it is found in the valleys. In this verse, therefore, the seeker is saying that the Lord has become equally precious to her whether she is at ease or in suffering, for the Lord is just as precious to her when she is in the pasture as when she is in the valleys. When she is at ease, she is a rose of Sharon, and when she is suffering, she is a lily of the valleys. No matter whether she is at ease or in suffering, however, she knows that God is shepherding her and caring for her.

The Lord’s seeker now realizes that she is nothing special or

extraordinary. She no longer exalts or glorifies herself or considers herself to be the most useful one, and she no longer thinks that she is the one who loves the Lord the most. Instead, she feels that she is just an ordinary flower, and she even likens herself to a despised flower. There is nothing to brag about. There is nothing to be manifested. She is simply a rose of Sharon and a lily of the valleys, and God is caring for her.

Without experiencing Christ as life, we have no way to realize what we are or who the Lord is, and neither do we understand what man is. When you really touch the Lord, however, you will realize the meaning of this verse. When you live according to the divine life and when you experience the work of the cross, you will experience the reality of being a rose of Sharon and a lily of the valleys. At that time you will have a realization of who you are and what man is, and you will also begin to know the Lord.

Every young saved one feels he is the most hopeful believer and expects to be someone extraordinary. Every saint hopes he will have a certain manifestation in the church life. No one is willing to be ordinary. Suppose the brother who helped you to love the Lord tells you, “You will be hopeless.” Would you still have any desire to pursue the Lord? You may think, in response, “Why should I pay the price to love the Lord, since I will still be hopeless?” Such a thought indicates that your focus is still on yourself instead of on the Lord and that you are living in the religious world. In contrast, once you realize that you are a rose of Sharon, you will know that you are not special in the church life. Among those who follow the Lord, you will become the most unassuming one.

We also see here that what God seeks is a rose of Sharon, not an orchid in a pot. Do you know the difference? If you are like an orchid in a pot, although you may have experienced some work of the Lord, you still need to be tended to by other saints;

otherwise, you will wither. A rose of Sharon, however, needs no such special attention.

Moreover, if you are like a rose of Sharon, you will not strive with other saints, for you will realize that all of the believers are equally common. It is wrong to consider yourself as someone with higher revelation or with more maturity in life. We need to be able to tell the Lord, "Lord, I am nobody special in the church life. I am just like others." Today the Lord needs to gain many saints to be a rose of Sharon. He doesn't need expensive, showy orchids, for the building up of the church is through the ordinary ones, not the showy ones.

We are often not willing to be just a rose of Sharon. Brothers and sisters, we live in God's mercy. We pursue God because His love attracts us. It is the Lord who brings us into His chambers. It is the Lord who reveals His cross to us. It is the Lord who works in us and who supplies us with His life. Besides these things, what can we boast in? We are nothing but a rose of Sharon.

When the Lord works in us, we will realize that we are very ordinary. We should have a feeling that it is completely due to His mercy that we receive any portion in His work. Only because of this do we have a part in His ministry, and only because of this are we able to render some help to others.

At the same time we are also lilies of the valley. This means that we should learn to look to the Lord (cf. Mt. 6:28-33). We should realize that it is the Lord who cares for us; it is the Lord who is responsible for us; it is the Lord who revives His church.

We all need to see that, on the one hand, we are a rose of Sharon; we are very ordinary. On the other hand, we are a lily of the valleys; we trust in God's care. Although we may have truly experienced being in the valley and trusting in God, and though we may have many experiences in which we could boast, we are not focused on such experiences. Rather, our desire is to bring others to see that it is God who cares for His lilies.

Brothers and sisters, do you know the Lord as the Lord of the lilies? You are a rose of Sharon and a lily of the valleys, and yet, although you are nobody, God cares for you. Although you are nobody, God is responsible for you and wants to accomplish His work through you. You are not a potted plant that others must care for, but a “rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys,” and it is God who cares for you. He will continue to hold you until you can truly testify that you are a lily of the valleys. We should keep this verse in our heart:

*“I am the rose of Sharon,  
the lily of the valleys.”*

We may not yet see what the future holds or how we can go on. But, we have the assurance that God’s mercy and care will never fail us. We should have a realization that we are lilies of the valleys. We should fear nothing. No matter where the Lord leads us, no matter what kind of situation we find ourselves in, we should thank the Lord. Whether it is difficult or pleasant, whether we find it to our liking or not, we should be thankful. We are lilies of the valleys, and so we live in the valleys and not in pots. This means that it is the Lord who cares for us and preserves us.

If we let this verse become a reality in us, we will never be a problem to the church, nor will we encounter any problem in the church. Instead, we will be able to function properly in all kinds of situations. We will only say, “Lord, thank You for Your leading. We are just lilies under Your care. Men don’t take care of us, nor does a work care for us. It is You Yourself who takes care of each one of us. Even if we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for You are with us.”

What a deep and precious experience is found within these verses! The Lord’s seeker has experienced a great change here. Praise the Lord for this beautiful picture of our union with Him!

## Song of Songs 2:2-7

*“Like a lily among the thorns,  
So is my darling among the maidens.”*

*“Like an apple tree among  
the trees of the forest,  
So is my beloved among the young men.  
In his shade I took great delight and sat down,  
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.  
He has brought me to his banquet hall,  
And his banner over me is love.  
Sustain me with raisin cakes,  
Refresh me with apples,  
Because I am lovesick.  
Let his left hand be under my head  
And his right hand embrace me.”*

*“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,  
That you do not arouse or awaken my love  
Until she pleases.”*

# The Banqueting House

## A Lily Among Thorns

*“Like a lily among the thorns,  
So is my darling among the maidens.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:2*

When we realize that we are nothing but a rose of Sharon and a lily of the valleys, living by God’s mercy and care, God will then bring us into deeper visions and experiences. When we walk by faith, we will become like “a lily among the thorns.” This means we will encounter many situations along the way that are the result of mankind’s fallen condition.

Thorns are a result of God’s curse of the ground as a result of the fall. God told Adam and Eve after they had fallen,

*“Both thorns and thistles shall [the earth] grow for you.”*  
– *Genesis 3:18*

Therefore, the mention of “thorns” in Song of Songs 2:2 reveals that although we are sanctified and we trust in the Lord, we still walk among fallen mankind. Many people around us are just like thorns, and in our fallen condition, we ourselves are at times like thorns to others. As long as we are living among fallen men, and have our own fallen human nature as well, many situations will arise to try us and even hurt us, like the piercing of the “thorns.” But, in the midst of such situations, we are the lilies trusting in the Lord’s care for us.

If you intend to live a life of only caring for the Lord and for the church, one in which you continuously supply life to the saints, you will find that it is not as smooth and simple as you might expect. You will also see that the way you walk is not as wide and easy as you would like. Instead, you realize that your way is like that spoken of in the hymn by James Deck:

*And though the wilderness I tread,  
A barren, thirsty ground,  
With thorns and briars overspread,  
Where foes and snares abound.*

*Yet in Thy love such depths I see,  
My soul o'erflows with praise;  
Contents itself, while, Lord, to Thee  
My joyful song I raise.*

Many things stab at you and seek your hurt, and many things give rise to tears and cause you to feel you cannot walk any further. However, you don’t have to be afraid; these environments will cause you to grow. The Lord watches over the lilies and protects them. If you give yourself to the Lord and truly love Him you will still encounter the thorns, but they will only help you to grow in life.

## The Apple Tree

*“Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest,  
So is my beloved among the young men.  
In his shade I took great delight and sat down,  
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.  
He has brought me to his banquet hall,  
And his banner over me is love.  
Sustain me with raisin cakes,  
Refresh me with apples,  
Because I am lovesick.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:3-5*

The seeker’s experience in the Song of Songs of following after the Lord both begins and ends with love. However, her experience of the Lord’s love in this stage, compared with what it was at the beginning, is much enlarged. Here she speaks of “my beloved among the young men.” The “young men” refer to all the things that seek to capture her heart. Among so many things that are desirable and attractive, her beloved holds the first place in her heart.

She also says that her beloved is “like an apple tree among the trees of the forest,” or, as the KJV says, “trees of the wood.” In the original language, “apple” refers to a kind of fruit that comes from an evergreen plant. This indicates that the Lord’s life is unlimited and can never fail. Our Lord is truly “ever green!”

Here she enjoys the Lord as such a fruit that is full of life which is unlimited, and which is increasing in her all the time. He has brought her into His chambers, their couch is green, and she is in the house, but at the same time, she is also among the trees of the wood enjoying the Lord as her “apple tree.” Such is her enjoyment of this unlimited life that she testifies here, “How rich is the life of my Lord! How excellent He is! He is like the

fruit of the evergreen among the trees of the wood.”

When you reach this point in your experience, you really have made some progress in following the Lord. Brothers and sisters, when you first began to follow the Lord, what you longed for was merely the feeling of the Lord’s presence, for some speaking, some leading, and some enlightenment. Your actual enjoyment of life at that time was still very limited. One day, however, through the work of the cross and the help of the church, you were enlarged and able to break through your limitations to enter into a fuller enjoyment of the divine life. At that point, your couch became green; this unlimited life became your support. Now you could tell others, “The beams of our houses are cedars; our rafters, cypresses.” This shows that you were no longer in the smaller sphere where you were experiencing Christ primarily for yourself. Rather, you had entered into the enjoyment of the bountiful supply of life so that your whole being is now for the church, for you had grown in His life.

## In His Shade

*“In his shade I took great delight and sat down,  
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.”*

*– Song of Songs 2:3b*

Here the seeker speaks of her delight in the shade of her beloved, whom she likens to this most lovely fruit tree, and of how she sat down in his shade. Originally she was in the King’s chambers, and then she progressed to the experience of resting on the green couch. At this point in her experience, however, her beloved has become the most prominent tree among the trees of the wood. His life has become her covering. When we come to experience the Lord in this way, we sit down in His

shade, and His life covers us, becoming our strength and even our delight. According to Watchman Nee, this refers to the rapture. Because of the riches of life, we are not only delighted, but we also feel we are experiencing heaven on earth. To our feeling, nothing could be higher than this.

If you only remain in the king's chambers, your experience will be confined. There, you cannot experience the transcendence of life, but as you progress, once you lay down on the green couch, you will realize that the unlimited life of the Lord supplies all your needs. Eventually, this life will overshadow you, and you will remain under its shade. Life will be over you, and life will be under you as well. You will live completely in the abundance and transcendence of this marvelous life!

## His Fruit

This life that covers you also becomes your food, so that you can say, "His fruit was sweet to my taste." If a believer has the experience of lying on the couch and sitting in the shade of life, he will not be troubled by his failures. If you cannot pray after losing your temper, it shows that you are still in the chambers; you haven't advanced. Once you experience the transcendence of this life and enter into its riches, something new will be manifested in you. You will rejoice and boast in your weaknesses, for this life will make you joyful, while the bountiful supply will enable you to remain in your joy. Even your failures will only cause you to go to the Lord; your weaknesses will only help you to draw a fresh supply from the Lord. Even being in bondage in your self will help you to experience being set free in the Lord. In this way you experience the heavenly reality—and yet, the Lord will bring you on still further.

## The Banqueting House

*“He brought me to the banqueting house.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:4, KJV*

At this point the Lord will bring you into His “banqueting house.” The Hebrew word here can also be translated “house of wine.” At first, the Lord brought the seeker into His chambers, which was an individual experience. Now He brings her into the “house of wine,” which is not merely individual but for all His people.

The house of wine is where all His people enjoy each other and rejoice together, the place where we can be joyful together. Individually, I experience the abundance of the divine life in my personal contact with the Lord. Corporately, all the believers experience the abundance of the divine life in the church. Individually, I sit down in the shade of the Lord as a wonderful apple tree, and His fruit is sweet to my taste; I feel as though I am being raptured. Corporately, I am brought into the banqueting house, the house of wine. I am no longer alone, but with all my brothers and sisters enjoying the Lord and experiencing His riches. I am so joyful, and so are all the brothers and sisters.

Brothers and sisters, let me ask you, what is the church? A normal church is a banqueting house, a “house of wine.” It is the place where you can be satisfied and even be drunk in spirit. In this house of wine, all the saints can enjoy the Lord together. It is the place where the saints are lost in the presence of the Lord, a place that every believer treasures. In the church life there should be no toiling or sighing, but only the experience of satisfaction and joy that comes from drinking the heavenly wine.

## His Banner

*“His banner over me is love.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:4*

This first section of Song of Songs (1:2 to 2:7) is focused on the matter of the Lord’s love; from the beginning to the end, it is focused on love: “Your love is better than wine” (1:2); “The king has brought me into his chambers....We will extol your love” (1:4). However, in terms of our spiritual experience, such statements in this section relate mainly to our own feelings, not to the reality of love in our relationship with the Lord.

After having a little consecration and having experienced something of the work of the cross, we are brought into the King’s chambers to enjoy His life in a deeper way. Furthermore, we are brought into the banqueting house, the church life, to enjoy the riches in the saints. At this time we can say, “Oh, Lord, Your banner over me is love! Now I know that Your love prevails; it is inexhaustible; it covers me. I have a banner over me, which is love. Oh Lord, how dearly do You love me! From the beginning until today, You still love me. How vast and how satisfying is Your love! Your love enables me to follow You. Oh Lord, Your banner over me is love.” At this point all our problems are gone, for the Lord’s love has removed them all.

Why is it that some people cannot believe in Jesus? It is because they don’t trust His love. Why is it that some believers can no longer go on? It is also because they don’t trust His love in full. The problem today is that we put a question mark on His love. Although we believe in the Lord, we do not yet believe that all He has measured to us is according to His love. Therefore, in all the things that we encounter every day, we often try to deal with them by our own efforts, acting in our own self-interest, rather than by the love of the Lord.

The seeker here, however, is different. Through the work of the Lord she has grown to the point that she has the assurance to say, “Lord, Your banner over me is love. My sufferings, my being able to live for others, my enduring attacks from others, they are all because of Your love. You bring me through every environment so that I can live before You absolutely. This is Your love.”

Brothers and sisters, when we realize that we are overshadowed by the Lord’s banner of love we will become very restful. We may have tears, but they will be the tears of joy. We can go on without fear, because we know that the Lord’s love sustains us to go through all the things that He has arranged for us.

The experiences in this initial stage, which focus on the Lord’s love rather than on the Lord Himself, end with, “His banner over me is love.” At this point, the seeker has experienced the Lord both individually and corporately. Both the riches of the Lord and the church have brought her to the love of the Lord. Now she realizes she has a banner over her. To whom does she belong? At this point she belongs to her beloved with a love that will remain over her throughout her entire life.

## Sustained and Refreshed

*“Sustain me with raisin cakes,  
Refresh me with apples,  
Because I am lovesick.”  
– Song of Songs 2:5*

After experiencing the Lord’s love as a banner over her, she still has a longing to be sustained in her love for the Lord by others, so that she may enjoy Him more fully. Previously she testified,

*“I am the rose of Sharon,  
the lily of the valleys.”*

Now, however, her experience is much more advanced. Before, her testimony was only to the Lord, but now she is testifying to the saints as well. She realizes now that she needs more strength to enjoy the Lord and experience His riches. Therefore, she turns to the other saints in order to continue enjoying the One whom she is seeking.

This is a further experience in the midst of the enjoyment of the banqueting house, the longing for a further sustaining and enlarging by the Lord, through the saints. The seeker seems to feel, “Lord, the banqueting house is so wonderful, the apples are so sweet, and sitting under Your shade is so marvelous; but Lord, my capacity for taking all of these in is so small.” Therefore, she calls out to the brothers and sisters,

*“Sustain me with raisin cakes,  
Refresh me with apples,  
Because I am lovesick.”*

The capacity of any one individual to enjoy the Lord is limited. As long as we are joined to the saints and live in the church life, however, the capacity of the other brothers and sisters sustains us and thus becomes our capacity as well. Thus, she cries out to her companions, “Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples!”

The “raisin cakes” indicate that what the seeker needs now is life, a life that is processed, for raisin cakes are produced through a process. First the fruit goes from being on the vine to grapes that have been harvested; then, by being dried out, the grapes become raisins; and then the raisins are made into raisin cakes. Such a process speaks of maturity, of a life that has been dried

out from the things of the world and broken by the work of the cross. Only those who have experienced such a process can render to us the real help. They are the ones who have the raisin cakes. They can help us to enlarge our capacity, and they can also sustain us. Our fellowship with them causes us to become those who not only enjoy the Lord's life, but who can also help and sustain others to enjoy that life as well.

The church cannot go on without those who have the "raisin cakes." The more experienced saints there are in the church, the more capacity every brother and sister will develop to enjoy the Lord. The more experienced saints there are in the church, the greater will be the saints' ability to sustain the enjoyment of the Lord. Praise the Lord! He can help us and work on us through all those who have gone before us.

In the same way, the Lord also refreshes us with the apples. The Lord is the apple tree among the evergreen trees of the woods (v. 2:3). The phrase "Refresh me with apples" indicates that we need the Christ in the brothers and sisters. Our attitude toward the saints should be, "Dear saints, please give me the Christ you have experienced so that I may be enlarged and be refreshed. I need the Lord, and I also need you. Now I am desperate, for I do not know what to do. It seems that morning watch, fastings, prayers, or the church meetings cannot help me; I need something more. Oh Lord, I am sick with love. Brothers and sisters, please help me." At such a time, it seems that while our dependence is on the Lord, our help actually comes from the other brothers and sisters.

## A Cycle of Growth

Normally, a Christian should experience a turn within his heart during the first year he is saved. Within that time he should know

what is the work of the cross and what is the breaking of the outer man; he should know how to live in the church life while experiencing the enlargement of the divine life; and he should know what it is to be sick with love for the Lord.

It is important for us to note, however, that the experiences described here are not meant to be one-time events. Rather, they comprise a cycle that is to be repeated many times throughout our Christian life. As we go through these experiences again and again, they will be wrought all the more deeply into our very being.

## The Lord's Embrace

*“Let his left hand be under my head  
And his right hand embrace me.”  
– Song of Songs 2:6*

As a result of what she has experienced, the seeker enters into a complete satisfaction, lying in the Lord's embrace. In this position she can only see the Lord. She also experiences the Lord as her supply and as the strength that supports her. Thus, she is completely restful. How sweet is this picture!

She has had the experience of His kisses and has been in His chambers. She has also been through the effort of keeping her vineyard and has experienced wandering astray. She has gained the praise and admiration of the Lord. Plaits of ornaments have been made for her. She has lived in the love of the Lord and experienced the riches of His life and the abundant supply of life and fellowship in the church life. She has also experienced living in the love of the Lord that will sustain her all her life. All these experiences culminate in this union with the Lord.

Although this union has not yet reached its highest peak, she

indeed feels, “Oh, Lord, You are my banner now. I rest in You. I am secure in You. Now my eyes can only look upon You. No environment can affect me, and I am restful in You. I can see You face to face. I can gaze on You and enjoy You.”

## A Pause in Her Seeking

*“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,  
That you do not arouse or awaken my love  
Until she pleases.”*

– *Song of Songs 2:7*

The Lord says this because a young seeker will often have a time in which the growth in life seems to come to a halt. When we reach this point, we may still enjoy the Lord in a consistent way, and no doubt we will still feel the Lord is wonderful. Nonetheless, our spiritual progress is actually stopped for a time. During this period, other saints may not be happy about us, for it will seem that the only thing we do is pray. The Lord, however, does not want them to meddle in the situation, and so charges them not to trouble us.

The gazelles and the hinds of the fields are easily startled. When there is a little sound, they will run away. This indicates that such a saint is still young and easily alarmed. You have to be careful not to rouse up or awaken such a one. They are restful now in the presence of Lord, and enjoying the sweetness of His presence.

If you see a brother in such a state, you should not complain about this situation or “awaken” him until he pleases. Is he spiritual? No. Has he matured yet? No. Has he grown up yet? No. He still needs to press on, but his pressing on will take time. It won’t

happen through someone's rebuking, reasoning, or preaching. It all depends on his relationship with the Lord. When the Lord appears to him, he will again rise up.

## From the Chambers to the Banqueting House

Although there is still so far to go, the seeker at this point in the Song of Songs has now had some growth in life, and has experienced a number of things. First, she has really touched the Lord's love; she has been attracted by the love of the Lord. In the beginning she said,

*“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—  
For your love is better than wine.”*  
— *Song of Songs 1:2, NKJV*

This was an experience of love. Then she realized, “The virgins love you,” and began to pursue the Lord in the church life. This is another experience of love. She further touched the love of the Lord and experienced being brought into the Lord's chambers, whereupon she said, “We will rejoice in you and be glad; We will extol your love more than wine.” Here, she really has experienced the Lord's love. A person who doesn't know the love of the Lord has no experience at all before God. We should not merely go to the meetings and pray. We have to allow the love of the Lord to captivate us and saturate us in order to experience Him. Only those who are living in the love of the Lord can truly go on with Him.

Second, she has experienced fellowship with the Lord, which is another aspect of her experience of being in “the King's chambers.” She knows how to talk to the Lord and meet with Him.

Third, she has come to know the work of the cross. She has experienced having the “plaits of gold” and “studs of silver” being made for her. She now realizes that she continually needs the work of the cross.

Fourth, she has experienced a transfer of authority. The authority over her has been shifted from herself to the Lord. She has consecrated herself to the Lord and given the Lord the first place in her life.

Fifth, she has some experience of the divine life. She knows how rich and precious this life is, as indicated by the green couch and the apple tree with its fruit. She also realizes that she must be sustained and supported by the divine life if she is to go on pursuing the Lord.

Sixth, she has come to know the church. At the beginning of her pursuit the seeker says, “The virgins love you.” The virgins are in the church. The result of her being in the chambers is, “We will be glad and rejoice in you.” Every stage of her experience refers to the church. The drawing of the Lord concludes with the church’s pursuing. The fellowship of the chambers concludes in the church’s appreciation. Her testimony in 1:6 also involves the church:

*“Do not stare at me because I am black,  
For the sun has burned me.”*

The seeker refers to the church as God’s building when she says, 1:16b-17:

*“Indeed, our couch is green!  
The beams of our houses are cedars,  
Our rafters, cypresses.”*

Even when the Lord's seeker has the highest enjoyment in the banqueting house (2:4), the result is a realization that the saints are needed to maintain this experience—"Sustain me with raisin cakes!"

Finally, she has come to know herself. She is not self-centered anymore, nor does she have such a high opinion of herself as she did previously. Because of the work of God's grace, she admits humbly that she is but a "rose of Sharon" (2:1). She feels she is nothing but an ordinary believer in the church. By the mercy of God, she can go on with the saints. She also finds out that she is a "lily of the valleys" (2:1). Since she has seen the Lord's faithfulness and love, she is able to set aside all her worries, doubts, struggles, and rash behavior. She can now rest in the mighty arms of the Lord and press on by faith.

Beyond all these items, she has also discovered that her capacity for experiencing the Lord is limited. Therefore, she is willing to give up her small world and enjoy, with all the saints, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ (2:5; cf. Eph. 3:18). She not only draws life from the Head, but also receives the supply from the members of the body. She has become more humble outwardly, and at the same time she has been broadened inwardly. Hallelujah for such progress in her seeking to know the Lord!

## Song of Songs 2:8-17

*“Listen! My beloved!  
Behold, he is coming,  
Climbing on the mountains,  
Leaping on the hills!  
My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.  
Behold, he is standing behind our wall,  
He is looking through the windows,  
He is peering through the lattice.”*

*“My beloved responded and said to me,  
‘Arise, my darling, my beautiful one,  
And come along.  
For behold, the winter is past,  
The rain is over and gone.  
The flowers have already appeared in the land;  
The time has arrived for pruning the vines,  
And the voice of the turtledove  
has been heard in our land.  
The fig tree has ripened its figs,  
And the vines in blossom have  
    given forth their fragrance.  
Arise, my darling, my beautiful one,  
And come along.’”*

*“O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,  
In the secret place of the steep pathway,  
Let me see your form,  
Let me hear your voice;  
For your voice is sweet,  
And your form is lovely.”*

*“Catch the foxes for us,  
The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards,  
While our vineyards are in blossom.”*

*“My beloved is mine, and I am his;  
He pastures his flock among the lilies.  
Until the cool of the day  
    when the shadows flee away,  
Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle  
Or a young stag on the mountains of Bether.”*



# The Covert

## A Self-Centered Seeking

As we saw in the previous chapter, up to this point in the Song of Songs the seeker has had spiritual experiences in seven different aspects. However, even though she feels she has gained much, her experiences so far are still lacking depth; they have only been two-dimensional. She may feel that her experiences are high, beautiful, admirable, and joyous. However, when the Lord looks upon such experiences from on high, He sees them as being basic things on the earth, for there is still no transcendence in her experiences. They all are on the plain, not on the heights of the mountain. She has indeed come to know the Lord's love, His fellowship, the cross, His kingship, His life, the church, and even the Lord Himself. Nevertheless, she herself is still the focus of all her experience. It is she who knows the love of the Lord; it is she who has fellowship with the Lord; it is she who knows the cross; it is she who allows the Lord to be King; it is she who sees the loveliness of the church; and it is also she who realizes that she is black on the one hand, and a rose of Sharon and a lily of the valleys on the other.

Brothers and sisters, here I would point out that, after being saved, a young one is often self-centered in terms of their spiritual experience. In fact, a new believer's experience and enjoyment of the Lord are typically not focused on the Lord but on himself. He seeks his own satisfaction, not the Lord's. His concern is about what he needs, not what the Lord needs. In his living, what he wants, what he looks after, and what concerns him are all things that relate to himself. Thus we might say that he is just using the Lord, even though his using of the Lord brings him into the Lord's presence.

Praise God that the Lord tolerates such a situation. In fact, He is happy about it. Once we have touched the Lord, He desires us to use Him. He likes to have ones who enjoy Him, experience Him, come into His chambers, and experience the cross; who know Him as King, know the church, and eventually know the self as well. The Lord is happy if we enjoy His provisions for us in such a way, even if we are actually self-centered in such an enjoyment.

## From Enjoyment to Union

Now, however, we come to the second stage of the Song of Songs. In this book we see that there are two basic foundations in the life of one who is seeking after Christ. The first foundation is all the riches we experience in the initial stage, and the second foundation is our being brought into a complete union with the Lord, which is what we see in the second stage of spiritual experience depicted in this book.

All the experiences of the seeker in the initial stage of the Song of Songs may have actually been quite low. But, after experiencing all of the riches in that stage, she begins to have a turn. This turn takes her from being two-dimensional in her experi-

ence to being three-dimensional. That is, she begins to experience something that is higher and heavenly, enabling her to be in union with the Lord. By such experiences, through which she gains the second foundation in her spiritual seeking, she begins to have something solid in her realization and experience before the Lord. In this stage, the seeker begins to have progressively higher realizations as her knowledge and experience of the Lord advance.

Whereas in the initial stage of her experiences the seeker was primarily self-centered, in this second stage, the Lord calls her to rise up. The Lord wants her to shift her focus from herself to Him, from her satisfaction to His satisfaction, from the fellowship of the chambers to a deeper fellowship with Him, and from the initial knowledge of the cross to the actual experience of the cross. In the past, the church was for her; now she sees that the church is for the Lord. As she enters into this stage of her spiritual experience she is no longer on the plains, but is now climbing upward, on the mountain. She begins to live a progressively higher life before the Lord.

The second section of this book begins with the Lord's calling of her. It is a call for deliverance from the self. The Lord seems to be telling her, "You need to be released from caring about your feeling, your enjoyment, your longing for My presence, and even from your joyful state with the brothers and sisters. From now on I am going to prepare you for My building work. I am going to work on you so that you can grow, mature, and become able to stand before Me. I want you to shift your center from your feeling to My desire. I want you to turn from caring for yourself and even from caring for others to just be in union with Me. I want you to be one with Me in feeling, in labor, and in working. You must even be one with Me in spiritual warfare."

In our spiritual experience, we cannot depart from these two

foundations. The first foundation we must have is a complete enjoyment of the Lord. The second foundation we must have is a complete union with Him. In the initial stage of our Christian life we enjoy the Lord and His riches. In this second stage we are joined to Him in His purpose and in the fellowship of His sufferings.

## Climbing and Leaping

*“Listen! My beloved!  
Behold, he is coming,  
Climbing on the mountains,  
Leaping on the hills!  
My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.”  
– Song of Songs 2:8-9*

What is the foundation of the second stage? It is to build up something in us so that we have the same feeling as the Lord. In the beginning of this second stage, the Lord reveals Himself as One who is coming to us, “like a gazelle or a young stag,” climbing on the mountains and leaping on the hills.

To say, “He comes” means that He has prevailed and overcome all difficulties, all obstacles, and all hardships. Nothing can prevent His coming. His coming in this way reveals that He is not only a Lord of the chambers, a Lord of enjoyment, and a Lord of love; He is also a Lord who climbs on the mountains and leaps on the hills, that is, one who leads us to rise up and overcome all difficulties and hardships to live a heavenly, transcendent life. He leads us to walk above everything in resurrection with Him.

## Standing Behind the Wall

*“Behold, he is standing behind our wall,  
He is looking through the windows,  
He is peering through the lattice.”  
– Song of Songs 2:9*

The Lord leaps upon the mountains and skips upon the hills as the One who has overcome everything. When He arrives, however, He stands “behind our wall.” What is this wall? It is the wall of our past experience; that is, yesterday’s experience and enjoyment become today’s wall. All the good, proper, and healthy things of the past become today’s wall, hindering our going on. Because of this, we continually need the Lord’s mercy that we would not hang on to these past experiences, but instead be willing to go on with Him.

Why is it so hard for the Lord to lead us to go on further with Him after we have had some experiences of Him? It is because we have laid hold of those experiences and will not let them go. We treasure, enjoy, and respect our past experiences of the Lord. We consider that those experiences are from the Lord, and therefore they have special value before Him. Indeed, they are precious; however, when we hold on to them, they become a wall between us and the Lord and frustrate Him from leading us on any further.

Brothers and sisters, every experience the Lord measures to you is either like spring or like winter; it is to prepare the way for further experiences. Therefore, if you desire to go on with the Lord, you cannot stay where you are, and you cannot cling to your past experiences simply because you treasure them. If you do, spontaneously they will become a wall that separates you and the Lord.

## Standing and Waiting

According to 2:9, the Lord is standing behind the wall. The fact that He is standing, not sitting, indicates that He is ready for action. What is He waiting for? He stands there waiting for you. As soon as you are ready, He will immediately take action. As soon as you are ready, He will lead. As soon as you are ready, He will take you on another journey. As soon as you are ready, He will bring you on to another stage in your spiritual growth. The Lord is never idle when it comes to your going on. He is always ready to go further.

The Lord here is not coming to feast with you. As the Shulammitte has testified,

*“Behold, he is coming,  
Climbing on the mountains,  
Leaping on the hills!”*

He is coming that we might go with Him to leap upon the mountains and skip upon the hills. He desires to constitute His riches, His power, and His transcendence into us in order that they might become our riches, our power, and our transcendence. He desires to have a deeper, more complete union with us. Through such a union we will enjoy not only His love and presence, but also His death and resurrection. Thus, now when He comes to us, He stands and calls us to rise up and “come away” with Him (2:10).

However, almost none who seek after the Lord will respond to Him immediately when the Lord calls them in this way. Suppose there is a brother with many of the precious experiences we have considered thus far in the Song of Songs. He has been experiencing the enjoyment of the banqueting house with all the saints. The Lord’s banner of love is spread over him. His testi-

mony is that he is dwelling in the loving arms of the Lord. He also tells the saints, “You are my enjoyment, my raisin cakes, and my apples. It is so enjoyable to be with the Lord and with you all. We have had some wonderful building up and fellowship. We never quarrel or argue. We are in one accord and have become one another’s supply.”

If at such a moment the Lord appears and says, “Come away with Me,” such a one would surely be puzzled. He might ask, “Lord, do You really want me to rise up from here? Where do You want me to go?” In fact, we might not even be as spiritual as this; we might not even be able to see or hear the calling of the Lord while we are in such a state.

Brothers and sisters, when you do not have the presence of the Lord, it is much easier for you to respond. Without the Lord’s presence, it is so dry that you would like to leave that situation immediately. Therefore, if the Lord calls you to come away with Him while you are in such a condition, you would follow Him without any hesitation. In this situation, however, the seeker is not weak or dry. She has the presence of the Lord. Everything is so sweet, so glorious, and so prevailing. Even “the vines [are] in blossom” (2:13). When everything is so bright and wonderful as it is here and the Lord says, “Rise up, my love, and come away,” it is really hard for you to respond to His calling.

## The Wall

When the Lord does call to us in such a way, we respond, “Am I not fine now? Isn’t it so pleasant here? Why are You asking me to go at this time? Are You sure?” There is indeed a wall between us and the Lord. What is this wall? It is not the world, nor is it sin. Instead, it is the most beautiful, most precious, and most triumphant spiritual experiences we have had with the Lord.

These transcendent and satisfying experiences become a wall separating us from the Lord.

When the Lord first led us, we followed immediately, for we had a ready spirit. However, as soon as we entered into what the Lord led us into, it became a wall. This wall can include the enjoyment we lay hold of, the ways and means we use for our work, and anything that gives us spiritual enjoyment or success so that we don't need to rely directly upon the Lord Himself.

When do we have a wall? It is not while we are weak and dry. It is when we are overcoming, and thus we feel that we have a way. When we are so sure about how to go on, that becomes a wall. When we are in such a state we cannot go further with the Lord Himself; we cannot enter into a higher, heavenly realm with the Lord as He desires.

It is important to see that this wall is not outward but inward. To give an example, at one time a leading brother told us frankly, "Don't just shout in the meeting!" At that time we were releasing our spirit and singing joyfully. We wondered, why would he tell us not to shout? Originally, that kind of shouting rendered us much help. It helped us to break out of our oldness and to have rich, vibrant, and satisfying meetings. We were so thankful for the practices of praying over the word together and calling on the name of the Lord. Through these practices we were so blessed, because they revived us and helped us open to the Lord. However, this brother realized that even our way of pray-reading and calling on the name of the Lord could become a wall separating us from going on further with the Lord. In our enjoyment of these things, we might have just remained where we were and become reluctant to go on.

In principle, every spiritual experience we have can become a wall preventing us from going on further with the Lord. To give another example, if you want to hold on to something you gained even from these messages, it will become a wall preventing the

Lord from taking you on further. Fortunately, the more we grow in the Lord, the fewer walls we will have, for we will gradually learn that there is always something more that the Lord desires to bring us into.

If we really desire to follow the Lord, we need to come before Him often and ask Him, “Is there a wall between us? If so, please break it down completely. Even if it is the highest experience, the sweetest feeling, or the largest work, I do not want it. I would rather throw it away so that there is no wall between us.”

## The Windows and the Lattice

*“He is looking through the windows,  
He is peering through the lattice.”  
– Song of Songs 2:9*

On the one hand, the Lord is standing behind our wall. On the other hand, He is looking through the windows and glancing through the lattice. This indicates that, even though we are in such a state, there are still some openings through which we can see Him and He can see us. Thank the Lord, He calls to us, grants us revelation, and allows us to see His face while encouraging us to rise up. However, we may be unwilling to follow Him, for we are spiritually satisfied with what we already possess.

It is difficult for us to leave behind what we are currently experiencing. It seems that it gets into our blood and we just cannot let it go. Although the Lord is restless, desiring that we would notice Him and turn our gaze upon Him, we are still focused on some teaching we have enjoyed, our present spiritual condition, the brothers and sisters, our practices, or what we have experienced of the Lord thus far. Thus, we do not notice that He is waiting for us. He calls out to us, “Come away!” but we do not

realize or understand what He is saying. How poor is our situation!

## The Call to Rise Up

*“Rise up, my love, my fair one,  
and come away.”*

– *Song of Songs 2:10, KJV*

The Lord allows us not only to see Him but also to hear Him, for He calls to us, saying, “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.” Here the Lord praises His seeker and calls her His “fair one.” The Lord considers her beautiful and lovely. Because she is so attractive to Him, He calls to her, “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

## The Winter is Past

*“For behold, the winter is past,  
The rain is over and gone.”*

– *Song of Songs 2:11*

While you are in such a state, resting in what you have previously experienced, you may think that the experiences you have had were something of the springtime. The Lord, however, tells you that your abiding in them should be considered as a time of winter. The Lord seems to be saying, “Your experiences, your enjoyment, your supply of life, and your boasting should stop. The winter is past. The rain is also over and gone. You will not receive the supply, nourishment, or watering if you stay in these things any longer.”

Brothers and sisters, when you were first saved, you could weep as you thought about the Lord. After being revived in your spiritual life, you might have wept again as your love for Him was renewed. However, if you have lost such feelings, you don't need to try to return to them again, for that rain is over and gone. It is useless to wish for it or to pray for it. If you ask the Lord to enable you to experience such things again, He might reply, "Do not ask to experience My mercy in this way again. I will not sympathize with you in this matter."

Brothers and sisters, what you treasured, what was most sweet, what helped you before—all are gone. The Lord is now saying, "Rise up and come away. The rain is over and gone. I won't water, nourish, and bless you in the way I did before. The rain that blessed you before has stopped now. It is over and gone. The matter you enjoyed before has come to an end. Now you must rise up to follow Me in a new and fresh way."

## The Flowers

*"The flowers have already appeared in the land."  
– Song of Songs 2:12*

When the Lord speaks of the winter being past and the rain being over and gone, it is very solemn. Next, however, we come to a portion which is very sweet and beautiful, as though a beautiful painting is being displayed before us, with flowers, birds, singing, and "the voice of the turtle-dove" being heard in the land. First, the appearing of flowers indicates that the abundant life is now being manifested among the saints. God has an eternal purpose which is to be carried out through the saints' growth in life. When you are with the saints, you should have a feeling that flowers are appearing on the earth!

## The Time of Singing

*“The time of singing has come.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:12b, ESV*

At such a time, people praise God, and their praise is real and practical. Such praising is beautiful before the Lord. It is just like music. “The time of singing has come!”

## The Voice of the Turtle Dove

*“And the voice of the turtledove  
has been heard in our land.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:12*

The voice of the turtledove represents love. This love exists not only between you and the Lord, but also between the Lord and the brothers and sisters. When you hear the voice of the turtledove, you hear the singing and the songs of love. Praise the Lord for the flowers, the singing, and the voice of the turtledove!

## The Fig Tree and the Vines

*“The fig tree has ripened its figs,  
And the vines in blossom have  
given forth their fragrance.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:13*

In addition to these positive items, there are also two words of encouragement in this portion for the seeker. First, the “figs”

indicate that at this stage, some further manifestation has taken place in her; she is like the fig tree that has ripened its figs. This does not mean she has become fully mature, but it does indicate that she has achieved a certain degree of ripeness; now is the time for her to bear fruit. Second, the “vines” being in blossom indicate that now she should go on and advance to another stage of experience with the Lord, for she should not be satisfied with only seeing the blossoms; she should aspire now to bring forth the fruit itself.

Altogether we see five main points in the Lord’s word to the seeker in verses 11 through 13. Praise the Lord for these five points! First, the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone. Second, flowers appear on the earth. Third, the time of singing has come. Fourth, the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. And fifth, the fig tree has ripened its figs and the vines are in blossom. How wonderful are these five points! The Lord repeatedly tells us, “Do not remain with what is past, for what lies ahead is even brighter and more glorious.” We have to rise up to press on and labor on into all the riches of Christ!

### “My Dove”

*“Arise, my darling, my beautiful one,  
And come along.  
O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,  
In the secret place of the steep pathway,  
Let me see your form,  
Let me hear your voice;  
For your voice is sweet,  
And your form is lovely.”  
– Song of Songs 2:13b-14*

Here the Lord repeats his call for her to rise up and “come along” or “come away” (KJV) with Him. Since she now has some manifestation in life, the Lord finds her to be lovely and calls her to Himself. In verse 14 he refers to the Shulammitte as “My dove”; He is saying, “You are beautiful; now, not only your eyes are beautiful, like doves, but also your whole person is pure. Nevertheless, such purity is not yet complete.”

The Lord’s longing for her to be in complete union with Him causes Him to call out to her in such a sweet way, a way that is very different from how we might do it. When we ask someone to do something, our petition is usually based on what we can see. When the Lord calls to us, however, He first shows us something that we do not yet possess, and then calls us to possess and experience that very thing. Here, even though we are not yet a dove, the Lord still says, “You are a dove. I am going to work in you and make you a dove.”

In verse 14, the Lord refers to “the clefts of the rock” and “the secret place of the steep pathway,” or “the covert of the precipice” (Darby). The Lord is telling His dove that she needs two things: the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice. The clefts of the rock symbolize our union with the Lord in His death on the cross. Our going to the covert of the precipice indicates that we are able to resurrect and ascend with Him to go to a place which cannot be reached by ordinary means. When we attain to the covert of the precipice, we enjoy all of Christ’s riches in resurrection and ascension.

## The Clefts of the Rock

The rock is the Lord himself (1 Cor. 10:4). The clefts of the rock are the place where we can be joined with the Lord, for He was the One whom God struck on our behalf to provide us

with a place to hide in Him (cf. Exo. 33:20-22). When we first loved the Lord, the union between us was a relationship of love, but it was not yet a true union. Now, however, it is different, for here the Lord calls us to enjoy not only His love but also Himself. We need to be joined in a real union with Him. In this union we not only enjoy the riches of His love; we also experience what He has gone through.

The Lord's desire to see us in the clefts of the rock shows us that all the experiences the Lord has passed through should be ours as well. We should experience how He humbled himself, suffered, was despised, and was reproached. Therefore we need to experience being joined with the Lord in the clefts of the rock, which is to be in union with Christ in His cross.

If we compare our experience of Christ here to that in chapter 1, we will see that, in comparison, the experience of chapter 1 is very shallow. Here the Lord calls us into union with Himself, something that is far beyond what is seen in chapter 1, which was a relationship of merely being in love with Him. In this union in the clefts of the rock, all of Christ's experiences become our experiences. We go through what the Lord went through. We weep as He wept. We are struck and misunderstood just as He was. The Lord desires to see us in the clefts of the rock, that is, He desires that through the union of the cross we would experience all that He experienced in His life on the earth.

Brothers and sisters, this is the beginning of a long and difficult journey. Our Christian life eventually requires us to have a union with the Lord in His death. Every day the cross should work in us. We need to experience the Lord's word to His disciples:

*“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”*  
– Matthew 16:24 (KJV)

And as the apostle Paul wrote:

*For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.*

– Romans 6:5

## The Covert

The Lord desires to find us not only in “the clefts of the rock” but also in “the covert of the precipice.” The precipice, a very steep rock face or cliff, is a place that ordinary men cannot reach, but the Lord is there. The word “covert” indicates a place of secret, private fellowship with the Lord, while the word “precipice” refers to the Lord’s ascension, the position He attained after His resurrection (Acts 2:34). Therefore, “in the covert of the precipice” can be interpreted to mean, “in the fellowship of His resurrection and ascension.”

The Lord is in the “clefts of the rock,” and He expects that we would join Him there. He expects us to experience His death on the cross. He is also in “the covert of the precipice,” expecting us to join Him in experiencing the power and riches of His resurrection and ascension. He expects that we would become united with Him, so that He could see our countenance and hear our voice in this union with Him.

If the Lord only called us to pick up our cross and follow Him, it would be too hard for us. But, praise Him, although we do bear the cross, at the same time we also experience His abundant life in resurrection. Each hardship we face only assures us of the faithfulness of the resurrected Lord. Each blow we suffer only brings us into the experience of His suffering, and into a greater trust in Him. This is to come all the way from the ban-

quieting house to the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice, to grow from abiding in some enjoyment of the Lord's riches into an actual union with Him.

Brothers and sisters, don't dwell on how much the Lord has accomplished in you or how much enjoyment you have had. We must realize we are walking on the pathway of the cross. Like the Lord, we must be prepared to die. However, this death is experienced in resurrection, in the covert of the precipice, a place which ordinary men cannot reach. We are with the Lord in the heavens to experience the suffering of the cross on the earth. Thus, our fellowship with the Lord in this union becomes so intimate. This is the experience of "the covert of the precipice."

### "Let Me See Your Countenance"

*"Let me see thy countenance,  
Let me hear thy voice;  
For sweet is thy voice,  
And thy countenance is comely."  
– Song of Songs 2:14, KJV*

Our countenance is our outward appearance, especially that of our face, and our voice is the expression of our inward being. How the Lord longs to know us, both outwardly and inwardly! He desires to see our countenance and to hear our voice. He yearns to enjoy us to the full!

Brothers and sisters, the Lord is asking us to give our whole person to Him. He wants to lead us into death in every part of our being, from the inside to the outside, so that we could experience all the riches of His resurrection. Only through such experiences can we become a person who is tender, sweet, and lovely, both inwardly and outwardly. Having enjoyed and expe-

rienced the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord, our voice becomes sweet and lovely to Him. Thus, our praises to the Lord with our voice become real, genuine, and meaningful, while our countenance becomes lovely, for it expresses our inward reality. Such comeliness truly attracts the Lord.

## The Foxes

*“Catch the foxes for us,  
The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards,  
While our vineyards are in blossom.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:15*

In order for her to walk in the way of the cross in union with Him, the Lord has called His seeker to escape from her feelings, her experiences, her past assurances, and whatever else had become important to her. Only by taking this way could she enter into the experience of His resurrection. Because she has indeed begun to have some experience in this regard, her comeliness to the Lord is more manifest, and He is attracted by her.

The Shulammite’s eyes, however, are upon the vineyards. She treasures her work, wanting it to be great and perfect. Therefore she says the vineyards are in blossom, but the foxes are causing trouble. Foxes here represent the human flesh. They can be the zealous ones who are not subject to the Spirit, who kill the meetings with their teachings according to the dead letter (cf. 2 Cor. 3:6b). The seeker thinks that as long as there are no fleshy ones causing trouble, the Spirit will be released in the meetings and the work will advance. Nevertheless, the Lord reminds her not to focus on her work.

The Lord did not praise her for her earlier concern over her vineyard (1:6), but here at the end of chapter 2 she still has not

learned this lesson, for she is still concerned about the blossoming vineyards. We tend to take notice of the blossoms, but not the grapes. However, it is not adequate to merely produce blossoms; we must also produce grapes for the life supply. Although at this point she has had considerable experience in following the Lord, she is still focused upon the work. All that she is thinking about is how to catch the little foxes.

This shows us that her heart is not yet single in following the Lord. He seems to be telling her, “You should want nothing but Me. You should walk the way of the cross with Me and experience all My sufferings and all My riches in resurrection.”

How poor and shallow we are; how easy it is for us to miss the Lord and what He desires! While He is calling, we reply, “Catch the foxes for us!” The seeker of the Lord is still concerned about her work, and thus she forgets that the Lord’s desire is for her to go yet higher; she forgets the Lord’s calling and worries about what to do with the vineyards. As long as she is satisfied with a little achievement and a little progress in her work, she will not be able to experience the riches of Christ’s ascension and the transcendence and glory of His resurrection.

## “My Beloved is Mine”

*“My beloved is mine, and I am his.”*

– *Song of Songs 2:16*

Still, it is precious to see that, even in such a condition, she still has a sense of her sweet relationship with the Lord, declaring here that He belongs to her and she belongs to Him. Why can she say this? It is because of the many experiences she has already gone through. She is still in the banqueting house, and the banner over her, even now, is love. She has the raisin cakes

and apples from the saints to sustain her. The Christ in the saints and the Lord Himself are her enjoyment, and moreover she is positioned in a place full of enjoyment. Therefore she can still say, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.”

In fact, it is hard for her, as one who is caught by her work, to see her own situation, or to realize that her work can easily become a wall that separates her from the Lord. Still, her work forces her to go to the Lord, and the supply from the saints still sustains her, so she still has the sense of her sweet relationship with the Lord.

At this point, the Lord is still not, in reality, her beloved, nor is she truly the Lord’s. Rather, while she is doing her work, she simply has no choice but to go to Him; while she is being sustained, she needs the saints. Her sense of having a sweet relationship may appear genuine, but at this point it cannot stand any real test, because it lacks reality.

## The Mountains of Bether

*“Until the cool of the day  
when the shadows flee away,  
Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle  
Or a young stag on the mountains of Bether.”  
– Song of Songs 2:17*

The Lord said to her previously, “The winter is past; the rain is over and gone” (v.11), and asked her to let Him see her countenance and hear her voice in the clefts of the rock and in the covert of the precipice (v.14). Her answer in verse 17 however is, essentially, “Oh Lord, I am sorry. I cannot follow You now, although I desire to do so.” She tells Him to turn away “and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of Bether.” She

realizes that the Lord is calling her, but she is too occupied with her work to respond to His call. She knows the Lord desires a deeper union with her and is calling her to live in resurrection together with Him, but she cannot leave her work. She wants to follow, but lacks the ability to do so, and so she tells Him to turn away.

The name “Bethel” means “full of valleys.” This must refer to all the experiences the Lord has gone through—His suffering, scourging, death on the cross, resurrection, ascension, and glorification. In contrast, the seeker of the Lord has only the terms of these experiences, not their reality. In fact, she is not even interested in entering into their reality, for she is still saturated with the enjoyment of the banqueting house, where she continues to extol His love. She is focused as well on the raisin cakes and apples the saints provide for her refreshment. She is, in effect, still living on the plain rather than on the mountain. Although she knows the Lord is calling her upward, hers is truly a situation where “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt 26:41). Therefore she has no choice but to cry out:

*“Until the cool of the day  
when the shadows flee away,  
Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle  
Or a young stag on the mountains of Bethel.”*

She is really telling the Lord, “Until the day breaks, take away all that comes between us so that I may yet enjoy the riches and glory of resurrection. I do desire that all You intend for me would become my reality!”

## Song of Songs 3:1-5

*“On my bed night after night I sought him  
Whom my soul loves;  
I sought him but did not find him.  
‘I must arise now and go about the city;  
In the streets and in the squares  
I must seek him whom my soul loves.’  
I sought him but did not find him.  
The watchmen who make  
    the rounds in the city found me,  
And I said, ‘Have you seen him  
    whom my soul loves?’  
Scarcely had I left them  
When I found him whom my soul loves;  
I held on to him and would not let him go  
Until I had brought him to my mother’s house,  
And into the room of her who conceived me.”*

*“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,  
That you will not arouse or awaken my love  
Until she pleases.”*

# Seeking Him Night After Night

## Review

Our God is the absolute One; He is fully committed to what is in His heart. He loves you, He wants you to be the one who occupies His heart, and so He begins to work in you so He can fully gain you. As we see from the experience of the seeker in the Song of Songs, the wonderful experiences of Christ that you have previously had in the vineyards may delay Him for a little while, but even so He will complete His work in you. What He desires, He will accomplish. If your heart is single, wanting only Him, His loving hands will never leave you. Although sometimes you may fall into the trap of caring too much for your own work, He is able to save you from such a preoccupation, and He will give Himself to you once again when you turn back to Him, so that He becomes your uttermost enjoyment and satisfaction. Hallelujah!

In chapter 2 the Lord had called to the seeker:

*“Arise, my darling, my beautiful one,  
And come along.  
For behold, the winter is past,  
The rain is over and gone....  
O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,  
In the secret place of the steep pathway,  
Let me see your form,  
Let me hear your voice;  
For your voice is sweet,  
And your form is lovely.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:10-11,14*

The Lord called her to come away, but she responded:

*“Catch the foxes for us,  
The little foxes that are  
ruining the vineyards,  
While our vineyards are in blossom.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:15*

The seeker held on to her past experiences of the Lord, so that they became a wall separating her from Him. She treasured these experiences to the point that she neglected His calling to her from outside the wall. The Lord responded, therefore, by turning away and leaving her on her own.

Actually, it seems as if there were two Lords—the one whom she enjoyed within the wall, and another who was calling to her from outside the wall. However, she could only see the Lord who was within the wall, not the one who was on the outside. She treasured so much her beloved within the wall, with all the sweet experiences she had of Him. However, she was afraid of the little foxes ruining the vineyard while it was in blossom. She could not understand the Lord’s longing for her and His calling

to her to come outside and be with Him. Outside the wall, the Lord was calling to her again and again, but she ignored this calling, even though she did not intend to. Therefore, the Lord could do nothing but turn away from her.

## Night After Night

*“On my bed night after night I sought him  
Whom my soul loves.”  
– Song of Songs 3:1*

To her surprise, when the Lord retreated, she lost the inner feeling of His presence. Suddenly, all the feelings of sweetness and enjoyment were gone, and she was left alone, feeling empty and helpless.

Her response to this sudden change was to seek Him, but only on her “bed.” The “bed” here refers to the past experiences and the sweet fellowship that she enjoyed with the Lord before. A bed is the place where one enjoys rest by laying down from work. It also depicts one’s personal contentment and enjoyment. If you are in your bed, you are not likely to be interested in rising up to do other things.

Although the Lord’s presence to her was so full in the past, such an experience had become her “bed.” She was so self-satisfied on her bed that it became a hindrance to her following the Lord. Until the Lord left, she thought that her experiences of the Lord’s presence and His loveliness were enough for her. She didn’t know that the Lord was always advancing. Although she could continue her spiritual life as before—pursuing, reading, praying, caring for others, and preaching, as usual—and outwardly, her life had not changed, the inward reality—the Lord Himself and His presence—was gone.

Therefore, she began to seek the Lord again. However, she only sought Him on her bed, and thus she could not find Him. According to her thought, there must have been something wrong with her spiritual life. However, at this point her spiritual life was not the problem; she herself was the problem; her unwillingness to answer the Lord's call was the problem. She was unwilling to leave everything and follow the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, this is serious. Many of us cherish the goodness and sweetness of our "bed," our past experiences of Christ. However, ultimately we should only treasure the Lord Himself. Without the Lord, the bed is empty.

It is a pity that many believers are holding on to their beds instead of the Lord. Some enjoy the sweetness of their prayers to the point that they care for nothing else, even if it means ignoring the Lord. If another brother asks such a one to go with him to visit some saints, he will consider it an interruption of his intimate fellowship with the Lord and chafe at this request. He will ask the Lord to "catch the little foxes"—meaning to take away anything that interrupts such fellowship with Him, even if the interruption is from the Lord. This is the result of our "bed" replacing the Lord's authority and His preeminence.

Could the Lord tolerate this? No, He could not. Therefore, as we see in the Song of Songs, He left His seeker. Although the bed was still there, the Lord's presence was not. Although she could pray as before, she had lost the sweetness of the Lord's presence in her prayer. This is very difficult to pass through, but it is by means of such a severe spiritual discipline that we learn not to rest on any of our past spiritual experiences. Our spirit must always closely follow the Lord.

We may think that obeying the Lord requires us to pay a stiff price, but we don't realize that it is actually more costly if we refuse. The loss that comes from disobedience far exceeds the price we pay to obey. When Abraham disobeyed God's call to

leave his country and kindred, God took his father away. When he listened to Sarah and disobeyed God by having a child through her handmaid, the result was Ishmael, someone who later persecuted Isaac, the child born according to promise, and whose descendents have troubled the children of Israel until today.

The Lord had called the Shulammitte to follow Him in the way of the cross; to experience His being put to shame, His sufferings, His being despised, and His loneliness, but she thought the price was too high. She didn't realize that if she obeyed, the power of resurrection would uphold her and the heavenly strength would protect her. The grace of the Lord would supply her to follow Him. Sadly, she failed to answer the Lord's call, and so she paid the price of losing the Lord's presence. This is very serious, and it is indeed a painful experience for those who believe they already love the Lord with all their heart.

In chapters one and two, all that the seeker experienced with the Lord was very intimate. However, because her life was still young and delicate, she could not go through too much hardship. Here in chapter 3 the maiden has grown to the point that the Lord is able to deal with her in a deeper way. Thus, due to her unwillingness to pay the price to follow Him, the discipline of the Spirit comes to her; the Lord's presence is taken away.

The Lord outside the wall is leaping upon the mountains, and the Lord inside the wall desires her to be in the same place of transcendence. Actually, the reaction of the Lord within and without the wall is the same. The grace that the Lord supplies to us within the wall is for us to be able to answer His call to rise up and come away with Him to the next stage in our pursuing. If we cannot obey, the grace within the wall will disappear.

In response to her loss of the Lord's presence, the maiden seeks the Lord more desperately. Although it is in fact her unwillingness to answer the Lord's call that has caused Him to leave, she thinks the problem is her "bed." Thus, she seeks the Lord by

trying to improve her spiritual exercise rather than by acknowledging her disobedience. In the past her morning watch was always full of the presence of the Lord, but now she feels that it is so dry. She thinks this is the result of her being too lax, and so she tries to wake up earlier, but it does not help. Then she feels the problem may be due to her lack of Bible reading, so she tries to read as much as possible, but that doesn't work either. The problem is not worldliness, either; even though she has no taste for the world, she still cannot gain the Lord's presence.

She is so troubled because she can gain nothing that she desires, but despite her seeking of the Lord like this, the Lord does not respond, for the bed is not the problem. Rather, her lack of response to the Lord's calling is the problem. Her spiritual life is not the problem; her disobedience is the problem. The Lord had called out to her,

*“O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,  
In the secret place of the steep pathway,  
Let me see your form,  
Let me hear your voice.”*

If the Lord calls you in this way, and you desire to follow Him, you have no choice; you must respond. If the Lord wants you to go on, you must go on; there is no room for analyzing or reasoning. What you need is to follow. Your disobedience will cause you to suffer, and it is useless to try to solve the problem by increasing this or that spiritual activity.

## Arising

*“I must arise now and go about the city.”*  
– *Song of Songs 3:2*

Finally, the seeker realizes that she cannot solve the problem merely by adjusting her spiritual life. Therefore she determines to “arise now and go about the city.” She has paid a real price for not following the Lord. The loss of the Lord’s presence has made her feel frustrated and helpless. She can rest on her bed no longer, and so she goes forth to seek the Lord.

### “I Found Him Not”

*“In the streets and in the squares  
I must seek him whom my soul loves.  
I sought him but did not find him.”  
– Song of Songs 3:2*

Finally, she rises up and goes about in the city, in the streets and in the squares, and seeks Him “whom her soul loves.” The city here refers to the church (cf. Rev. 21:2), and the streets and the squares indicate the display and exhibition of the saints’ rich experience of Christ (cf. Prov. 8:1-4). This indicates that she is seeking the Lord within the church. She thinks she can find the Lord she loves among the brothers and sisters. She may go to a brother and says, “Oh, brother, my Lord has disappeared, what should I do?” Since he enjoys praying over the word, he tells her to pray in this way so as to eat the word. However, no matter how hard she tries this, the Lord’s smile remains hidden from her. Another suggests, “You should call on the name of the Lord.” Yet, though she calls so long and hard, there is still no response. Then a sister who enjoys weeping before the Lord tells her to try that. Yet, in spite of so many tears, she still cannot recover His presence. This is the meaning of, “I sought him, but I found him not.” She tries in every way, but she just cannot find the Lord or enter again into the enjoyment of His presence.

Oh, brothers and sisters, this is serious. We cannot take the matter of the Lord's calling lightly. If the Lord calls us to join Him on the pathway of His cross, if He calls us to unite with Him in His suffering or in His being put to shame, we must obey. When He desires to see our countenance, and we do not answer His call, He will remove His presence from us. No matter how we confess our sins or how we deal with the Lord, until we obey, He will not answer. He will only ask, "Are you really following Me?" Once we obey Him, however, the problem will be solved. When we rise up to follow the Lord we will immediately have His presence again.

What God focuses on is our obedience to His will. To deal with trivial things is not His focus. Even if we do deal with so many things, still, if we are unwilling to fully consecrate ourselves and follow Him, we are still wrong in the sight of God, and we will be a useless vessel unto Him. In this circumstance, no matter how good our behavior may be, how holy we are, or how much spiritual activity we engage in, it will all be in vain. It is useless for us to be zealous, to be good at stirring up a meeting, or to try to visit and take care of the saints. It will even be useless for us to leave everything to serve the Lord. Rather, we need to fear God and cooperate with Him absolutely. We should care for His will regardless of our gain or loss. The way of the Lord will be open to us only when we count all things to be loss and follow Him.

The Shulammitte, however, has not yet discovered that the basic reason for the Lord's disappearance has nothing to do with her spiritual exercise. She does not see that she herself, rather than the state of her spiritual seeking, is the problem. Thus, although she goes about the city, in the streets, and in the squares, seeking her beloved, she does not find Him. Although she tries to imitate others' calling upon the name of the Lord, praying over the word, weeping, singing, and praying, she is unable to

recover her sweet fellowship with the Lord; she simply cannot recover His presence. In reality, the Lord is not leading her to read more, pray more, call upon Him more, or to be more zealous. Rather, His call is for her to rise up and pay the price to follow Him in the way of the cross, to experience the suffering of His death and the glory of His resurrection. His intention is to deliver her from herself and to help her enter into the rich and fresh supply of His divine life.

## The Watchmen

*“The watchmen who make the rounds  
in the city found me,  
And I said, ‘Have you seen him  
whom my soul loves?’”  
– Song of Songs 3:3*

By now she is quite distressed; she has tried every way to find Him, but it is all in vain. Would she lose the Lord’s presence forever? No, for while our Lord may be strict, He is also gracious. He will not break the bruised reed, nor will He quench the smoking flax (Matt. 12:20, KJV). When she has no one left to turn to, the Lord turns back to her, helping her through the saints who have the same heart as He does, the ones who are fully united with Him in His will.

Those who can help the maiden are the ones who themselves have had a deep experience with the Lord. Unlike those with little experience, they live in union with the Lord. Instead of trying to help the seeker in her zeal and outward behavior, they bring her to the Lord and lead her to take His way. Those who lack experience can only give suggestions, but those in union with the Lord are able to bring others into union with Him.

It is marvelous that when we have no way to turn, one of these saints will come to our rescue. They are the “watchmen” who go about in the city. This means that, being the servants of the Lord, they take care of the church. Also, they help to raise up the young ones. They know how to help the saints; they know the problem that hinders your going on is not the way you pursue or exercise, but your disobedience and your unwillingness to deny yourself. Initially, however, you may not feel that their fellowship helps you. Instead, you may feel that what they have rendered you doesn’t meet your need and that they don’t understand your situation. It may seem to you that their fellowship is only some kind of instruction given by older brothers.

Despite what you may think, however, they do understand what is frustrating you. They are spiritual men who are able to discern your situation and see through you. Yet, because you are still young in life, you do not at this time possess a keen sense of perception, and thus you are unable to receive such help. Not until after your eyes are opened will you realize that their fellowship really was a help to you. At that time, your long toil and burden will be over, and the Lord will smile upon you once again. The winter will be past and the spring shall have come. Everything will be recovered, and it will be as sweet and attractive as before. Oh, what an enjoyment and rest!

## Holding On to the Lord

*“Scarcely had I left them  
When I found him whom my soul loves;  
I held on to him and would not let him go  
Until I had brought him to my mother’s house,  
And into the room of her who conceived me.”  
– Song of Songs 3:4*

Her experience here is much higher than before, but it is still not high enough; it is still not in the heavenly places. At this time, she still attempts to recover her previous experiences by holding on to the Lord and not letting Him go. This is a picture of how we all like to hold on to our past spiritual experiences. Actually, if it were not for the Lord's mercy, none of us would be able to lay down such experiences in order to go on with the Lord in a fresh way.

Everything that we consider wonderful and everything we are not willing to let go of will become a problem to us one day. The way we think we know to gain the Lord's presence and touch Him today will become a hindrance to us in the future; if we try to hold on to what enlightens us now, it will eventually become a hindrance to our growth.

This was the Shulammitte's situation. Although the Lord called her to leave her previous experience, she replied, "Catch the little foxes" (2:15). At that point the Lord left, and she began to seek Him. However, she still only sought Him on her bed, ignoring His call to join Him in the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice. She sought the Lord's presence in every way except the way that He desired.

Thank the Lord for His mercy, for after she suffers in this way for a period of time, He appears to her again. At this point she holds on to the Lord and will not let Him go. To her realization, she was in the chambers again. It seems that she is back in chapter 1, afraid of losing the Lord's presence. However, she now has some growth; she has gone on further with the Lord during her period of searching.

When we look back at her condition in chapter 1, we realize that she was self-satisfied, even while she testified, "Our couch is green and so are our cedar and cypresses. Our love is green and full of freshness and hope. I am a lily, while others are thorns. The building of the church cannot take place without me."

In fact, she was so self-satisfied that she did not know what it meant to be humble and obedient. She only knew her own enjoyment of the Lord and didn't know how to be with others. Now, however, after having the experience of being in the covert of the precipice, she has learned to humble herself and fellowship with the other members of the body. Because she has experienced being in the covert of the precipice, she has a deeper realization of being nothing, of being fallen, and of being corrupted. She also has more realization of the riches of Christ in His body and the beauty of the other members. She has had a turn in her experience; whereas in chapter 1 she was self-centered, in chapter 3 the Lord has become her center. In chapter 1, it was she who was drawn by the Lord to love Him; now it is the Lord who is attracted by her and who longs to enjoy her love.

By God's mercy, she is now able to experience the suffering of the cross—loneliness, dryness, and anguish—and to come together with the other brothers and sisters. She can now receive help from others. Originally, she thought that she alone was the Lord's, while others were of the work or religion, but now she realizes that the "sons of my mother" (1:6) were her help. Instead of being self-centered, she now has the Lord as her center. She has seen something further of how to live before the Lord and among the saints, and so she is no longer independent of the Lord or merely an individual among the brothers and sisters. Now she dares not leave the Lord, for she cannot walk without His presence. When she senses that the Lord is with her, she is joyful. If He seems to be gone, she becomes so concerned that she has to stop and call out to Him until she senses Him again. However, while much of this is very good, at this time she is still bound by her feelings. She doesn't yet realize that the Lord's presence is always with her.

## Her Mother's House

Even though she is still living mainly in her feelings, the seeker is nonetheless entering more deeply into grace (“my mother’s house”) and life (“the chamber of her who conceived me”). Here, “mother” refers to grace (cf. Gal. 4:26). Now she feels that everything is due to grace, rather than to her ability or faithfulness. Her experience here is deeper than that of the banqueting house, for it is the experience of life, the abundant life of the Lord.

Moreover, her realization of the Lord is different now. Although her experience is not yet in the realm of ascension, she does experience being in the clefts of the rock and in the covert of the precipice, that is, knowing the cross and resurrection, which is a real advancement for her. She is able to come out from the realm of her own enjoyment and work, and to enter into the realm where she realizes that her relationship with the Lord is a relationship of grace.

Since she has experienced the abundance of life, the seeker has been delivered from herself and has begun to walk on the way of the cross. Thus, her experience is no longer merely on the plain, in the banqueting house. She has advanced to another dimension, for she has experienced the power of resurrection. She has gone further now, even to “leap” and to “skip” as the Lord does, following Him for the building up of His body.

## Resting

*“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,  
That you will not arouse or awaken my love  
Until she pleases.”*  
– Song of Songs 3:5

Now she is really in the Lord's heart; He appreciates her because, at this point, He has gained much in her. Here He is saying, "O daughters of Jerusalem, do not rouse up or awaken my love. She should rest, because she suffered so much. Then she can begin another stage in her experience."

## In Union with the Lord

Thank the Lord, at this point we see a picture of one who is in union with Him. As we shall see in the next chapter, she is now spoken of as one

*"...Coming up from the wilderness,  
Like columns of smoke,  
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
With all scented powders of the merchant."  
– Song of Songs 3:6*

She also becomes Solomon's bed. She pours out herself completely and becomes empty. What fills her within is the Lord Himself. Now, her spiritual condition has truly advanced, and she has entered into a higher experience of her beloved.

Brothers and sisters, from such experiences as these we can see that a person who is merely saved and has no other experience of the Lord is truly in a pitiful situation. Moreover, it is pitiful if we ourselves are those who are satisfied with just having the Lord's love and being comforted by Him. It is pitiful if we are those who become complacent because we feel we have some spiritual attainment. And it is pitiful if we consider that we have some accomplishment before the Lord as our service, so that we do not press on to know Him and experience Him in a deeper way.

The riches of the Lord are inexhaustible. We will always be able to experience and enjoy Him further. May we be poor in spirit; let us be humble, and let us empty ourselves before the Lord to tell Him, “Lord, I am nothing, but You are all. Fill me every moment so that I can fully express You!” We should have Paul’s aspiration:

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

– *Philippians 3:13-14*

May we encourage and exhort each other in this way so that all the riches of the Lord become our reality.

Lord, make it so; Amen!

Song of Songs 3:6-4:6

*“Who is this coming up from the wilderness  
Like columns of smoke,  
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
With all scented powders of the merchant?  
Behold, it is the traveling couch of Solomon;  
Sixty mighty men around it,  
Of the mighty men of Israel.  
All of them are wielders of the sword,  
Expert in war;  
Each man has his sword at his side,  
Guarding against the terrors of the night.”*

*“King Solomon has  
    made for himself a sedan chair  
From the timber of Lebanon.  
He made its posts of silver,  
Its back of gold  
And its seat of purple fabric,  
With its interior lovingly fitted out  
By the daughters of Jerusalem.  
Go forth, O daughters of Zion,  
And gaze on King Solomon with the crown  
With which his mother has crowned him  
On the day of his wedding,  
And on the day of his gladness of heart.”*

*“How beautiful you are, my darling,  
How beautiful you are!  
Your eyes are like doves behind your veil;  
Your hair is like a flock of goats  
That have descended from Mount Gilead.  
Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn ewes  
Which have come up from their washing,  
All of which bear twins,  
And not one among them has lost her young.  
Your lips are like a scarlet thread,  
And your mouth is lovely.  
Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate  
Behind your veil.  
Your neck is like the tower of David,  
Built with rows of stones  
On which are hung a thousand shields,  
All the round shields of the mighty men.  
Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle  
Which feed among the lilies.”*

*“Until the cool of the day  
When the shadows flee away,  
I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh  
And to the hill of frankincense.”*



# Up from the Wilderness

## The Experiences of the Third Stage

The spiritual experiences of the first and second stages in the Song of Songs are not separate from what is portrayed in the rest of this book. In fact, they form the basis for the rest of the book, which, in essence, shows the deepening and advancing of what we have experienced in the first two stages. That is, even when you have advanced to the second stage, you will still sense that you also remain in the experience of the first stage; of being kissed by the Lord, of being with Him at His table, and of being under His banner of love in the banqueting house. Furthermore, no matter how far your experience advances, you will still sense that you need more experience of the Lord's death and resurrection—to be found in the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice. Brothers and sisters, the first two chapters of the Song of Songs are for us to experience again and again for the rest of our lives; we can never leave them behind, because they form the foundation of all our further spiritual pursuing.

Now, in this message, we come to the seeker's experiences in

the third stage of her pursuing after her beloved. In this stage, although she continues to experience the items of the first and second stages, she nonetheless goes beyond her previous experiences.

In this third stage the most important experience is that of the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense (4:6). What is this? It is the experience of being in union with the Lord in His death and resurrection.

We come to this stage because, once we have passed through what is seen in the previous two stages, we will long for a deeper experience of Christ. Such a longing will cause us to have a change in our being; it will constitute us with more of Christ and make us more valuable before Him. When we enter into this stage, we will have a prayer from deep within that expresses our inward longing to know the Lord more deeply. We will tell Him, “Oh, Lord, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense. May Your cross lead me to experience more of Your death and resurrection, and so live in the pathway of the cross all the time.”

## Coming Up from the Wilderness

*“What is this coming up from the wilderness?”*  
– *Song of Songs 3:6*

The third stage begins with the experience of coming up from the wilderness. The wilderness is a place of wandering. To say that we are coming up from the wilderness means that we are one who has experienced leaving Egypt, signifying the world and its attractions. We have also passed through a period of wanderings, and are now entering into the Good Land.

The question here is not asked by the Shulammitte, nor by the

king, but by someone else, one who is observing the seeker. This indicates that when we are broken before the Lord, our condition is manifest to others and the Spirit is thus able to testify through the saints, “Here is one who has left Egypt and is entering into Canaan. The world cannot occupy him or affect him. He is separated from the world. Now he lives in the riches of Christ.” In response, the saints will recognize and acknowledge that indeed, here is one coming up from the wilderness!

A Christian who comes up from the wilderness has a clear purpose: to journey on with the goal of entering into the Good Land. His aim is to gain all the riches of the Lord. Because he is so purposeful, he will continue on this journey regardless of any suffering, tears, or opposition he may face. This world no longer holds anything to attract such a seeker of the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, this should be true of us. To come up from the wilderness may seem to be an experience that is too high for us to attain, but it is actually very normal. Once we are separated from the world and seek only the Lord Himself, we also will experience laying aside our future and no longer have any plans for ourselves; we will bear the mark of one who is coming up from the wilderness.

## Separated Unto the Lord

If we are healthy before the Lord we will sense that we have been separated from the world, for the Spirit is continuously working within us to sanctify us unto God, and this working enables us to live a life that testifies of our separation from the world. When others see us they will also testify that we are those who are coming up from the wilderness, whose living is simply to walk in this heavenly pathway and who will not allow anything to distract us.

By the Lord's mercy may we see that the world truly is a wilderness which only seeks to turn us away from pursuing after Him. And, by His mercy, may we give up any seeking after the things of the world and instead seek to enter into the Good Land as our goal. Yes, today we must, practically speaking, live in the wilderness of this world, but we do not seek the things of the world. Rather, God alone is our center and all other things are of no value to us.

If we ever lose the sense that the world is a wilderness to us, we shall also lose our proper function and healthy condition before the Lord. A normal Christian should always feel that the world is a wilderness where nothing is attractive. Whether we are rich or poor, whether we are in joy or in sorrow, we are still in the wilderness, because our hearts are not set on these things. Rather, we are occupied with, and longing for, the holy city (cf. Heb. 11:8-10), and for the Lord Himself; these are our destination, and nothing else can capture our hearts. If we are one who has truly come up from the wilderness, we will not allow anything to affect us, for our being will be fixed upon the Lord and on seeking after Him.

How do we know we are coming up from the wilderness? Because of our experiences of Christ. When we first began to love the Lord, we thought that we had consecrated everything to Him, when in fact we were still reserving much for ourselves. Then gradually, the Lord began to work on us, and the more we experienced His work, the more we were washed and purified. As a result, we became simpler and more single before Him. Now, deep within, we have the realization that without the Lord we really have nothing. In this way we begin to bear the testimony that we are coming up from the wilderness.

This same principle applies to the church as a whole. A healthy church is one that is coming up from the wilderness, and in which all the saints realize that we are only here awaiting the Lord's

return. While we are waiting, we desire nothing of this world. If there are many ones like this in a church, surely that church as a whole will be one that is coming up from the wilderness. May the Lord grant us the grace so that we may be those who do come up from the wilderness and enter into His rest.

## Pillars of Smoke

*“Like pillars of smoke”*  
– *Song of Songs 3:6, KJV*

If you are one who is coming up from the wilderness, it will also be manifest to others that you have become “like pillars of smoke.” What does this refer to? When the people of Israel came up from the wilderness, a pillar of cloud and of fire went before them (Exo. 13:21). This pillar led the people of Israel; it appeared as a pillar of cloud by day and as a pillar of fire by night. In the Song of Songs, by the time the seeker is likened to “pillars of smoke,” she has experienced the Lord’s working in many aspects. She has dwelt in the Lord’s love, and she has experienced the work of the cross. Therefore, she has become such a pillar.

Pillars of smoke allude to the power of the Spirit. The Lord will work on you until you become someone who is able to shepherd and lead others, someone who can enlighten and render help. When you become such a one, the church is able to move forward, for you are able to lead people through the wilderness, just as the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire led the children of Israel in their wilderness journey. As such a one, when you speak for the Lord, others will be affected by the riches with which you have been constituted, and you will be a blessing to the church.

If we want to become such a blessing, we should seek to be filled with the Spirit rather than to become busy with work. We

should allow the Lord's hand to break us. Then, through the breaking in our outer man, our spirit will be released so that we may supply life to others. In contrast, if we do not have such dealings with the Lord, and we do not become such pillars of smoke, we will one day find that neither our labor nor our work matter very much. May others be able to testify of us, "You have become like a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire in our midst. Because of you, the church is able to go forward."

## The Myrrh, Frankincense, and Scented Powders

*"Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
With all scented powders of the merchant."  
– Song of Songs 3:6*

Where do the pillars of smoke come from? They come from being "perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the scented powders of the merchant." We can only become fragrant by being perfumed with myrrh, frankincense, and all the scented powders of the merchant. Myrrh refers to the suffering and death of Christ, and frankincense refers to Christ's resurrection. If we experience Christ's death and resurrection we will become fragrant with His death and resurrection, for His death and resurrection are indeed fragrant. When we experience a variety of environments before the Lord while paying the price to experience Him in those environments, He as the Merchant will supply us with the precious spices of His death and resurrection, making us fragrant pillars of smoke in the church life.

## The Merchant

According to Watchman Nee, because the “merchant” here is singular, it must refer to the Lord Jesus Himself. The Lord as the Merchant is selling something to us. He is in effect saying, “If you want the blessings of this stage, you must pay a price before Me.”

We are not required to pay a price to gain the experiences of the first stage. Even the experience of having the plaits of gold with studs of silver is something done for us that results in our own beautification. But in this stage, the seeking one realizes that a price must be paid if she wants to follow the Lord. Her love for Him will not leave her untouched any longer; rather, from this point on He will touch every aspect of her living.

Here in the experience of the third stage, we begin to realize that the Lord is a Merchant. We can no longer expect that things will come cheaply. The Lord makes it clear that if you pay Him five cents, He will give you something worth five cents, and if you pay Him 100 dollars, He will give you something worth 100 dollars. If you give Him one year, He will give you something worth one year in return; if you give Him ten years, He will give you something worth ten years in return. How much blessing He will give you depends on the price you are willing to pay.

Our relationship with the Lord is no longer one in which He draws us, and then we pursue Him, or in which He freely supplies us, and thus we enjoy Him. Now the Lord asks, “Can you pay the price? Can I touch you in your living?” Although you will need to pay such a price, the result will be glorious, for in your being you will be perfumed with myrrh.

If it were a matter of being consumed by fire, it would in a sense be much easier, for we would die immediately. In contrast, for anything to be perfumed it must go through a lengthy process, through a long process of suffering; only then can the fra-

grance permeate and spread within it. The fire we experience in this process will not burn us to death, but rather it will “smoke” us for a long period of time in order to change us. We may be unwilling to pay the price and attempt to run away, but in fact this will only prolong our suffering, for we will need to begin the process all over again. Eventually, the Lord will gain us, for His intention is to gain us fully until our entire being is perfumed with the fragrance of His death and resurrection.

We may think that the Spirit works in us freely, at no cost to us. However, at a certain point in our Christian life, when we say, “Lord, bless me,” He will answer, “I will bless you, but at a price.” In this stage, the way we live is by paying a price before God.

From this point on, if we want God to bless us, we will need to pay a price. If we want God to bless our marriage, we will need to pay a price. If we want God to bless our family, we will need to pay a price. If we want God to bless our job or our spiritual work, we will need to pay a price. That is, we must pay a price to buy the fragrant spices from this Merchant. In this way we will manifest the aroma of Christ’s death and resurrection; we will bear a fragrance. Only when we pay the price to be perfumed by the Lord can we really supply others.

We often consider that everything given by the Lord comes in the principle of grace. While this is true in regard to our initial salvation, nonetheless, after we are saved, if we desire to grow in life and become mature before the Lord, we will need to pay a price. We must not take this lightly. We may think that it doesn’t matter whether we watch TV or read a novel, but we may find that God will only perfume us through our not watching TV or not reading a novel. If we are willing to pay a price, God will make us one who is so fragrant before Him as well as before the saints.

We need to realize that our maturity is obtained by being

perfumed with all the fragrant powders of the Merchant. In a sense, it is true that we do not deserve to possess these elements, but unless we pay the price to buy them from the Lord, who is the real “Merchant,” we cannot obtain maturity in this age. If we are unwilling to pay the price, we cannot be matured. When we pay the price, however, all the blessings in Christ become our reality. May the Lord have mercy upon us so we can tell Him, “Oh, Lord, grant me the grace that I may pay the necessary price. Grant that I could buy everything that You have for me.”

## Solomon’s Bed

*“Behold his bed, which is Solomon’s.”*  
– *Song of Songs 3:7, KJV*

This one who comes up from the wilderness becomes Solomon’s bed, one in whom Solomon can find His rest. The Lord enjoys and gains rest in His believers. Brothers and sisters, we should be those in whom the Lord can rest; He should feel restful because of us. Because of her experiences in the first and second stages, the Lord’s lover now understands the Lord’s love, the Lord Himself, the work of the Lord, the cross, and the church. Now she is willing to come up from the wilderness and pay the price. The Spirit has worked in her, and by means of the cross’s work, life is able to flow from her. She has also become fragrant with the aroma of Christ in His death and resurrection. At such a point the Lord can say of her, “Now in My seeking one I am restful.”

## Sixty Mighty Men

*“Sixty mighty men around it,  
Of the mighty men of Israel.”  
– Song of Songs 3:7*

We also see there that the Lord is not alone as He rests, but rather, He is surrounded by sixty mighty men. Spiritually speaking, this shows us that the seeker is now experienced enough to be able to unite with others who have also come up from the wilderness, who are also pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh, frankincense, and all of the fragrant powders of the merchant. She not only loves the Lord together with these seekers, but she even unites with them as an army. The Lord can rest because of this army. At this stage, we live in the church life and coordinate with those who have also separated themselves from the world and given themselves up to experience Christ. This is truly a remarkable picture; it shows us that the Lord will make us, the fallen ones, His bed!

Sixty is a number that refers to man, who was created on the sixth day. There are sixty mighty men surrounding the bed, and all of them wield the sword because of the night alarms. Before the Lord returns, who can deal with Satan’s work and attack? Only those who come up from the wilderness, for only these have experienced the Lord’s death and resurrection to such an extent that they can move with the Lord in this way. This is the group of people in whom the Lord can find rest.

Solomon could not sleep peacefully without the mighty men surrounding his bed, for something could happen at any time (v.8). While the Lord finds rest in us, He also has in His heart a deep concern for the going on of the church. Therefore, He needs not only a bed, but also the sixty mighty men who are vigilant at night and ever watchful until His return. They always

have their swords with them and know how to fight for the Lord. They notice Satan's every move; when something happens in the church life, they know what to do. They know how to lead the church and how to help the brothers and sisters. With them, the Lord can be fully at rest.

At this point we see that the maiden is in a full union with the Lord. The world to her is a wilderness; nothing in it can capture her heart or distract her from loving the Lord. Rather, everything in this world is simply for her to gain Him. She depends on the Lord's mercy to enable her to live a life in which she is simply committed into His hand. She is purely for the Lord, and she lives by His mercy. Inwardly she unites with the Lord so that nothing can draw her away or distract her.

Only one who is like this maiden can be empowered by the Spirit and recognize how valuable the myrrh, the frankincense, and the fragrant powders are to the Lord. Only such a one is able to coordinate and be built up with others. Along with the sixty mighty men, she fights a spiritual battle for the Lord to gain His full rest.

## The Palanquin

*“King Solomon made himself a palanquin  
Of the wood of Lebanon.”  
– Song of Songs 3:9, ASV*

In ancient times a palanquin was a cart used by servants to carry the nobility and the wealthy where they needed to go. Before the Lord returns, He first needs a bed where He can rest, and then He needs a palanquin in which He can be carried where He wants to go. The bed is for the Lord's rest in the night, whereas the palanquin is for His move in the day.

We may think that one day we should be carried by the Lord. However, those who love the Lord eventually will carry Him. If there is no one to carry the Lord on the earth, He cannot move. The move of the Lord is carried by those who love Him and are absolute for Him. We who love the Lord must be not only His bed, but also His palanquin for the sake of accomplishing His move on the earth.

The wood of Lebanon used to make the palanquin is cedar wood (5:15), which denotes Christ's noble humanity. The fact that the Lord's lover has become a palanquin made of cedar wood indicates that she has been constituted with the noble humanity of Christ.

## The Silver Posts

*“He made its posts of silver.”*  
– *Song of Songs 3:10*

The pillars of this palanquin are made of silver. In the Bible, silver signifies redemption (Exo. 30:12-15), so the “posts of silver” here signify that the supporting element in the seeker for this move is the redemptive work of Christ. Through this redemptive work, every part of the Seeker's being is changed; her speaking, behavior, thought and living are all different from before, for every aspect of her being has been fully brought back to the Lord. Originally she cared very much for herself, but now she is one with the Lord to deal with her flesh. Originally she sought the Lord's comfort when she was sad and going through difficult situations, but now she knows how to be one with the Lord's feeling even if she is in tears. She says “Amen” to the Lord's dealing, because she is constituted with the silver.

In order to be the Lord's palanquin, we need to experience

the Lord's redemptive work, as signified by the silver. Without the silver, there can be no palanquin. If our thoughts are filled with low things, then we cannot be the Lord's palanquin. If we are slothful, we cannot be the Lord's palanquin. If we have an uncontrollable temper, we cannot be the Lord's palanquin. Our mind, our will, our emotion, our character, and our living all need to be redeemed by the Lord. Only when we are fully redeemed in every part of our being are we constituted with silver to become the supporting posts of the palanquin. Moreover, we will be able to support the church, for whenever there are the saints as the silver posts, there will also be the churches.

## Its Bottom of Gold

*“The bottom thereof of gold”*  
– *Song of Songs 3:10, KJV*

The bottom of the palanquin is made of gold, meaning that the source of the Lord's move is of God. Brothers and sisters, we have to remember that if God is not the foundation, our work is useless, regardless of what method we employ. God will not commit His move to those who are not drawing from His life.

We need to pay a price before God. Our personality, temper, habit, and thought should bear the mark of the cross, and we must be those who are living out God's divine life and nature as the base of our work. After the experience of the silver, we will have the experience of being constituted with the gold. The redemption of Christ enables us to experience God's life and nature, and the more we possess of God's life and nature, the more the palanquin is equipped for the Lord's move.

## Its Seat of Purple

*“And its seat of purple fabric”  
– Song of Songs 3:10*

The palanquin’s seat is of purple, which speaks of nobility and kingship. We will manifest the kingship to the degree that we experience Christ’s redemptive work and receive God’s divine nature.

## Paved with Love

*“The midst thereof being paved with love,  
From the daughters of Jerusalem.”  
– Song of Songs 3:10d, ASV*

The Lord’s palanquin is paved with love from the daughters of Jerusalem. Originally, all the virgins loved only the Lord. When you become a palanquin, all the virgins will also love you. Have you noticed that when your love to the Lord is stale, the saints seem to be less attractive to you, and you to them? In contrast, the more you love the Lord, the more the Lord’s lovers will also find you to be so lovable.

## The King's Gladness

*“Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion,  
and behold King Solomon,  
With the crown wherewith  
his mother hath crowned him  
In the day of his espousals,  
And in the day of the gladness of his heart.”*  
– *Song of Songs 3:11, ASV*

At this time, there is an espousal between the Shulammite and Solomon. Even though she is not yet fully matured, she engages herself to Solomon to be his bride, making this “the day of his espousals,...the day of the gladness of his heart.” The writer here does not say “daughters of Jerusalem,” but “daughters of Zion.” Zion is the highest point in Jerusalem, and the “daughters of Zion” here denotes the overcomers in the church life.

“Espousals” in this verse can also be translated “engagement.” While there may be a kind of love between a young man and woman, that love is not solid until they are engaged to be married. Before you are engaged, you are free to date or to choose someone else. However, once you are engaged to someone, you are committed to that person. In the same sense, before we experience the “engagement” to the Lord spoken of here, we might leave Him for other things. However, after our espousal to Him, we are no longer free; we are committed to the Lord.

Here all the overcomers go forth to look at King Solomon with his crown. What is the crown with which Solomon’s mother crowned him on the day of his espousals? It is the Shulammite herself. Those who love the Lord and are committed to Him in such a love become His crown and His boast.

As we have seen, the daughters of Zion are the overcomers in the church life. They are also those who help the saints be-

come the Lord's crown, the ones who are more mature and who take care of us and support us so that we may grow in Christ. On the day of His espousals, they crown the Lord with such a crown, which is a testimony that the saints are being brought into glory with Christ, which is taking place within the church.

## The King's Praise

*“How beautiful you are, my darling,  
How beautiful you are!”  
– Song of Songs 4:1*

In 4:1-5 the king praises his seeking one, now that she has come up from the wilderness, declaring how beautiful she is to him. Seven aspects of her beauty in particular give rise to the king's praise in this section.

### *Her Eyes*

*“Your eyes are like doves  
behind your veil.”  
– Song of Songs 4:1*

First, the Lord praises the seeker because her eyes are “as doves behind your veil.” A veil is something that covers and obscures. Being behind a veil means that the seeker is hidden in the Lord and does not allow others to see what she has within her. To the Lord, her eyes are beautiful because they are behind a veil. They are also beautiful because, just as a dove's eyes can only behold a single thing at any give time, so she with her eyes only beholds the Lord and nothing else.

In chapter 1 we saw that, normally, the eyes of a Christian should be like doves (1:15). Now the seeking one has progressed; not only are her eyes like doves, but they are also behind a veil. For her eyes to be behind a veil means that she keeps her spiritual insights hidden. Her spiritual insight and discernment are not for her to display outwardly, but are instead hidden so that she may see all the more clearly. If we are mature in our spiritual experience, we also will veil our spiritual insight and keep it for the church. The Lord likes our living before Him to be hidden from men, and He desires our eyes to see nothing but Him.

### *Her Hair*

*“Your hair is like a flock of goats  
That have descended from Mount Gilead.”  
– Song of Songs 4:1*

The “flock of goats” here speaks of those who are at rest in the pasture as they enjoy the Lord, who is likened to Mount Gilead. Her power, typified by her hair, comes from her resting on the enjoyment of the Lord. She is willing to give herself to the Lord in complete submission to Him, like a true Nazarite (cf. Num. 6:5).

Even when we have eyes like doves, we still need hair that is like a flock of goats. That is, besides being pure and single, we also need to be obedient and empowered. True power comes not from exercising our own will, but from obedience to the Lord’s will. The Shulammite is no longer going about and doing things on her own; rather, she is now a genuinely consecrated person, one who is at rest in the Lord and empowered by Him.

When we have grown in the Lord, He may grant us power: power so that our speaking could meet the needs of the church,

power to supply others, or power to lead the church in His way. However, the one who reposes in this way is one who enjoys resting in the Lord and feeding on Him, rather than focusing on the manifestation of such power. All of these different manifestations of power are typified by our hair being as a flock of goats that reposes on Mount Gilead.

From this picture we see that, as we follow the Lord, we should not focus on power, but on obedience. The real power comes from obedience, and thus we must care more about living before the Lord in obedience than about manifesting power before men. We do not carry out our burden simply because we have the ability to do so, and neither do we speak simply because we are eloquent. Instead, we should repose before God and function according to His leading. As Watchman Nee wrote in a hymn,

*I for greater power pray not,  
Deeper death is what I need;  
All the meaning of the Cross, Lord,  
Work in me – for this I plead.*

Amen; Lord, grant us all this realization!

### *Her Teeth*

*“Your teeth are like a flock of  
newly shorn ewes  
Which have come up from their washing,  
All of which bear twins,  
And not one among them has lost her young.”  
– Song of Songs 4:2*

Third, the Lord praises her teeth. Wool typifies a life of the flesh. In the Old Testament, the priestly garments were made of linen, not of wool, because wool would cause the priests to sweat, indicating that they were living by the effort of their own flesh (Eze. 44:17-18). Thus, the reference to sheep being “shorn” of their wool signifies that the seeker’s flesh has been dealt with.

Furthermore, her teeth are not merely like a single ewe, but like “a flock of newly shorn ewes.” Teeth refer to the ability to receive, because we use our teeth to chew our food and bring it into our body. Therefore, the seeker’s teeth being like “a flock of newly shorn ewes” shows that she knows how to enjoy and feast upon what the Lord has provided; she is able to receive help from any believer, even a newly saved one. If we are such ones, anything that is fresh in life or anything that is in the Spirit will become our food, our supply.

We shouldn’t be selective in receiving the things of life and truth. If we are selective, our teeth are not like a flock of shorn ewes. Instead of coming up clean from the washing, we bring something impure into our spiritual pursuit. The maiden here can now receive and gain help from the Lord in every situation. She is not selective. Her flesh has been dealt with, and now she is able to receive her food by whatever means the Lord chooses. Moreover, her ability to chew and receive the Lord’s nourishment is strong and solid, as indicated by the phrase “All of which bear twins, And not one among them has lost her young.” She has not missed or lost anything that the Lord has given to her.

### *Her Lips and Mouth*

*“Your lips are like a scarlet thread,  
And your mouth is lovely.”  
– Song of Songs 4:3*

Fourth, the Lord praises her lips. The scarlet thread signifies redemption (Josh. 2:18-19), showing that her speaking for the Lord is not careless, but through His redemption (cf. Psa. 12:6). The thread of scarlet also signifies authority.

The fact that her mouth is lovely shows us that her words are filled with grace (cf. Eph. 4:29). Her words are fitting for all occasions and beneficial for others; they are not opinion or gossip, but are able to meet the need of various listeners on differing occasions. In the same way, our words should also be with grace, so that we may water, refresh and help others (Col. 4:6).

In the church life, all our coordination takes place through our words. Therefore, if our words are not spoken under the Lord's redemption, if we come together and our words turn to gossip, we will not be able to coordinate sweetly with others. Only when we have a proper speaking with one another can the church be built up.

### *Her Cheeks*

*“Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate  
behind your veil.”*

*– Song of Songs 4:3, ESV*

The fifth thing the Lord praises about the Shulammite is her cheeks. Originally, her cheeks were beautiful with plaits of ornaments (1:10). Now her cheeks are beautiful behind her veil. This shows that, while in the past she labored to make herself appear beautiful, and even more to manifest her beauty, now, in contrast, she is endeavoring to keep her beauty behind her veil, hidden away from all but the Lord.

Her cheeks are also like a piece of pomegranate. However, they are not like a whole pomegranate, but like the broken halves

of a pomegranate. Only when a pomegranate is broken open can the riches of its life flow out. Thus, the broken halves of a pomegranate here show us that the seeker is full of life within. Her beauty is not merely something of outward appearance for people to admire, but is something hidden and inward, and that supplies life to others in a hidden and inward way.

### *Her Neck*

*“Thy neck is like the tower of David  
built for an armoury,  
Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers,  
all shields of mighty men.”*  
– *Song of Songs 4:4, KJV*

The sixth item the Lord praises is her neck. In the Bible, the neck refers to man’s will. In chapter 1, the Lord said that the seeker’s neck was beautiful “with strings of jewels.” (1:10, ESV). Now He says, “Your neck is like the tower of David built for an armoury.” The high tower here is built to be an armoury for the king. The neck of the seeker is like such a tower; having a neck as a tower, she does not face the earth but heaven.

Moreover, having such a neck shows that she is standing before the Lord with her will in submission to Him; that is, the Lord’s praise here for the Shulammitite’s neck indicates that she is submissive to His authority. The beauty of her neck is in the submission of her will. She is not stiff-necked, but instead submits to Christ as the King and cooperates with His will. According to this verse, this tower is “of David,” meaning it is for God’s interest, for His kingdom on the earth. The maiden’s neck being such a tower shows that she is not stiff-necked but obedient.

Furthermore, the tower of her neck is also an armoury. This

means that she exercises her will to prepare for the spiritual warfare. Verse 4 tells us that on this tower “hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of the mighty men.” This refers to her preparedness against Satan’s attack. Brothers and sisters, Satan will not usually attack us by means of sin, for we are too sensitive concerning that for such an attack to succeed. Rather, his strategy is to cause us to leave our proper standing under the Lord’s authority, for then he can surely defeat us. Therefore, the first thing Satan attacks is our “neck,” our submission to God. No matter whether it is through sin, the evil world, or the “good” world, Satan succeeds if we leave our place of submission under the Lord’s authority.

The mention of “a thousand bucklers” hanging on the tower indicates that whenever there is a flaming dart from Satan, we are able to quench it, regardless of what direction it comes from (cf. Eph. 6:16). Whether Satan’s attack comes through our mind, our emotion, or our will, we will know how to make our defense and remain under God’s authority. Even if Satan should attack us at the point of our greatest weakness, we will still be able to maintain our defense, for we have experienced the work of God and have stored up sufficient bucklers.

It is our obedience that brings us the needed bucklers. Sometimes when we have the sense of the Lord’s presence in our prayers, we feel quite victorious; we think that in this way we can defend against the devil. Actually, such an experience only provides a little protection. In reality, it is as we obey the Lord that we gain the bucklers; that is, the more obedience we have, the more bucklers we will gain. Thus, we should place the emphasis on our obedience rather than on our works; through our obedience we will come to possess the bucklers. If this is our experience, we can stand before God as His mighty men.

## *Her Breasts*

*“Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle  
Which feed among the lilies.”  
– Song of Songs 4:5*

Next the Lord speaks of her breasts as the seventh item of His praise, a praise which shows that His life has grown within her. Originally, she was the one who said,

*“My beloved is to me a pouch of myrrh  
Which lies all night between my breasts.”  
– Song of Songs 1:13*

She thought that she had some maturity at that point, but the Lord did not express the same feeling. Now, however, the Lord is the one who expresses His appreciation.

Here “breasts” refers to the seeker’s faith and love. They are twins of a gazelle, indicating a harmony that issues from having the same life. Faith and love are related to our experience of the Lord’s life. The richer our experience of this life is, the stronger will be our faith, and the greater the love we will possess. If we are a person full of life, we will also be a person full of faith and love. The more we grow in life, the more we will be able to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. And with this love, we will have faith toward the Lord. We are very clear that when we are with the Lord, everything will be fine, for the Lord is the One on whom we depend. He is the source, and in Him, faith and love will be manifested in our life in proportion to each other, according to the life of Christ we have received.

The Lord also speaks of her breasts as “fawns.” Fawns have

the tender feeling of life; that is, they are shy, very timid, easily frightened, and very sensitive in their feelings. This shows that at this point she is full of the sense of life. Before she felt that she was gaining some maturity, but now, in the Lord's eyes, she is truly being matured.

These seven items of the Lord's praise for the seeker—her eyes, hair, teeth, lips, cheeks, neck, and breasts—indicate the experiences we should have when we follow the Lord in a healthy way. We should examine ourselves in light of these seven items.

## A Deeper Pursuit

*“Until the cool of the day  
When the shadows flee away,  
I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh  
And to the hill of frankincense.”*  
– Song of Songs 4:6

At this point the maiden experiences a full union with the Lord. She is the Lord's satisfaction, and her beauty wins His praise. She is no longer satisfied with her own experiences or focused only upon her own fellowship with the Lord. Because she has experienced the work of the cross, she is able to receive the Lord's praise without becoming excited or proud. She knows that her earlier experience, “My beloved is mine, and I am His” (2:16) was sweet, and the banqueting house was very rich. However, she also realizes that apart from the experiences of myrrh and frankincense, she cannot be matured.

After the Lord praises her, she has a hunger deep within, and so she speaks here of her desire to go to “the mountain of myrrh, And to the hill of frankincense.” She realizes that she is not yet perfected. She desires to go on in her experience, so she is will-

ing to go to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. In other words, she is willing to walk in the way of the cross, so that by it she may have a deeper union with the Lord.

Now she has a feeling that as one the Lord has praised, and as one manifested in the church, she needs to go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense and dwell there. She longs that the myrrh, the death of Christ, would perfume her, so that she could express His resurrection, the frankincense. Although in the past she was not always obedient when the cross was working on her, she has at this point gained the riches of life. Now she is willing to rise up and walk with the Lord.

She has come to the realization that only by means of fellowship in the Lord's death and resurrection can she go through all the difficulties, and only by means of the work of the cross can she become God's satisfaction. Not until then will she be a testimony in the church and a lover before the Lord. She realizes that her relationship with the Lord no longer relies primarily upon reading the Bible, going to some meetings, or just praying some sweet prayers. Rather, she now sees that she needs to pay a price in order to continue on in her love relationship with the Lord. Therefore, she desires to go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense to gain a deeper experience of Christ.

Our chief desire should be to experience the Lord in His death and resurrection. May we all pray, "Lord, I too want to go to the mountain of myrrh. I don't want to only treasure my gift. The blessings I held before are now forsaken. I desire to go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense."

Only those who abide in the mountain of myrrh will truly experience the riches of God and express the hill of frankincense.

## Song of Songs 4:7-16

*“You are altogether beautiful, my darling,  
And there is no blemish in you.  
Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,  
May you come with me from Lebanon.  
Journey down from the summit of Amana,  
From the summit of Senir and Hermon,  
From the dens of lions,  
From the mountains of leopards.  
You have made my heart beat faster,  
    my sister, my bride;  
You have made my heart beat faster  
    with a single glance of your eyes,  
With a single strand of your necklace.  
How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!  
How much better is your love than wine,  
And the fragrance of your oils  
Than all kinds of spices!  
Your lips, my bride, drip honey;  
Honey and milk are under your tongue,  
And the fragrance of your garments  
    is like the fragrance of Lebanon.”*

*“A garden locked is my sister, my bride,  
A rock garden locked, a spring sealed up.  
Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates  
With choice fruits, henna with nard plants,  
Nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,  
With all the trees of frankincense,  
Myrrh and aloes,  
    along with all the finest spices.  
You are a garden spring,  
A well of fresh water,  
And streams flowing from Lebanon.”*

*“Awake, O north wind,  
And come, wind of the south;  
Make my garden breathe out fragrance,  
Let its spices be wafted abroad.  
May my beloved come into his garden  
And eat its choice fruits!”*



## The Streams

### Review

In chapter 2 of the Song of Songs, the Lord called out:

*“O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,  
In the secret place of the steep pathway,  
Let me see your form,  
Let me hear your voice;  
For your voice is sweet,  
And your form is lovely.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:14*

The Lord will not let us go until we answer this call, until we are completely focused on Him. He leads us, deals with us, and guards us each step of the way until we reach the goal.

In the first step of His dealing with the seeker at this point, after she refused His call, the Lord took His sweet presence away from her so that she was no longer able to enjoy an intimate fellowship with Him while she stayed in His chambers. Yet, this sense of His presence was the entire basis of what she had expe-

rienced up to this point. Therefore, when the Lord took this sense away, she could only respond:

*“On my bed night after night I sought him  
Whom my soul loves;  
I sought him but did not find him.”*  
– *Song of Songs 3:1*

In the second step, she was moved in her distress to open up her situation to the other brothers and sisters, saying:

*“I must arise now and go about the city;  
In the streets and in the squares  
I must seek him whom my soul loves.”*  
– *Song of Songs 3:2*

In the third step, He led her to the more experienced brothers and sisters, “the watchmen who go about the city” (3:3, NKJV). These experienced saints helped her to be constituted with what the Lord desired for her. This brought her back to the enjoyment of His presence.

When we reach this point in our seeking of the Lord we experience a full submission to His authority. Though we only know to hold on to Him and not let Him go, we gradually find ourselves changed from merely seeking enjoyment to submitting to His constituting work in us. Others will realize that we have experienced something of this constituting work, and ask:

*“What is this coming up from the wilderness  
Like columns of smoke,  
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
With all scented powders of the merchant?”*  
– *Song of Songs 3:6*

Eventually, we as His seeker will become a bed, surrounded by the sixty mighty men, for the Lord to have His rest. We will also become a palanquin for Him to be able to move, that is, one through whom the Lord can carry out His desire.

The main structure of the Lord's palanquin consists of the posts of silver (3:10), signifying the redeeming work of the Lord. This indicates that, when we have become the Lord's palanquin, we are fully constituted with the redemptive work of the Lord, to the point that we have lost our opinion and even our feeling about what should be. Our mind, emotion, and will have, in our experience, been fully redeemed back to Christ.

According to the picture in the Song of Songs, the seeker is now praised by both God and man. The saints appreciate the outward effect and manifestation of the Lord's work upon her, while the Lord appreciates the working of His life within her.

What the Lord appreciates in His seeker, as seen in chapter 4:1-5, is in seven different aspects, in which we see the real need of a seeker of the Lord. First, her eyes have become like doves behind her veil. Second, her hair is now like a flock of goats that repose on Mount Gilead. Third, her teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes. Fourth, her lips are like a scarlet thread. Fifth, her cheeks are like a piece of pomegranate behind her veil. Sixth, her neck is like the tower of David. And seventh, her two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle that feed among the lilies.

When you pay the price before the Lord to gain Him, you will also have this beautiful, sevenfold result. Here He Himself testifies to His seeker, "You have paid the price that brings you a sevenfold result; you are beautiful, because your genuine growth in life is so manifest." Only those who are mature and who have these seven items are worthy of the Lord's praise, and worthy to be His bride. Only they can bring the Lord comfort and rest, and only through such ones can the Lord gain the glory. Surely we should seek after such a testimony as this!

As we read the Song of Songs, we find that only if we are a lover of God can we always have such a seeking heart, for only as such a lover can we realize that we are not totally perfected yet. No matter how many years we have loved the Lord, we should realize that we still have not experienced enough of Him. Following the Lord, growing in life, and functioning in the church are all very practical matters. Whenever we are not joined to the Lord, or whenever our hearts are not pure toward Him, our growth in life ceases and our function in the church disappears. Thus, we should never be satisfied; rather, we should desire that He would continue to work within us until He is fully expressed through us.

In the church there is nothing but life, and we must pay a price to gain this life. Whether we are young or old, strong or weak, desirous or not, we all have to pay the price. The way to be spiritual is very definite; one who does not struggle to gain this life never will obtain it. Only those who pay the price can buy all the “scented powders of the merchant” and be perfumed with them.

The journey of our growth in life is very precious. Not only do we pay a price, but we also experience many things along the way. We experience being distracted by our work and coming back to answer the Lord’s call; losing His presence and then joining ourselves to Him in His death and resurrection; being in ourselves and then coming back to be His alone. Then, when we are in complete submission to Him, we become His comfort and rest, and also the means by which He carries out His move.

At this point the Lord finds His seeker to be beautiful. The Lord praises her sight, her submissiveness, her ability to receive, her ability to generate life, her ability to speak for Him, her exercise to carry out His will, and her sensitivity to life. Now the Lord can tell her, “You have truly satisfied My heart.”

Yet, in spite of all this, she still has not fully reached the place

the Lord spoke of in 2:14, when He called her to “the clefts of the rock” and “the covert of the precipice.” At this point, a seeker of the Lord knows that only through death, resurrection, and the work of the cross can he really satisfy God, testify in the church, and become a real lover of the Lord. He knows that his love relationship with the Lord does not merely lead him to read the Bible, to attend meetings, or to simply say, “I love you, Lord.” This love relationship comes with a price, that is, going to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense. May we all have such a longing prayer as the seeker in the Song of Songs, that “I, for my part, will go to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense! Lord, may my life experience be nothing but Your death and resurrection.”

## The Transcendence of Ascension

### *Called into His Ascension*

If we are willing to stay in the mountain of myrrh to experience the Lord’s death, and in the hill of frankincense to experience His resurrection, then the Lord will call us to be with Him in His ascension. This is what we see next in the Song of Songs.

### *Altogether Beautiful*

*“You are altogether beautiful, my darling,  
And there is no blemish in you.”  
– Song of Songs 4:7*

In this further calling, the Lord first of all tells His seeker that she is “altogether beautiful.” When we hear this praise we may

ask, are we really so beautiful to the Lord, without any spot or blemish? Actually, it is the Lord's love that causes Him to see us in this way. He knows that if we go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense and remain there, sooner or later we will indeed not have any blemish. Such a one is truly beautiful in His sight.

### *His Bride*

*“Come with me from Lebanon, my bride.”*  
– *Song of Songs 4:8*

Here for the first time, the Lord calls her “My bride.” In the mountain of myrrh, there is nothing but death; all things have come to an end. However, when there is nothing left, there will also be a hill of frankincense, that is, a place of resurrection. Therefore, at this point there is nothing that remains in the Lord's seeker but resurrection, and so He calls her, “My bride.”

### *Moving with the Lord*

*“May you come with me from Lebanon.”*  
– *Song of Songs 4:8*

At this point the Lord calls to her, “Come with me.” This indicates that the Lord now has a further calling for her. What is His intention here? It is to call her upward to move with Him in His ascension. When the Lord in this section goes on to speak of “the lions' dens” and “the mountains of the leopards” He is showing us that we may watch God's operation in His divine authority, ascending power and bountiful supply.

### *a. From Lebanon*

In this verse the Lord calls His seeker to come with Him “from Lebanon.” The land of Lebanon refers to the Lord’s resurrection and ascension. Therefore, here the Lord is calling His seeker to move with Him in the realm of ascension. The Lord tells her, “You have to be in the transcendence of My ascension. You need to look at things from the viewpoint of My ascension. Do not remain in your own pursuing, your own little work, and your plans for the future. You have to be with Me in the heavenly realm to consider the things of the Spirit, to co-labor with Me, and to accomplish My desire.”

### *b. From the Top of Amana*

*“Journey down from the summit of Amana.”*  
– *Song of Songs 4:8*

The Lord calls His seeker not only to come with Him from Lebanon, but also journey with Him from the top of Amana. Amana’s peak symbolizes the reality of the truth, because the word “Amana” means “truth.” The Lord is telling her, “Do not just work according to your own feeling as you did before. You have to see what is real according to the truth. The truth must not just be the words in your mouth; it must become your reality.”

### *c. From the Summit of Senir*

*“From the summit of Senir and Hermon”*  
– *Song of Songs 4:8*

The Lord also calls her to journey with Him from the top of Senir. The word “Senir” means “armor.” This refers to the church, which puts on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18). In other words, the seeker must not only be in the heavenly places and in the reality of the spiritual things; she also needs to put on the church as her armor. The armor is for the spiritual warfare. The real warfare can be successful only when we are with Christ on the ground of ascension and in the church.

*d. From the Summit of Hermon*

In 4:8 the Lord also calls His seeker to journey with Him from the top of Hermon, which means “destruction.” Christ has overcome the power of sin and destroyed the enemy through His cross (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). Therefore He calls His seeker to come and dwell with Him in the overcoming aspect of His cross.

*e. From the Lion’s Dens and  
the Leopard’s Mountains*

*“From the dens of lions,  
From the mountains of leopards.”  
– Song of Songs 4:8*

Peter described the devil as a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8). A lion is good at roaring, and a leopard is very swift, and good at clawing, ripping, and destroying (Hab. 1:8). The fact that such things are in the “mountains” reminds us that our battle is with an enemy in “the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). When we walk with Christ in His ascension, the lions’ dens and the leopards’ moun-

tains will be closer than ever before. Before we may have experienced something of Satan's opposition, but when we stand in the overcoming power of the Lord's cross, His resurrection, and His ascension, we will be fighting against the enemy directly.

## The Experience of Ascension

As those who stand with the Lord in His ascension, we must be clear concerning two matters, both of which are illustrated in this section of the Song of Songs. First, we must realize that we will be involved in spiritual warfare. We must understand that when we are on the ground of ascension, we are also close to the dwelling place of the enemy, "the dens of lions" and "the mountains of leopards." All of Satan's stratagems start from the high places. However, we are not only holding up the shield of faith to quench the flaming darts of his stratagems (Eph. 6:16); we are also taking the battle directly to Satan and his army. Because we are in ascension, we will be able to see what Satan is preparing to do and deal with it accordingly. Thus, we will be able to take the initiative to frustrate his attack. When we are with Christ in His ascension, we are no longer awaiting Satan's attack from the vantage point of earth. Instead, we see his plans ahead of time and can thus preempt his attack.

Second, when we are in ascension, we come with the Lord, for we are proceeding together with the Lord "from Lebanon." This means that we are never alone when we are in the Lord's ascension; He never leaves us to fight the spiritual warfare by ourselves. When we enter into ascension with the Lord, He is with us to help us experience the reality of all the spiritual things. He is with us from Lebanon, from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, and from the lions' dens and the leopards' mountains. As we engage in this struggle, we will have the

same mind as the Lord, and we will be in one accord with Him for the carrying out of God's eternal desire through His work on the earth.

## Four Crucial Matters

As the Lord calls us forward to be with Him in His ascension, He emphasizes four things. First of all, we should realize our position. Where are we? We are in Lebanon, in the Lord's position of ascension. We don't need to ask for victory, for we are already standing on the ground of victory. We don't need to ask for strength, for we are already on the ground of strength. We don't need to ask for light, for we are in the light. Why is this? It is because we are with the Lord in the heavenly places. Even though we still walk on the earth, we are, according to our position and status, the people of heaven. May the Lord open our eyes to see that our position is in the heavenly places!

Second, those who are with the Lord in His ascension can abide in the reality of the truth, "Amana." What we speak and what we live should no longer be separate. What we say has to be our reality.

This requires us to pay an even greater price. Earlier, we purchased some myrrh (3:6), but now we dwell in "the mountain of myrrh" (4:6). We need to pay the price to experience the reality of the truth. This requires us to go to the mountain of myrrh, and this, in turn, requires us to be willing to cast everything else away. We should not be anxious or worry or plan for ourselves, or even think too much, for our life is now in the Lord's hand. We live by faith before the Lord, and what we hear and what we speak of the truth has to become our reality.

Third, the Lord reveals that we need to put on the armor, "Senir," which is the church. We have to know that we are not by

ourselves anymore. It doesn't matter how spiritual or how effective we are in ourselves; now we must live in the church life and allow the body to be our protection. Whether the church is strong or weak, it is our armor to fight against Satan.

Fourth, the Lord shows us that we are living in the victory of the cross. We must be in continual union with the Lord to experience all the riches of the cross.

When we consecrate ourselves to the Lord, telling Him, "I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense," He will surely be moved to reveal these things to us: that we live in the heavenly places; that the truth must become our reality; that we must put on the church to have a life of spiritual warfare; and that we live in the victory of the cross. Here the Lord is saying, "If you are willing to live in the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense, you need to experience the reality of ascension. You have to live a life of ascension and experience the transcendence of ascension. The truth, the church, and the victory of the cross can then be substantiated in you."

## The Lord's Praise of His Beloved

### *Capturing His Heart*

*"You have made my heart beat faster,  
my sister, my bride;  
You have made my heart beat faster  
with a single glance of your eyes,  
With a single strand of your necklace."  
– Song of Songs 4:9*

The Lord's word here shows us that at this point the Shulamite answers the Lord's calling, not with any words, but with

one glance of her eyes and one “jewel” (ESV), or “strand” (NASB) of her necklace. No longer does she argue with the Lord or bargain with Him. In fact, she doesn’t say anything at all here; rather, she answers with her eyes, ravishing His heart with her glance. Actually, the best way to know whether someone is truly in harmony with you is by the glance of their eyes. In particular, this is often true between a husband and wife.

The Shulammitte’s obedience here comes naturally; she does not speak, but simply looks at the Lord to signify her willingness to respond to His call. Her glance seems to tell Him, without any words, “Lord, I am with You in all that You desire, for Your wish is my command. I am here; I don’t want to cause You any loss or hinder You any more; I don’t want to have any more disagreement with You; I am willing to put aside all I have that Your desire might be fulfilled.”

Such a response deeply moves the Lord, and so He tells her that she has “captivated [his] heart with one glance” of her eyes (4:9, ESV). The Lord’s heart is captured in this way because she answers His call to enter into His ascension; He called her to go there with Him, and she obeys without any hesitation.

She also has captivated His heart “with a single strand of [her] necklace.” This indicates that her will is now given over to the Lord. A necklace is a chain upon the neck. Because the neck signifies the will, the necklace here is a symbol of submission. She has but a single strand upon her neck, that is, the calling of the Lord. He has spoken to her of a certain matter and this speaking has become her necklace. She obeys Him completely.

Such a response ravishes the Lord’s heart. Previously, she made a great show of pursuing the Lord, yet the Lord compared her to a mare. Here the Shulammitte doesn’t even say a word, yet the Lord says she has captured His heart.

It is after the seeker has spoken of going to “the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense” that the Lord called her

to come with Him to experience His ascension. She did not say anything, but replied with one glance of her eyes, a glance that told Him she is deeply joined to Him. Her reply was also manifested with the one strand upon her neck. This necklace indicates that she only cares for what the Lord cares for, and this deeply touches the Lord.

May the Lord have mercy upon us so that we may be the ones who capture His heart! Although we know a great deal and may have a strong desire, nothing is real until we capture the heart of the Lord. We have to satisfy the Lord in everything and capture His heart in every matter. We have to take the real action. Whenever the Lord has a requirement for us, we should be able to answer, “Lord, I am here; I am simply here before You, awaiting Your word.” On our neck is but one strand whenever the Lord requires something of us, that is, the calling of the Lord.

### *A Love Better than Wine*

*“How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!  
How much better is your love than wine!”  
– Song of Songs 4:10*

In chapter 1 the seeker told the Lord, “Your love is better than wine” (1:2). Now it is the Lord telling her, “How beautiful is your love for Me!”

It is important to see here that when she is so submissive, the Lord doesn’t tell her that her submission is beautiful, but that her love is beautiful. Brothers and sisters, would your labor make the Lord say, “How beautiful is your labor”? Or do you still expect the Lord to praise the effectiveness of your labor? The Lord will never do that. Instead, He desires to say to you, “How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!”

A good meeting is an enjoyment to the Lord. A good work is also an enjoyment to the Lord. However, these are not what the Lord ultimately desires. The Lord wants us to be sanctified and overcoming, but neither of these are what He really desires. Rather, what He truly desires is our unceasing love toward Him. No matter how blessed we are, no matter how approved we are, no matter how many experiences we have, we still need to tell the Lord, “Oh Lord, I love You. I love You in all my labor. I serve You because I love You. Why do I go to the meetings? It is because I love You.”

Are we the ones who can prompt the Lord to exclaim, “How beautiful is your love!?” Perhaps there is a good meeting after which everyone is excited, saying, “How rich was the presence of the Lord! Every testimony was so prevailing!” The Lord’s response would be, “This is because of My love, which is indeed better than wine. But how is your love for Me?” What the Lord really treasures is our love for Him.

I hope this word would stay with you for the rest of your life. You may work much, labor much, and serve much in the coming years. But in those coming years, will you still be able to tell the Lord, “Lord, Your love is better than wine?” Indeed you may produce much for Him, but it is not the “wine” you produce, but your love for Him, that can truly satisfy His heart. Love is the banner between the Lord and you. Love is the banner the Lord stretches out over your life—“His banner over me is love” (2:4). You cannot replace this banner with other things in your life. No matter how hard you work, no matter how desperately you labor, no matter how great a price you pay, the Lord will say it is useless unless your love is uniquely for Him.

## *A Fragrance Better than Spices*

*“And the fragrance of your oils [is better]  
Than all kinds of spices!”  
– Song of Songs 4:10*

In the beginning of the Song of Songs the seeker says that the king’s oils have a pleasing fragrance (1:3). Here, however, the Lord praises the Shulammitte in regards to her fragrance, telling her that the fragrance of her ointments is much better than all spices. The Lord is no longer the only one who has a pleasant fragrance; now we also are full of that same fragrance. Not only does the Lord have the Holy Spirit, but we also possess the Holy Spirit. In Psalm 133 the ointment upon the head of Aaron, who typifies Christ, also comes to us, His body (v. 2-3). Since the Lord as the compound Spirit has worked in us, we now have a pleasant fragrance. The life flowing from us can supply and satisfy people wherever we go.

## *Dripping as the Honeycomb*

*“Your lips, my bride, drip honey;  
Honey and milk are under your tongue.”  
– Song of Songs 4:11*

At this point our lips, which represent our words and our speaking, drip honey. Honey is one of the richest and most enlivening of all foods. This means that what we say becomes full of the reviving power of life. When we speak for the Lord with honey, our words are full of life. Moreover, we are so rich that we are not in a hurry to pour out what we have; rather, our words drop slowly as honey from the honeycomb. As such persons, we

can release what the Lord has committed to us wherever we are and in just the right manner.

He also tells her, “Honey and milk are under your tongue.” Honey revives people, and milk nourishes people. Honey gives people strength when they are tired, while milk feeds people when they are hungry. This means that, through our words, the tired are revived and the hungry are fed. When people, young or old, weak or strong, come to us, they will gain the riches of life.

When we answer the Lord’s call, we enter into Lebanon, the realm of ascension; we are on top of Amana, the reality of truth; we are on top of Senir, the whole armor of God in the church; and we are on top of Hermon, where there are the lions’ dens and the mountains of leopards, so that we are able to discern the stratagems of Satan. Moreover, when in the realm of ascension we come to people, we will be full of life and full of supply so that we can revive others. As one hymn in Chinese says to the Lord:

*“O may my lips drip fresh honey,  
And may you enjoy the sweetness of my love.”*

At this point, because we are one who loves the Lord and has a rich flowing out of the divine life, we give the Lord a real enjoyment, for He has gained one who belongs to Him completely.

### *With the Smell of Lebanon*

*“And the fragrance of your garments  
is like the fragrance of Lebanon.”*  
– *Song of Songs 4:11*

Garments in the Bible refer to a person's behavior (Rev. 19:8). Now our behavior is completely in resurrection, signified by Lebanon. Although outwardly we live a life that is the same as others, yet inwardly we are separated from all common things, and others see us as one who bears a heavenly fragrance.

*A Garden Enclosed,  
a Spring Shut Up, a Fountain Sealed*

*“A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse.  
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”  
– Song of Songs 4:12, KJV*

In the Bible, God's first thought was that of a garden—the Garden of Eden. When He created man, He planted a garden and put the man there to take care of it. There man could enjoy the milk and honey. Alas, Adam and Eve failed and damaged God's purpose. But, praise the Lord! In a seeking one who stands in Christ's ascension, man recovers what was lost, and God can testify, “How wonderful! I now have another Garden of Eden. My sister, my bride is like an enclosed garden to Me.”

Positively speaking, there were only God and man in the original Garden of Eden. In like manner, when we are in the condition of what is pictured in this verse, there are only God and man in us today; that is, when we come to this stage, we will also be a garden to the Lord. To the Lord we are a garden that is fragrant, fresh, and full of life. The Lord can say to us, “When I come to you, when I look at you, and when I fellowship with you, I feel that My original purpose in creating man has been achieved; I have gained My garden.”

The seeker's experience here is higher than that revealed at the beginning of chapter 4. Now she is united with the Lord,

and yet she is also free. This indicates that as a garden, we have no responsibilities except to grow something for others' enjoyment. Being such a garden, we do not have opinions as to what should be planted, or when and where the planting should take place. The Lord is the Master, and He is so great that He knows each one of His lovers as a garden that He comes to enjoy in a particular way. He will decide how to arrange everything, and He will determine when He will come to enjoy us.

The Lord's word here also indicates that when we are in this stage we are a spring flowing out the living water and a fountain of life (cf. John 4:14, 7:37-39). Not only are we beautiful, enjoyable, fresh, and new; we are also full of life. The Lord looks at us and finds that we have so many "buds" and "shoots." There are so many things sprouting up from us. Truly the Lord at this point finds in us a recovered paradise! However, that fact that the spring and the fountain are "shut up" and "sealed" indicates that our flowing out of the living water is solely for the Lord.

### *Her Shoots*

*"Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates  
With choice fruits, henna with nard plants,  
Nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,  
With all the trees of frankincense,  
Myrrh and aloes,  
along with all the finest spices."  
– Song of Songs 4:13-14*

As we have said, the Lord's first thought was of a garden, the paradise of the garden of Eden, but this garden was lost through the fall. How can this paradise be recovered today? The secret is in the pomegranate.

The pomegranate tree is full of life. If you break open its fruit, you will see that it is full of seeds and juice. Every part of the pomegranate, including the buds and the shoots, shows the abundance of life. This indicates that it is through the abundance of life that God regains His lost paradise. We gain this abundance of life by loving the Lord and experiencing His cross.

The garden here is filled with choice fruits and the finest spices. As the Lord testifies, there is henna with nard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the finest spices. All of these are produced from the seeker's experience of the fragrant powders of the merchant, the mountain of myrrh, and the hill of frankincense. The Lord seems to be telling her, "Death has had its operation in you, and now, through your union with Me, you are full of the life supply." As Paul testified:

*So then death works in us, but life in you.*  
– 2 Cor. 4:12

Brothers and sisters, when you read the Song of Songs, you will find that the Lord cares for almost nothing besides love and the cross. If you love the Lord, you must take up the cross, and the more you take up the cross, the more you will, in turn, love the Lord. The Lord always confronts you with these two matters. He is not interested in your work, nor is He interested in your spirituality. This is absolutely a matter of life. You will grow in life spontaneously through love and through the cross.

## *The Streams from Lebanon*

*“A fountain of gardens,  
A well of living waters,  
And streams from Lebanon.”  
– Song of Songs 4:15, KJV*

The Lord’s word here shows, again, that the seeker is full of the life supply. She is a fountain in gardens, a well of living water. She is not only helped by others, but she also co-labors with them. Since she is in submission to the Lord and with Him in the heavenlies, she becomes a supply of life to others, a “fountain of gardens.” Even those who are more experienced, who are also “gardens” and “springs,” can receive help from her. Even the church itself testifies that she is a person of the Spirit.

Brothers and sisters, you have to know the spiritual principle that we gain life by experiencing death. We have to go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense until the day dawns and the shadows flee away, that is, until the Lord comes back and we are raptured. The Lord is saying, “If you are willing to give yourself to Me and to allow Me to strip you, shape you, and conform you to My image, I will take you to Lebanon, to the top of Amana, and to the top of Senir and Hermon.”

By now we have come to know the clefts of the rock and the covert of the precipice. Now our experience is that of an enlargement of the victory of the cross. It is no wonder that the Lord’s heart is drawn to us! Because we are in complete submission to the Lord’s will, we have ravished His heart. Now, His heart is set upon us. We have become a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, one who is just for the Lord’s enjoyment. We have become full of the riches of His life; honey and milk are flowing out from us to revive and nourish those around us. We are joined to the Lord for His desire and are just for

Him. Although outwardly we may be doing our work, inwardly, we only desire and treasure the Lord Himself, who is so lovely to us. What a wonderful experience is this!

As a result, the Lord can say of His seeker that she is “A fountain of gardens, A well of living waters, And streams from Lebanon.” She is indeed the source of supply to others. Others are growing in gardens and she is a fountain in gardens. Others have wells, but she is the living water in their wells.

## Calling for the Winds

*“Awake, O north wind,  
and come, O south wind!  
Blow upon my garden,  
let its spices flow.  
Let my beloved come to his garden,  
and eat its choicest fruits.”*  
– *Song of Songs 4:16, ESV*

Now the Lord’s beloved is at the height of her joy. She knows that the Lord enjoys her and treasures her, and she knows that the riches of life in her have become a supply and refreshment to others. Still, from her statement here we see that she realizes her need of the Lord’s further work upon her if she is to truly please her beloved. First, she realizes she needs the north wind and the south wind to blow upon her garden. Her feeling is, “When I am in such a marvelous condition, I have to go further. For my going on, the Lord has to work on me more. O Lord, use every opportunity to work in me. Let the north wind (which is cold, bitter, and insufferable), and the south wind (which is warm, gentle, and comforting) come together upon me.”

How bold and buoyant she is! She is so joyful that she has

become the blessing of the church and the enjoyment of the Lord, yet she asks for all kinds of environments. She does not seek to live a common life, but rather, she desires a life full of all kinds of new experiences. Although she doesn't really understand what she is asking for here, her yearning is still pleasing to the Lord.

Second, she realizes that she needs to let her spices flow forth. She knows that she has produced all kinds of the choicest fruits and spices, and she has also received so many blessings. She is not common before the Lord anymore. She has paid a high price and shed many tears. She has also experienced much enjoyment. She can testify of her story with the Lord over the years, how she helped the church at this time and blessed others at that time. She has many experiences to support her feeling in this regard. When she looks back over her life, she can say, "Lord, I am not common anymore. I am special. I have all kinds of fragrances and choice fruits. The fragrances are for You to smell, and the fruit is for You to taste. All that I have and all that I have become are for Your satisfaction."

Third, she realizes that she, as a garden, needs to be the Lord's alone. First she says, "Blow upon my garden." Then she says, "Let my beloved come to his garden." She now knows that she belongs to the Lord and that the Lord belongs to her; that is, her garden is the Lord's garden. She is in a complete union with the Lord.

The assurance she has within is not merely that her salvation is eternally secure, nor that she is a child of God; rather, she has an assurance of her union with the Lord Himself. She realizes now that she exists for the Lord's satisfaction. Therefore, her concern is, "Lord, do You feel sweet when I come to You? Do You enjoy me when I pray, and when I meditate upon You? Do You feel that we are fully joined in spirit when I speak for You? Do you feel that we are one when I go visiting the saints and

testifying to others on Your behalf?” Truly, at this point she is united with the Lord to the extent that her garden is indeed the Lord’s garden.

What a beautiful and glorious manifestation of life she has. We praise the Lord that we can experience such a living together with our marvelous Lord!

## Song of Songs 5:1-8

*“I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride;  
I have gathered my myrrh along with my balsam.  
I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey;  
I have drunk my wine and my milk.  
Eat, friends;  
Drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers.”*

*“I was asleep but my heart was awake.  
A voice! My beloved was knocking:  
‘Open to me, my sister, my darling,  
My dove, my perfect one!  
For my head is drenched with dew,  
My locks with the damp of the night.’”*

*“I have taken off my dress,  
How can I put it on again?  
I have washed my feet,  
How can I dirty them again?  
My beloved extended his hand  
through the opening,  
And my feelings were aroused for him.”*

*“I arose to open to my beloved;  
And my hands dripped with myrrh,  
And my fingers with liquid myrrh,  
On the handles of the bolt.  
I opened to my beloved,  
But my beloved had turned away and had gone!  
My heart went out to him as he spoke.  
I searched for him but I did not find him;  
I called him but he did not answer me.  
The watchmen who make the rounds  
    in the city found me,  
They struck me and wounded me;  
The guardsmen of the walls  
    took away my shawl from me.  
I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
If you find my beloved,  
As to what you will tell him:  
For I am lovesick.”*



# The Myrrh

## The Lord's Enjoyment

*“I have come into my garden,  
my sister, my bride.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:1*

As chapter 5 begins, the king again refers to the Shulammitte maiden as “my sister, my bride.” The Lord and His lovers have a relationship that is of both life and love. The term “sister” refers to their relation in life, while the term “bride” refers to their relationship of love. In life, we are the Lord’s sisters, and in love, we are His bride.

In this union of life and love the Lord speaks of His enjoyment of the seeker. The myrrh, spice, honeycomb, honey, wine, and milk all speak of the things of life that issue from the Lord in resurrection. This indicates that in this stage, the Lord enjoys the fruits of His labor in His seeking one.

## Gathering the Myrrh

*“I have gathered my myrrh  
along with my balsam.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:1*

In saying to her that He has gathered his myrrh and his balsam, or “spice” (KJV), the Lord’s meaning is, “I have searched your heart and have found the operation and the work of My death in you. Instead of sin and the world, I find the breaking which marks the work of the cross. The lessons of the cross that you have garnered I now gather for My enjoyment.”

The experiences of death that we pass through, as signified by the myrrh, belong to the Lord. Although we paid the price to gain these experiences, they are ultimately not for us, but for the Lord to enjoy in us. This indicates that the seeking one by this time has surrendered all authority over herself and all her rights to the Lord. In chapter 1 she could separate her enjoyment from the Lord’s enjoyment, saying,

*“While the king was at his table,  
My perfume gave forth its fragrance.”*  
– *Song of Songs 1:12*

Now, however, the experiences she has acquired of the Lord are not only for her enjoyment, but also belong to the Lord for His enjoyment. She and the Lord are now united as one. This is indeed a deep experience.

## The Honeycomb, Wine, and Milk

*“I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey;  
I have drunk my wine and my milk.  
Eat, friends;  
Drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:1*

Her experience of the cross operating in her has indeed become the Lord’s enjoyment. In her, the Lord has gathered His myrrh and spice; He has eaten His honeycomb and honey; and He has drunk His wine and His milk. Here we see that the Lord has gained a rich refreshment of life through her. Where does the Lord gain this supply? It is from the garden of her heart. If we are those who are truly seeking after the Lord, our heart should become such a place of delight to the Lord.

In the past, it was we who sought after the Lord, but now it is He who comes seeking after us. Before, we were weak and in need, and often asked merely for the Lord’s forgiveness and His blessing. Now, however, we can tell Him, “My heart has become a delightful place to You. Lord, do come; eat, drink, and enjoy what You have gained in me.” Eventually, the Lord does indeed come to us to enjoy the fruit of His work within us.

Brothers and sisters, you may wonder why it seems the Lord cannot seem to have His way in some localities, while in other churches it seems He is able to operate in a prevailing way. This is because some places lack the real seekers and lovers of the Lord, while others do have a good number of them. Wherever there are ones who are truly in union with the Lord, experiencing a life union with Him and living in the riches of His resurrection life, who are like the Shulammite in the Song of Songs, the Lord is able to gain His satisfaction, nourishment, and supply. How wonderful if the Lord among us can say:

*“Eat, friends;  
Drink and imbibe deeply, O lovers!”*

In his book on the Song of Songs, Watchman Nee writes that the friends here refer to the Triune God. In contrast J.N. Darby says that the friends are other believers; he says this based on the fact that the Lord calls His disciples His “friends” (John 15:15) who are beloved (John 15:9). Regardless of how we understand this verse, in our experience we know that the Lord is happy when He gains a group of believers, and in addition, many other saints will be revived and satisfied as they share in His enjoyment. If there are some in a church who are matured, rich in life, and one with the Lord, that church will be a place of enjoyment because of them. They are the gardens in whom the Lord can enjoy something, and which others also can enjoy with Him.

## The Deeper Calling of the Cross

We might feel that at this point, there is nothing further of the Lord for us to experience. However, it is at this very point that the Lord calls the seeker to arise and follow Him into another, deeper stage of spiritual experience, that is, to join Him in His being rejected and despised.

As we have said before, throughout our experience of seeking after the Lord, He leads us into what He Himself passed through while He was on the earth. Now, in this stage, He shows us that although He had no sin, He suffered; although He was the King, He was mocked and reproached; and although He was blameless, He suffered the agony of the cross and of God’s judgment. He didn’t deserve what He suffered. He shouldn’t have been mocked and reproached; He shouldn’t have been rejected; and He shouldn’t have been nailed to the cross. Though He was

the greatest man who ever walked on the face of the earth, He was nonetheless unappreciated and despised. Ultimately, what the Lord experienced was infinitely more unjust and unreasonable than anything anyone else has ever had to go through.

Now the Lord calls His seeker to walk this unreasonable pathway that He Himself has trod. Although He was holy, He was misunderstood; in like manner, although we are sanctified, we will also be misunderstood. Although He was God's glory, He was despised; although we also possess God's glory, we will also be despised. Although He was meek and lowly, evil was spoken of Him; if we are meek and lowly, we will also be slandered. It is the Lord's desire that in this way we enter into the fellowship of His sufferings so that we may fill up what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ.

The apostle Paul was an example of such a one. He wrote to the Colossians:

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.*

– *Colossians 1:24*

The afflictions of Christ today are not for redemption, since that has already been fully accomplished by Christ on the cross. Rather, these afflictions are for the building up of the church. In order for the church to be built up, some saints need to fill up what is lacking of His afflictions. The Lord has accomplished His part on the cross; now we have to fulfill our part for the building up of the church. If we desire to serve the Lord and to be His bride, we need to make up that which is lacking, for sufferings upon the earth are still necessary for His building work to be completed.

The Lord wants us to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:10). Indeed, His sufferings must be constituted into us to become our reality. Brothers and sisters, we need to be willing to go deeper. Even after becoming so fruitful before the Lord, we still must tell Him continually, “O Lord, I am not satisfied with my condition. I must still have more growth in You.”

The most difficult thing for the seeker at this point is that she does not yet see the need of this further work of the cross, because she is satisfied with what she has already attained. Therefore, she goes to sleep, but not completely, for she says, “my heart is awake.” That is, outwardly she is asleep, but inwardly her heart is awake. This means that she is still quite clear within. She would never think that someone would forsake, despise, or reject her, since she has attained so much and she is the source of everyone else’s blessing. For her, it seems that there is no longer a need to pay a price in order to go on further with the Lord. Nonetheless, the Lord’s desire now is to lead her to a deeper experience of the cross.

### “Open to Me”

*“I was asleep but my heart was awake.*

*A voice! My beloved was knocking:*

*‘Open to me, my sister, my darling,*

*My dove, my perfect one!’”*

*– Song of Songs 5:2*

As we walk on the way of the Lord we should not sleep. However, at times we tend to be satisfied with the spiritual experience we may have already acquired, and thus we do indeed “go to sleep,” spiritually speaking. We do not think there is a need to go on any further, or to pay any more of a price. The

Lord, however, calls us to continue to pay a price. He reminds us of His desire that we would enter into the fellowship of His sufferings and fill up what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ today; this is the significance of His knocking on the door. Fortunately, although the Shulammitte is asleep, her heart is aware that the Lord is knocking. This shows us that, due to her love to Him, she is not completely separated from the Lord even in such a condition.

The Lord here calls her, “My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one.” The Lord praises her in four aspects. In life, she is His sister; in their relationship, she is His love; in purity, she is His dove; and in her sanctification, she is His perfect one. The Lord calls this beautiful and lovely one to open to Him.

## Drenched with the Dew and with the Damp of the Night

*“For my head is drenched with dew,  
My locks with the damp of the night.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:2*

This calling of the Lord is very simple, yet what is portrayed in this scene is quite profound; it is the Lord’s experience at Gethsemane. The Lord is reminding the seeker of His sufferings there. In that night, His head was truly full of dew and His locks were truly filled with the damp of night.

The Shulammitte considers herself to have achieved the highest level of spiritual experience. The Lord now has established His authority over her; she has become a blessing to the church; she has entered into a degree of union with the Lord; and she is on her way to resurrection and glory. Even so, the Lord tells her at this point, “You are content with your situation before God

and man. You are in victory. Everyone praises you. However, I am still homeless. I am still wandering about. Do you realize it is still the night? Do you know I am outside? Do you know that My head is wet with the dew while you are asleep and enjoying your rest? Do you know that I am still suffering and without such rest and enjoyment even until now?"

Brothers and sisters, we would never dream that the Lord would ask this of us. We do not realize that the Lord is in such a state, but it is true, for there is as yet nothing on the earth that can really satisfy Him. God's purpose has not yet been fulfilled, but we are so satisfied when we call on His name and touch Him in spirit. We are so satisfied when we enjoy the Lord. It is so easy for us to shout, "Hallelujah!", but we don't realize that the Lord is still a homeless wanderer, that His head is full of dew and His locks drenched with the damp of night. While we are at rest, we don't realize that He is still waiting for the morning to appear.

### "I Have Taken Off my Dress"

*"I have taken off my dress,  
How can I put it on again?  
I have washed my feet,  
How can I dirty them again?"*  
– Song of Songs 5:3

The Shulammitte is indeed spiritually perceptive at this point, for she recognizes the knocking of her Lord's hand. However, her response is that she has taken off her dress and cannot put it on again, and has washed her feet and cannot dirty them again. She feels that the work is going very well, the saints are being helped, and she has become a garden full of riches for the Lord's enjoyment. Therefore, she does not understand the His call.

The dress here can be interpreted as our old man (Rom. 6:6). It can also refer to the coat that is put on over armor. She seems to be saying, “Lord, I have taken off my coat and put on the whole armor of God to fight for You. I lead the church to go forward. Why do You ask me to leave what I have built? Why do You want to take away the powder of spices and the gifts that You have given me? Lord, what are You asking for? I am full of strength and victory now. I am in the realm of ascension. Why do You ask me to go back to a situation of dryness and weakness? I have washed my feet; how can I dirty them again? I have become separated from the world; how can I return to dirty my feet there again?”

Brothers and sisters, we may have experienced something before the Lord to the extent that we can say, “Awake, O north wind, and come, O south!” (4:16, NKJV). We may even be able to tell the Lord, “Lord, I am Your servant, Your bride, and Your garden.” We might feel that we have a certain position in God’s work. We could become so satisfied that we would want to remain in such a situation and never go further. Thus, when the Lord calls us, we refuse by telling Him that we have put off our dress and washed our feet, and so we cannot rise up again. We may feel that the Lord wants us to remain in our spiritually exalted state, but we forget that although we have helped a few, there are multitudes who are still under Satan’s power. We may have nourished some, but how many there are who still need spiritual feeding! There are many more who need to be saved and cared for.

It is our lack of such a realization that causes us to reply the way we do. We do not see that there is still a long way to go before the Lord can claim His corporate Bride. Up to this point our experience of having the same heart as the Lord and of being one with Him are limited to the small sphere of our own Christian life. We haven’t yet entered into all the riches of the

Lord; they have not yet fully become our possession. Still, the Lord does not force us to follow Him. Rather, He only knocks and calls out to us from outside our door until we are willing to rise up once again.

## His Hand

*“My beloved extended his hand  
through the opening,  
And my feelings were aroused for him.”  
– Song of Songs 5:4*

In chapter 4, the Shulammitte ravished the Lord’s heart with one glance of her eyes (4:9). Here, He ravishes her heart by showing her His hand. In this stage the maiden doesn’t mention anything to the daughters of Jerusalem, for she has now entered into heights and depths of experience where her companions can no longer help her.

When the Lord calls us in this stage, He reveals to us His hand. It may be during a time of prayer or fellowship or during a time of dealing before the Lord. We don’t quite understand how it happens, but the love of the Lord encourages us to pursue Him again, for on His hand we see the mark of the nail. His scars and His lowliness in suffering appear to us again.

When we were on top of everything in the heavenly realm, all was victorious and satisfactory. Yet, without our even realizing it, the vision of the cross faded away. We lived in its victory but forgot where the victory came from. We lived in the riches of Christ, but forgot what it was that produced those riches. In reality, we had departed from the foundation, and as a result, when He calls us again we are unable to follow Him.

Nevertheless, the Lord places His hand into the opening of

the door, that is, into the opening of our heart. Praise the Lord that we still have an opening! Even as we sleep, our heart is awake. We still love the Lord, and deep within we still have a place where He can touch us. We are full of excitement and enjoyment as one standing on the peak of spiritual experience, but we still have an opening for the Lord to show us His hand, and when we see that hand, all our protests dissolve.

It may take a long time, however, for us to answer the Lord's call. Perhaps He has asked us to open to Him several times, but we have not yet responded. Deep within, we know the Lord is calling us to carry the cross, but we just cannot understand this calling. The Lord says, "Open to Me," but we think, "How can I open the door? My situation could not be better than it is now. And aren't these all things that I have gained from the Lord and for the Lord? Why would I jeopardize such a situation?"

Therefore, we go through a long period of struggle. The Lord shows us His nail-marked hand and reveals to us that He is still on the outside, with His head full of dew and His locks wet with the drops of night, but we remain on the inside. The Lord is in another realm, and we simply cannot answer His call.

Because we hesitate, the Lord places His hand into the opening of the door. We cannot yet follow him, but nonetheless there is still, due to our love for Him, a certain place within us that the Lord can easily touch: our heart. At this point, however, there is only room for the Lord to place His hand into this opening. He says to us, "Look at My hand. I went to the cross and shed My blood for you. Through My hand, you should be reminded that My visage and form were marred for you. You are so glorious now because of what I obtained for you through My suffering, but when I was on the earth, I grew up like a root out of parched ground (Isa. 53:2-3), and My experience was one of loneliness. I was reproached, scourged, and nailed to the cross. Now I show you My hand to remind you that I am the Lord of suffering."

When the Lord shows us His hand in this way, our hearts melt and we fall down before Him. It seems that we suddenly wake up. Before, we considered ourselves as His bed and His palanquin, and appreciated that wherever we went, people were blessed. Now we repent to the Lord for focusing on these things. We thought all this was the result of our labor, but now we realize such things cannot be our focus. We realize, moreover, that our past willingness to go to the mountain of myrrh was, at least to some extent, for gaining the glory of men.

We have to be saved from our work, from our serving, and from our helping others, realizing that the Lord's head is full of dew, and His locks are full of the drops of night. He is hungry and thirsty. He has no place to stay. He is still mocked and reproached by people. He has no rest, no way to accomplish His desire.

Praise the Lord, for we still love Him, even though we have fallen into works. Everything we thought we had collapses when the Lord touches us in this way. When we see His hand, our inner parts yearn for Him; we have a new revival, for we touch His love for us in a fresh way. We realize, "Lord, I have been wrong all these years. I should not have thought that my previous experiences were the end; rather, I went through those things so that they could usher me into the real journey, which begins from this point on."

This is a major turning point in the Song of Songs, and in our spiritual experience as well. We needed to pass through the previous four chapters to arrive at this point, but no matter how glorious those experiences of the first four chapters were—no matter how precious it is to be a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, a fountain in gardens, a well of living water, streams from Lebanon, and so on—the impurities of the self are still present. Even in the most glorious moment, there is still the enjoyment for the self. May we all come to this point and

be able to say, “Lord, in Your light I now abhor everything else. I want to rise up. Now, as I see Your hand, my inner parts yearn for You.”

## Rising Up

*“I arose to open to my beloved.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:5*

Thank the Lord, here the Shulammitte at last rises up. Now she is really willing to pay the price. She seems to tell the Lord, “Lord, I surrender to You. I am willing to pay any price. I am willing to submit to all that You require. I desire what You desire. I choose what You choose. I am willing to put myself into death, for I want to have a complete union with You.”

## Dripping with Myrrh

*“And my hands dripped with myrrh,  
And my fingers with liquid myrrh,  
On the handles of the bolt.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:5*

In her submission, she can see the “myrrh” on her hands. Her word here indicates that she now knows what the price must now be, that it is different from anything she has paid before. She knows now that if she presses on, there can be no return. She will lose all the renown and praise that she has acquired. She will become a lonely person, living a life of the cross, as the Lord did before her. No one will sympathize with her. She will be joined to the Lord alone, living on the earth only for His

satisfaction. Her feeling here is like that expressed by M.E. Barber in a hymn:

*If the path I travel  
    Lead me to the cross,  
If the way Thou choosest  
    Lead to pain and loss,  
Let the compensation  
    Daily, hourly be  
Shadowless communion,  
    Blessed Lord, with Thee.*

*If there's less of earth joy,  
    Give, Lord, more of heaven.  
Let the spirit praise Thee,  
    Though the heart be riven;  
If sweet earthly ties, Lord,  
    Break at Thy decree,  
Let the tie that binds us,  
    Closer, sweeter, be.*

She knows that her obedience will lead to death, and that everything she has will be taken away from her. What she sees now is not the Lord of ascension and glory, but the Lord of marred visage and of wandering (Isa. 52:14; Matt. 8:20; cf. John 7:53-8:1). She now knows that the way of the Lord is the unsympathetic and unreasonable way of the cross.

Brothers and sisters, this consecration will be the issue of all the previous consecrations in your life. In this consecration, you must forsake all your previous experiences. The Lord tells her, "My calling for you now is different from before. You can no longer have other yearnings or desires or plans. You cannot even have your own work. From now on, you can only wander with

Me, living in tents and waiting for the city whose foundations are laid by God (Heb. 11:10). You can only experience the work of My cross. You have to allow Me to strip you of everything—your wisdom, your ability, your work, your enjoyment, your praise, and your glory. I will take away everything you treasured in the past and leave you with nothing but Myself. From now on, you do not even have any other companions, only Me. This is how you will walk with Me until I come.”

Such a consecration requires a serious struggle for any seeker of the Lord, perhaps for a long period of time, because it is the end of everything. When we first give ourselves to the Lord, we generally don’t understand what is involved in our consecration. We may have said, “We die to the world,” but our actual thought was, “The world is over, for we have forsaken it. Now we have the church that we can go to and lean upon as our world.” However, the Lord will even take away the church so that we would not have anything to hold on to besides Himself. When we realize that this is the price of following the Lord, we will wrestle with Him until the day we finally, fully surrender to His call.

When we do finally answer His call, though the price is truly great, it will be our salvation. Not many among us see this price; fewer still are willing to pay it to truly follow the Lord. Brothers and sisters, are you willing to walk this way, in which there will be only pain and shame? No one will understand you, nor will anyone sympathize with you. Rather, you will be seen as nothing, as “the scum of the world, the dregs of all things” (1 Cor. 4:13).

## The Lord Withdraws

*“I opened to my beloved,  
But my beloved had turned away and had gone!”  
– Song of Songs 5:6*

At this time the Shulammitte is truly in a sorrowful, pitiful state. She has finally answered the Lord's calling, but as she rises up to follow Him, the Lord disappears.

Perhaps you have had this same experience. When you are arguing with the Lord, He seems to be with you all the time, calling to you. Then when you finally open to Him, He is gone! This is truly frustrating. The Lord seems to be saying to you, "When I called you to walk the way of the cross at the beginning, you didn't want to follow Me. Now I would like you to go even further, to taste what it means to have your head full of dew." Therefore, you completely lose the presence of the Lord. When you read the Bible, there is no light. When you pray, there is no answer. You cannot help or supply others any longer. Previously you had the appearance of one who possessed the Lord's presence, but now that is also gone. Instead, you seem to be in a state of desolation. Everyone wonders why you have become so weak, and why a person as rich as you has become so poor. You cannot find any comfort from others anywhere. This is the experience of the Lord's death.

At this point the seeker loses the presence of her Lord, for He has withdrawn, and she laments, "My beloved had turned away and had gone!"

## "My Soul Failed"

*"My soul failed me when he spake."*

– *Song of Songs 5:6, KJV*

Here the Shulammitte seems to be saying, "When He called me, I truly desired to answer His call, but I was not able to do so. My spirit was willing to follow, but my flesh could not, and thus my soul failed. I was not unwilling to follow; I just could not

understand why He wanted me to walk with Him in this way. Why did He treat me like this? Why did He ask so much of me? Although I was slow to submit, my heart was yearning for Him when He spoke.”

## Seeking but Not Finding

*“I searched for him but I did not find him;  
I called him but he did not answer me.  
The watchmen who make the rounds  
in the city found me,  
They struck me and wounded me.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:6-7*

As we read this we might ask ourselves, how can the Lord treat one who seeks Him in such a way? No matter how earnestly she calls out to Him now, He gives no response. Even though she renews her consecration over and over, there is no answer. Moreover, when she meets the watchmen who go about the city—the older brothers—they strike her and wound her. They show her no sympathy, and even more, they deal harshly with her. Before, they wept with her, but now they rebuke her for weeping. Before, they prayed for her when she was weak. Now they scold her for her weakness. They cast blame upon her, and she cannot comprehend the reason.

## The Guardsmen

*“The guardsmen of the walls  
took away my shawl from me.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:7*

Before the seeker had been quite beautiful, and she appeared to be a holy woman. Now, in contrast, her veil is taken away and she is completely exposed to others. Her spirit seems to dry up, and she loses all her dignity.

Can you imagine that someone who has been with the Lord for so long could fall into such a pitiful situation? In fact, now the Lord's calling has caused her to lose everything. Outwardly, she suffers the loss of her beauty and the sympathy of man, and she also suffers insults and persecutions from her dear brothers and sisters. Moreover, inwardly, she cannot find the Lord.

Because she is willing to pay the price now, the Lord is able to lay upon her the hardest, most severe, and most cruel cross.

As a result, she is dry inwardly, and at the same time she is shameful outwardly. Through such a cross she has been stripped of everything, so that she no longer has anything to boast in. Instead, she is put to shame, and that to the uttermost.

It is at this point that she truly realizes the way of the cross. In reality, her walk before was not completely pure, but after this affliction her walk is purified, and she is finally able to focus solely on the Lord rather than on the praises of others. Previously she still had at least some desire for others' appreciation, now her unique desire is to gain the heart of the Lord. The work can no longer ensnare her, nor can any person still hold her. Even the feeling of the sweet presence of the Lord or the feeling of dryness cannot affect her. She truly realizes now that she is on the way of the cross.

## Seeking Help

*“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
If you find my beloved,  
As to what you will tell him:  
For I am lovesick.”  
– Song of Songs 5:8*

Although she is in such a weak state, she lives in the purpose of the Lord, and her words still carry authority. She ceases to complain about how the Lord treats her. She is so experienced that now, even in all kinds of difficulties, she can still say, “I know all will be well, so long as my relationship with the Lord is right.”

Although she is misunderstood, frustrated, and afflicted, and she cannot seem to find the Lord, she still asks the brothers and sisters to pray for her. The daughters of Jerusalem have received much help from her in the past. Now she pleads with them, “Please tell the Lord in your prayer that I am sick with love. I truly love Him. I just want to gain Him.”

In chapter 2 she had also claimed that she was sick with love (2:5). However, that feeling came from the banqueting house and the raisin cakes; it was a result of all the rich enjoyment in the church life. Here her feeling comes, instead, from her scourging and sufferings. It comes from the dryness, misunderstanding, reproach, and persecution. Here she is in the shadow of extreme darkness, yet she can still testify, “How I love the Lord!”

When I come to this section of the Song of Songs, I cannot help but bow my head and worship the Lord. May this become our experience. May the Lord have mercy upon us so that we could experience Him unceasingly. In this stage, we do not care about how we serve, how we supply others, or whether we are recognized. We come to know that what He treasures is nothing but our desire for Him.

One who follows the Lord in this way knows who and where the Lord is. He is not yet at rest, but rather, He is wandering, still without a home. His head is full of dew, and His locks with the drops of the night. His hands bear the marks of the nails, and now He calls us to walk the way of the cross with Him. There is no joy, no praise, no supply, and no enjoyment on this way, nor will we experience excitement or have a glorious testimony. Still, as we are in this way, we can tell others, “How I love the Lord!”

We will all go this way eventually. Everything must fade away until only the Lord is with us. What do we eventually receive in the church? Eventually we receive nothing but shame, misunderstanding, and reproach. Regardless, we can still tell Him, “Lord, I just love You. I may have lost all my ability, and I may be evil-spoken of by everyone, but the only important thing is that I can still tell You, ‘Lord, I love You.’” At this point, we realize that there is no one but the Lord who is worthy of our love.

How beautiful is her ending! How humble she has become! She no longer says, “O daughters of Jerusalem, do not rouse me up,” but instead, “If you find my beloved, just tell him that I am sick with love.” Although the daughters of Jerusalem were blessed and supplied through her, she humbly asks them to pray for her. “If you find the Lord in your prayer, please tell Him I desire to see Him. I just love Him. Everything can be taken away from me, but I still love the Lord.”

Brothers and sisters, this is the way we should walk all our life. Praise the Lord!



## Song of Songs 5:8-16

*“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
If you find my beloved,  
As to what you will tell him:  
For I am lovesick.”*

*“What kind of beloved is your beloved,  
O most beautiful among women?  
What kind of beloved is your beloved,  
That thus you adjure us?”*

*“My beloved is dazzling and ruddy,  
Outstanding among ten thousand.  
His head is like gold, pure gold;  
His locks are like clusters of dates  
And black as a raven.  
His eyes are like doves  
Beside streams of water,  
Bathed in milk,  
And reposed in their setting.”*

*“His cheeks are like a bed of balsam,  
Banks of sweet-scented herbs;  
His lips are lilies  
Dripping with liquid myrrh.  
His hands are rods of gold  
Set with beryl;  
His abdomen is carved ivory  
Inlaid with sapphires.  
His legs are pillars of alabaster  
Set on pedestals of pure gold;  
His appearance is like Lebanon  
Choice as the cedars.  
His mouth is full of sweetness.  
And he is wholly desirable.  
This is my beloved and this is my friend,  
O daughters of Jerusalem.”*



“My  
Beloved”

Review

In the first four chapters the Shulammitte experienced sufferings which could be considered as the discipline of the Spirit. She suffered because she needed to grow and gain Christ. Indeed, without such sufferings there could be no growth in life. If it were not for them, she would still be abiding in sin, the world, her self, and her natural ability. Through these sufferings she was able to become the Lord’s bed, palanquin, and crown. Because of them, the Lord could exclaim, “Oh, you are beautiful!” After passing through the dealings of the Spirit, she became a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed for the Lord.

Beginning from chapter 5, however, the Lord has another expectation for His lover. At this point He seeks to bring her out of her abiding in the enjoyment of His victory to walk the pathway of the fellowship of His sufferings. To the Shulammitte, this seems utterly contrary to her desire to enjoy the Lord. However, unless she follows Him in this way, she will not be able to share in the making up what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for His Body’s sake (Col 1:24).

On the one hand, the Lord has worked on her to the extent that she has become pure and sanctified. Therefore, she is now well-pleasing to the Lord. On the other hand, what the Lord experienced has not yet become her reality; she has not yet met with misunderstanding, loneliness, and reproach. She needs to know scourging in her innocence and piercing in her blamelessness. Then what the Lord has experienced will become her reality.

However, in the exalted state she is currently in, she cannot understand why she needs to experience this kind of unreasonable suffering. After all, where could the Lord possibly lead her that would be better than the Lord's resurrection and ascension? She has no desire to put on a garment and become cloaked again, nor does she want to dirty her feet again. As a victorious and manifested saint, she has no inclination to follow the Lord to lesser realms.

When we come to this stage, we will fully identify with her in her hesitation. As those who speak for the Lord in the church, how can we allow the Lord to take away His anointing? How can we agree to let the Lord strip us of our ability? Why would we enter a state where those we have helped and blessed would now reject and refuse us?

The Lord's call in this chapter reveals that, if we desire to truly follow the Lord, we must eventually enter into the fellowship of the Lord's sufferings and death. We need to carry our cross so that we may do our part to fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ.

Because of the Shulammite's reluctance, the Lord puts His hand into the opening of the door. The mark of the nail upon His hand so moves her that she is able to say, "Lord, since You have called, I have been restless and not at peace, but now I am willing to obey Your will; I desire to magnify You alone. Lord, up to this point I have been unwilling to rise up and follow You

on Your path of rejection and suffering, but now my heart is ready.”

Yet, as soon as she rises up, the Lord seems to withdraw! Although she has entered into the enjoyment of the Lord’s life and loved the Lord absolutely, she now finds herself separated from the Lord, saying:

*“I searched for him but I did not find him;  
I called him but he did not answer me.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:6*

The Lord seems to have left her destitute. At this time, the Lord even arranges for her to be struck by those who should be helping her (5:7). As a result, she is deeply troubled. She has committed no sin, nor is she loving the world. In fact, the reason for her suffering is just the opposite; she is suffering because of her purity before the Lord.

It is indeed a deep experience when the Lord takes away His presence and at the same time arranges that we experience shame and misunderstanding. Before, we were considered the church’s blessing. Now, we are reproached by those who have received benefit from us, and we suffer unjustly.

Not only do the watchmen who go about the city strike the maiden, but the keepers of the wall also take away her veil (5:7). This indicates that her spiritual blessedness has been stripped away and that she is now seen as someone who is in weakness and failure. She doesn’t know where to hide, for she can no longer show herself approved in anyone’s eyes.

## Sick with Love

*“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
If you find my beloved,  
As to what you will tell him:  
For I am lovesick.”  
– Song of Songs 5:8*

All she can do now is to humbly request the other believers to pray on her behalf. In chapter 2, she also said she was sick with love (2:5); that, however, was when she was in the Lord’s presence. Here, she is bereft of the Lord. She feels dried up inside and experiences shame in the presence of others. She has no companion; no one will even give her any consolation. She is so lonely. However, her love for the Lord has not altered. She still can say, “Lord, I love You. Even though You allow me to be mistreated, even though You have left me destitute, Lord, please remember that I still love You.” How pure is her heart! How well pleasing is such love to the Lord!

## The Daughters’ Question

*“What kind of beloved is your beloved,  
O most beautiful among women?  
What kind of beloved is your beloved,  
That thus you adjure us?”  
– Song of Songs 5:9*

Here others respond to the Shulammitte’s call. Hearing her testimony, they desire to know, “Why is the Lord so special to you that you beg us to pray for you?”

Brothers and sisters, those with less experience can offer tes-

timony of the Lord when He is with them. However, those who have gone on to deeper experiences can testify even when the Lord is not with them. When we were still young in our spiritual life, we were often quick to testify whenever the Lord touched us, and so we shared much in the meetings. However, after becoming more mature we may not readily share with others regarding what we have passed through, for our experience has gone beyond words. If you have looked with the Lord from the top of Senir and Hermon, and from the lions' dens and the leopards' mountains, or have ravished the Lord's heart with one glance of your eyes, you are able to testify that the Lord is precious, but words will fail you to describe your experience of Him. When the Lord's lover is constituted with all that she has experienced in the past, she becomes one who can testify the preciousness of the Lord, even when the Lord's presence is not there at that moment. If we are one who has been constituted with Christ through our past experiences, then even in such a condition we can also tell others how transcendent our Lord is as the resurrected One. The more we speak of Him, the more we become excited, for He is altogether lovely to us.

How is it that we can testify in this way even though we don't have His anointing or His presence? It is because we have the assurance produced from many years of experience. It is an objective testimony out of one's subjective constitution.

Such a testimony is not according to our feeling or what we are touching at the moment. We are not like those in the Old Testament who spoke because the Spirit was upon them. Our speaking and realization are based upon the history of our experience with the Lord and upon what the Lord has constituted into us.

Brothers and sisters, if we want to truly serve the Lord, we have to be constituted with Him. If we want to be able to give a testimony of value before the Lord, we cannot merely testify

according to inspiration. Rather, our testimony should be according to our subjective, life-long experience. If we have a history of such genuine experience, we will find that we are able to testify of the Lord to others whether we have the Lord's presence or not.

## Shining with Life

*“My beloved is white and ruddy.”*

– *Song of Songs 5:10, KJV*

Here the Shulammitte begins to describe her beloved to the others, saying that he is “white and ruddy.” The Bible likewise describes David as being “ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance” (1 Sam. 16:12). Whiteness speaks of purity, and ruddiness, which refers to having a rosy complexion, speaks of the richness and the vibrant nature of this life. The Lord's being dazzling white, yet ruddy, indicates that He is rich, vibrant, and even shining in life.

When people reach the age of seventeen or eighteen, that is the time they most approach being “dazzling white and ruddy,” for then they are most full of the vigor of life. Our Lord is such a One; He never gets old. Here the maiden forgets having been struck and wounded by the brothers, having her veil taken away, and the Lord not being with her, for she says, “Brothers and sisters, our Lord is full of vitality and the promise of life. Whenever we touch Him, we touch newness and vigor.” She speaks in this way with much assurance, for this is her experience.

You are blessed if you can testify that the Lord is dazzling white yet ruddy. Those who haven't attained to this level of maturity may testify as to how wonderful are the Lord's leading and blessing, because they are only able to speak of what the Lord

has done for them. Those who have experienced the work of the Lord over many years, however, can bear witness to the Lord’s attractiveness as the One who is full of life.

## The Outstanding One

*“The chiefest among ten thousand”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:10, KJV*

The Lord is the chiefest among ten thousand. He will draw all men to Himself if He is lifted up from the earth (John 12:32). He is full of life, and so wherever He goes, tens of thousands follow Him.

## His Head

*“His head is like gold, pure gold.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:11*

This indicates that the Lord’s thought, will, arrangement, and plan for us are according to God’s eternal purpose and divinity. Her testimony is that He is never wrong. If you don’t really follow Him, you will complain about how He seeks to lead you. But those who have truly experienced the work of God can testify that His head is of the finest gold. We cannot form a better plan than His, nor can we arrange or schedule things better than He can. The things we desire for ourselves cannot match what He desires for us. The Lord’s arrangement is according to God’s nature, God’s plan, and God’s desire, and His work brings us into God’s nature, plan, and desire. The maiden’s realization of the Lord here is very high.

## His Locks

*“His locks are bushy, and black as a raven.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:11, KJV*

A raven, of course, is able to fly. The fact that the Lord has hair that is “black as a raven” signifies His eternal power. Our hair should be like a flock of goats that repose on Mount Gilead, whereas His is as black as a raven. He can fly and is full of power. We also have power, but we need to submit to the Lord. His power is like a river that flows through us. How should we live our life? We should live in His locks, which are bushy and full of power. His head is full of supreme wisdom, and His power is immeasurable. By means of His power we can live a heavenly life.

## His Eyes

*“His eyes are like doves*  
*Beside streams of water,*  
*Bathed in milk,*  
*And reposed in their setting.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:12*

A dove’s eyes can only look at one thing. The eyes of the Lord also look at us in this way. They are not behind a veil, but are rather beside the streams of water. Streams of water speak of life supply. As His eyes are upon us, He supplies us according to our needs. If we need discipline, He will not supply us with sympathy; rather, He will give us the discipline that we need. If we need blessing, He will bless us. If we need joy, He will richly supply us with joy. If we need to weep, He will let us weep. He is

full of nourishment because His eyes are like doves beside the streams of water, bathed in milk. Moreover, His eyes are fitly set. He accurately sees what we need. When He fixes His eyes upon us, He also supplies and nourishes us according to what He alone can accurately discern.

## His Cheeks

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

– *Song of Songs 5:13, KJV*

All fragrant powders are from the Lord. He is a bed of spices. When we unite with Him, we will spontaneously experience the work of myrrh, frankincense, and all kinds of spices. In the past, we might have thought that it was we who paid the price and took up our cross to follow the Lord, but now we realize that even our ability to pay the price comes from Him. When we grow in Him, we spontaneously take up our cross.

The Shulammitte has enjoyed Him as a bed of spices, and as mounds of sweetly fragrant herbs. She also has seen that when she supplies others with all the spices that she has enjoyed, they also begin to bear fruit and fragrant herbs. The more death we experience (the “bed of spices”), the more we bear fruit (the “mounds of herbs”); if His death operates in us, more fruit will be seen in others (2 Cor. 4:12). Thus, the bed here is only one, while the mounds are plural in number. We all need to receive the Lord’s rich supply if we wish to bear sweet fruit to Him.

## His Lips

*“His lips are lilies  
Dripping with liquid myrrh.”  
– Song of Songs 5:13*

The words of the Lord are pure and clean like lilies, yet their fragrance is like that of “liquid myrrh.” Psalm 45:2, speaking of the Lord, says that “grace is poured upon Your lips.” When we put these two verses together we see that His grace comes to us in words that bring us into the experience of His death. That is, when the Lord speaks, His lips drip with liquid myrrh, meaning that when He speaks, we are led to experience His being put to death.

In contrast, if the Lord’s word is scarce and His appearing is rare among us (cf. 1 Sam. 3:1), we find it easy to go our own way and are not troubled by doing so. Those who do not experience His speaking find it easy to make their own choices—to choose an occupation, ways of making money, a college, or their own desire in a number of matters—for there are no words “dripping with liquid myrrh.” But if in His mercy He speaks to us again, we will be brought back to experience His death once more.

If we obey the Lord’s speaking, He will bring us into the experience of being put to death, for the Lord’s leading is always closely related to the cross. We all desire to have the Lord’s speaking, but when His word comes to us, it brings the real experience of His death on the cross. However, it is only in this way that we can have the testimony of His victory.

## His Hands

*“His hands are rods of gold  
Set with beryl.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:14*

His hands refer to His work, and the rings of gold set with beryl refer to His being unshakable. According to Watchman Nee, beryl refers to stability; the Lord’s hands cannot be kept back from fulfilling their intended purpose. Thus, the beryl indicates that when the Lord holds us in His hands, we cannot run away; rather, we experience how steady and firm He is with us, for He simply will not let anything go.

What a wonderful testimony this is! The maiden has no fear of the Lord’s hand failing her, nor does she fear that she will fall as she follows the Lord, for she is assured that the hands that hold her are steadfast. She is enfolded in His hands, which are like rods of gold set with beryl, so that she cannot possibly end up where the Lord does not intend her to be. She knows that she is the work of His hands, the object of His labor, the one who occupies His heart, and the one whom He keeps in His care.

## His Belly

*“His belly is as bright ivory  
overlaid with sapphires.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:14, KJV*

In the first part of this verse we saw that with His hands, the Lord holds us in a way that is very firm. Here, however, we see that He is also very tender, for in the Bible the belly speaks of sympathy and compassion (cf. Phil. 1:8). Of course, ivory speaks

of death, for it can only be obtained from an animal that has died. The fact that the Lord's belly is as "bright ivory," or "carved ivory" (NKJV), indicates that He experienced suffering Himself and was sculpted as an ivory work (cf. Heb. 5:8-9). The Lord has already experienced all that we may encounter. Therefore, He truly knows the feeling of our weaknesses, and He sympathizes with us when He works upon us and "sculpts" us. He knows what we are going through and what we are feeling; He is with us when we are weeping; He is with us in all our sorrow and hardship. This is why His belly is described here as "carved ivory." Furthermore, His belly is overlaid with sapphires. Sapphires are blue, which indicates that His feeling toward us, , signified by His belly, is heavenly in nature. Today even while He Himself is in the heavenly places, He is nonetheless touched with the feelings of our sufferings and sorrows.

## His Legs

*"His legs are pillars of alabaster  
Set on pedestals of pure gold."  
– Song of Songs 5:15*

"His legs" speaks of His move, and in Hebrew the word for "alabaster" here is also used for "fine linen," which typifies an uplifted humanity. This indicates that His move is in a fine and uplifted humanity. Also, "pillars" signify gravity and strong support of a structure, showing that this uplifted humanity is a strong support for His move.

Being set upon the pedestals of pure gold indicates that the move and the fine humanity of the Lord are unshakable because they are based upon His divinity. He is unshakable in His glorious divinity, and He is perfect in righteousness in every way.

## His Appearance

*“His appearance is like Lebanon  
Choice as the cedars.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:15*

To sum up her description of the Lord, the seeker simply speaks of “His appearance.” The Lord’s head, hair, eyes, cheeks, lips, hands, and belly are like Lebanon. What a heavenly person He is! Moreover, His appearance is as excellent as the cedars. Cedar refers to humanity. This indicates that He is such a glorious and excellent man.

Although the maiden is in weakness and shame, and although she lacks the Lord’s presence, she still can testify, “His appearance is like Lebanon.” The Lord is heavenly. If we can testify in this way, it indicates that our relationship with the Lord is no longer related to any earthly blessing. It also shows that we feel no earthly price can compare with the blessing of being so one with Him; it is, in fact, no price at all. We would even feel ashamed to speak of forsaking anything we have as a price we had to pay to follow Christ.

## His Mouth

*“His mouth is full of sweetness.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:16*

Here the seeker testifies that the Lord’s mouth is so sweet. How can we ourselves know the sweetness of His mouth? It is by tasting what He has tasted. Because of our pursuing and fellowship with Him, we can say, “His mouth is full of sweetness.” What He measures to us is what He has also experienced. Thus,

we enjoy what He has tasted. According to Watchman Nee, “His mouth” refers to the Lord’s work. As we experience His work step by step, His work becomes our reality.

## Altogether Lovely

*“He is altogether lovely.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:16, KJV*

The maiden has experienced this person to such an extent that she can say, “He is altogether lovely!”

Oh, our Lord is altogether desirable from His head to His feet, from inside to outside, from His wisdom to His leading, and from His dealings to His keeping of us! Such a marvelous testimony of the Lord is not something that can be spoken after simply touching Him in a meeting or in a moment of inspiration. Rather, this testimony is the summation of a deep, subjective experience of the Lord, and it can only be borne by one who has experienced Him for many years. Only this kind of genuine experience can make such a testimony real.

## “My Beloved”

*“This is my beloved and this is my friend,  
O daughters of Jerusalem.”*  
– *Song of Songs 5:16*

This is the Shulammitte’s conclusion. She does not say here, “He will be my beloved one day.” She is speaking of her present experience; the Lord has become her reality today, and such is her testimony.

Although she was not able to answer the Lord’s calling to follow Him into the night immediately, she is, nonetheless, still stirred up when she speaks of Him. Although she is now in shame and loneliness, she still can give such a glorious testimony. Her experience at this point is far, far deeper than when she initially proclaimed, “Your oils have a goodly fragrance,” or, “Catch the little foxes.”

Brothers and sisters, as we read this book, we gain a fresh appreciation of how meaningful it is that we follow the Lord. Oh, how we need His mercy that one day we may give such a glorious testimony, founded upon such deep experiences of Christ. May the day come when we all can declare, with the seeker in the Song of Songs:

*“My beloved is white and ruddy,  
The chiefest among ten thousand;  
He is altogether lovely!”*

Brothers and sisters, only the Lord can save a sinner to such an extent. Praise be to Him!

## Song of Songs 6:1-7:13

*“Where has your beloved gone,  
O most beautiful among women?  
Where has your beloved turned,  
That we may seek him with you?”*

*“My beloved has gone down to his garden,  
To the beds of balsam,  
To pasture his flock in the gardens  
And gather lilies.  
I am my beloved’s  
And my beloved is mine,  
He who pastures his flock among the lilies.”*

*“You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my darling,  
As lovely as Jerusalem,  
As awesome as an army with banners.  
Turn your eyes away from me,  
For they have confused me;  
Your hair is like a flock of goats  
That have descended from Gilead.  
Your teeth are like a flock of ewes  
Which have come up from their washing,  
All of which bear twins,  
And not one among them has lost her young.  
Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate  
Behind your veil.”*

*“There are sixty queens and eighty concubines,  
And maidens without number;  
But my dove, my perfect one, is unique:  
She is her mother’s only daughter;  
She is the pure child of the one who bore her.  
The maidens saw her and called her blessed,  
The queens and the concubines also,  
and they praised her, saying,  
‘Who is this that grows like the dawn,  
As beautiful as the full moon,  
As pure as the sun,  
As awesome as an army with banners?’”*

*“I went down to the orchard of nut trees  
To see the blossoms of the valley,  
To see whether the vine had budded  
Or the pomegranates had bloomed.  
Before I was aware, my soul set me  
Over the chariots of my noble people.”*

*“Come back, come back, O Shulammitte;  
Come back, come back,  
that we may gaze at you!”*

*“Why should you gaze at the Shulammitte,  
As at the dance of the two companies?”*

*“How beautiful are your feet in sandals,  
O prince’s daughter!  
The curves of your hips are like jewels,  
The work of the hands of an artist.  
Your navel is like a round goblet  
Which never lacks mixed wine;  
Your belly is like a heap of wheat  
Fenced about with lilies.  
Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle.  
Your neck is like a tower of ivory,  
Your eyes like the pools in Heshbon  
By the gate of Bath-rabbim;  
Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon,  
Which faces toward Damascus.  
Your head crowns you like Carmel,  
And the flowing locks of your head  
are like purple threads;  
The king is captivated by your tresses.  
How beautiful and how delightful you are,  
My love, with all your charms!  
Your stature is like a palm tree,  
And your breasts are like its clusters.  
I said, ‘I will climb the palm tree,  
I will take hold of its fruit stalks.’  
Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine,  
And the fragrance of your breath like apples,  
And your mouth like the best wine!”*

*“It goes down smoothly for my beloved,  
Flowing gently through the lips  
of those who fall asleep.  
I am my beloved’s,  
And his desire is for me.  
Come, my beloved, let us go out into the country,  
Let us spend the night in the villages.  
Let us rise early and go to the vineyards;  
Let us see whether the vine has budded  
And its blossoms have opened,  
And whether the pomegranates have bloomed.  
There I will give you my love.  
The mandrakes have given forth fragrance;  
And over our doors are all choice fruits,  
Both new and old,  
Which I have saved up for you, my beloved.”*



# The Prince's Daughter

“Where Has He Gone?”

*“Where has your beloved gone,  
O most beautiful among women?  
Where has your beloved turned,  
That we may seek him with you?”  
– Song of Songs 6:1*

As we saw at the end of the previous chapter, the Shulamite, after telling others how excellent her beloved was, declared with conviction, “This is my beloved, and this is my friend.” (5:16) Even though she could not find Him outwardly and could not touch Him inwardly, she is so sure of who He really is. The daughters of Jerusalem, however, do not have such an assurance, and so they ask her, “Where has your beloved gone?” Because her Lord is so wonderful, they also desire to seek Him with her, for He seems so different from others.

After the Lord has worked in you for a number of years, you should be able to render help to others whether or not you are in the Lord's presence; even when you are suffering rejection,

shame, and spiritual dryness, you can still bless others. This is not a matter of your feeling, revelation or enlightenment. Rather, you are able to be others' blessing because of who you are, because you have experienced God's work upon you. It does not matter whether you are "up" or "down." Regardless of your situation, you are able to help others because of the Lord whom you have experienced. Even though you may be in weakness, you are nonetheless able to help others pursue Christ. As we see in 6:1, because of you, others will desire to seek Him with you.

## The Recovery of the Lord's Presence

### *The Lord in His Garden*

*"My beloved has gone down to his garden."  
– Song of Songs 6:2*

When the daughters of Jerusalem ask her where her beloved has gone, the Shulammite declares that He has gone down to His garden. Now she knows where He is. He is in her heart—the enclosed garden—and nothing can separate them.

In chapter 5, she asked the daughters of Jerusalem to pray for her and to help her find her Lord, because she truly loved Him. When she rouses herself to describe Him, her relationship with the Lord is restored immediately. She is encouraged and realizes that actually the Lord hasn't left her; rather, her beloved is in her. Now she can say with the hymn writer:

*O strangely art Thou with us, Lord,  
Neither in height nor depth to seek.*

By replying in this way, she is saying, “Where can you find Him? Let me tell you, my Lord is in His garden, and I am His garden. If you seek the Lord, you can find Him here in me. If you want to experience Him, I can tell you how. If you want to know Him, I can show you the way.”

Now the maiden is able to testify that nothing can separate her from the Lord. She is in Him and He is in her, for to her, to live is Christ, and her living on the earth is one that magnifies only Christ (Phil. 1:20-21).

### *The Beds of Spices*

*“To the beds of spices”*  
– *Song of Songs 6:2, KJV*

Her beloved has gone not only into His garden, but also to “the beds of spices.” She realizes that not only is she the Lord’s garden, but the other saints are also beds of spices, for they are also experienced and full of life.

We need to remember that our growth and life supply come not only from the Lord but also from the other brothers and sisters. The church’s supply does not come from the Lord alone; the saints also supply the church with life. Having the experiences of the Lord, they are also the source of the life supply, and they are the beds of spices in the church.

### *Gathering the Lilies*

*“To feed in the gardens,  
And to gather lilies”*  
– *Song of Songs 6:2, KJV*

Her beloved has also gone down to the garden “to feed in the gardens and to gather lilies.” The Lord is shepherding the saints and gathering lilies in the hearts of His believers. Lilies refer to a life which is dependent on the Lord, a life which is also one of purity and joy. Such a life comes from the Lord, and is unto Him as well.

### *Belonging to the Lord*

*“I am my beloved’s  
And my beloved is mine.”  
– Song of Songs 6:3*

Earlier the seeker said, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (2:16), but at this point the center of her life has shifted, so that now she testifies, “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” Originally, she was the center, and her spiritual enjoyment and pursuit were for herself. Now, however, she realizes that if the Lord’s head is drenched with the dew, her head must also be full of dew; if His locks are wet with the damp of night, then hers must be also (5:2). She is now fully willing to be identified with the Lord in His sufferings.

Brothers and sisters, today you might not have much assurance to say, “I am the Lord’s”; so far you can only say, “The Lord is mine.” For example, today you may consider your future and become anxious as to how to go on or what to do next. However, if your experience is that you are your Beloved’s, you will realize you have nothing to fear. You will know that whether you stay or go abroad, you are the Lord’s. Whether you succeed or fail, you are the Lord’s. Whether things go up or down, you are still the Lord’s. When you are in complete union with the Lord, you can say, “Lord, I am completely Yours.”

The reality of the church life doesn't lie in how much you labor or how many great things you accomplish. But, if you can truly say, "I am my Beloved's," it follows that you will be able to supply others and that they will long for your help.

Once you have this realization—"I am completely the Lord's, I desire nothing but the Lord, and I love only Him"—you will have unspeakable rest. You will be delivered from trying to please others or to gain their praise. May the Lord deliver us from any other seeking so that we can honestly say, "I am the Lord's. I am my Beloved's, and He is mine."

### *Feeding His Flock*

*"He feedeth his flock among the lilies."*

– *Song of Songs 6:3, ASV*

This is exactly what she said earlier in this book (2:16). She realizes that, just as He was shepherding His sheep before, so He is shepherding them now. Just as He fed the flock previously, so He is feeding it now. Moreover, this verse indicates that there are many other "lilies" who look upon the Lord in faith, and the Lord takes care of them as well.

### The Lord's Praise of the Shulammit

#### *As Beautiful as Tirzah*

*"You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my darling,*

*As lovely as Jerusalem,*

*As awesome as an army with banners."*

– *Song of Songs 6:4*

Now the Lord testifies, once again, to the Shulammitte's beauty. In this verse the Lord mentions three things. First, she is "as beautiful as Tirzah," which was a royal city (1 Kings 14:17). This indicates that she is where the authority is. Because of her submission to the Lord and union with Him, her living is mingled with the King, and thus she manifests His kingship. When we are in the presence of certain brothers, hearing their words, we indeed feel that they are as beautiful as Tirzah.

Second, the Lord mentions that she is as lovely as Jerusalem. As the city where the temple was located, "Jerusalem" in this verse signifies the place where the church of God is built up. Today we are growing into a holy temple in the Lord and being built into a dwelling place of God in spirit (Eph. 2:21-22). When we reach the point where we are "as lovely as Jerusalem," others will feel that we are the source of supply for the church, those in whom God finds rest and through whom the church is being built up. They will feel that the church's future is bright, for we exercise our portion for its building up. We not only represent the King on earth, but also bring in the rest of God, for not only the kingship is with us, but also the dwelling place of God.

Third, the Lord appreciates that His lover is "as awesome as an army with banners." She manifests not only loveliness before God but also terribleness before the enemy and the world. Her presence strikes terror into the enemy's heart, and she also repulses the world so that it dares not show itself in the church life. Indeed she looks down with the Lord from the lions' dens and the leopards' mountains (4:8). How great is her victory!

### *Overwhelmed by Her Love*

*"Turn away thine eyes from me,  
For they have overcome me."  
– Song of Songs 6:5, ASV*

When you are fully united with the Lord, not only will He affect you, but you also will affect Him. His word and movements affect you, while your words and movements affect Him. This is why the Lord tells her here, “Turn away your eyes from me, For they have overcome me.” He is saying: “When you look at Me, I cannot help but surrender. When you look at Me, I cannot help but be captured by you. Turn away your eyes from Me.”

Her gaze overwhelms the Lord. Although the Lord says, “Turn away your eyes,” this is actually a word of appreciation, for He certainly desires that she would behold Him (cf. 2:14).

By this time, the Lord has led her to the extent that she has gained the full victory, yet this is not a victory in work, but in life. Because she lives in such purity before Him, she truly captures His heart. When she prays, the Lord cannot help but answer her. She indeed experiences mingling with the Lord as one who dwells in His chambers and enjoys the most intimate fellowship there.

### *A Repeated Praise*

*“Your hair is like a flock of goats  
That have descended from Gilead.  
Your teeth are like a flock of ewes  
Which have come up from their washing,  
All of which bear twins,  
And not one among them has lost her young.  
Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate  
Behind your veil.”*  
– *Song of Songs 6:5-7*

The Lord praised the seeker in the same way in chapter 4 (4:1-2,13). This repeated praise is given to encourage her. Although at times she may have been weak or even slow in obeying

Him, the Lord's love for her does not change. He will not leave her. Whether we have just begun to follow the Lord or we have been following Him for many years, we all need this encouragement of the Lord.

### *The Unique One*

*“There are sixty queens and eighty concubines,  
And maidens without number;  
But my dove, my perfect one, is unique:  
She is her mother's only daughter;  
She is the pure child of the one who bore her.”  
– Song of Songs 6:8-9*

Every believer has a love relationship with the Lord. However, each one's experience of the Lord's love is unique. Some in their relationship to the Lord are like queens, others are like concubines, and still others are like maidens, or “virgins” (KJV). Here the Lord is telling her, “You seem perfect in every way. You are a victor before Me. Although I have sixty queens, eighty concubines, and virgins without number, you are unique. You are My dove and the perfect one. Although I also love the others, you are the only one of your mother.”

When the Lord refers to her “mother,” He is speaking of God's work of grace toward her (cf. Gal. 4:21-26). He is saying, “In My eyes, only you are the product of My work of grace through all these years. You are truly beautiful. You are indeed victorious. You are the only one of your mother and the choice one of her who bore you.” In reality, every matured overcomer is considered unique in the Lord's eyes as a masterpiece of God's grace. How greatly the Lord loves us! He is the one who bore us, and He is the one who loves us.

## Blessed

*“The maidens saw her and called her blessed,  
The queens and the concubines also,  
and they praised her.”*  
– *Song of Songs 6:9*

The maidens, queens, and concubines see her and call her blessed, realizing that she surpasses them in her relationship with the king. When those who are experienced and mature see someone who truly loves the Lord, they will praise them as a true servant of the Lord and as a wonderful product of the Lord's work of grace.

## A Spirit-Inspired Praise

*“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,  
Fair as the moon,  
Clear as the sun,  
And terrible as an army with banners.”*  
– *Song of Songs 6:10, KJV*

After the Lord praises her, the Spirit moves others to testify to her maturity. In this praise, five aspects of her maturity are held up for our appreciation. The first aspect of this praise relates to her looking forth. In 3:6 it was asked, “Who is this coming up from the wilderness?” Here the question is, “Who is she who looks forth as the morning?” This description indicates something deeper. It shows that at this time she is mature and ready for the Lord's return. She is adorned and is looking forth to see her Lord.

The second aspect of this praise is that she is like the morn-

ing, or “dawn” (NASB), in her looking forth. Dawn is the time of morning light. This indicates that she is walking in the light and that she herself is manifested as light (cf. Eph. 5:8-9).

Those who are experienced in the things of the Lord know not to look back upon their past experiences. If you like to live in the past, or if you like to mention how you used to love the Lord, or how you experienced the Lord’s love at this time or that time, you are not one who looks forth like the dawn. If you are one who is like the morning dawn, you will look forth and focus only on the future, as Proverbs 4:18 says:

*But the path of the righteous  
is like the light of dawn,  
That shines brighter and brighter  
until the full day.*

Those who look forth like the dawn feel that the future is bright. In saying that “She looks forth as the dawn,” these observers mean that she keeps going forward and only desires the Lord’s coming.

The third aspect of this praise relates to her being so fair, even like the moon. The moonlight is the reflection of the sun. In like manner, this seeker reflects God. Her words and her behavior magnify God. This is like the apostle Paul, who could say:

*Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.  
– 1 Corinthians 11:1*

She is one who reflects the riches of the Lord and manifests Him. Speaking and acting through Christ, she experiences the Lord’s presence continually.

The fourth aspect of praise here is that she is as “clear as the

sun.” In the Bible, the sun typifies Christ Himself. Her being as fair as the sun signifies that she is a totally new creation in Christ. She not only reflects Christ, but she is Christ Himself.

When you meet a brother such as this, you will feel that you can hide nothing from him. For example, you may have it in your heart to complain about a certain situation, but when you come into his presence, your desire to complain evaporates. Such a brother is like the sun that shines upon you, in whose light you see your own fault rather than the problems of others or of difficult situations. In the presence of such a one it seems all the problems, all the sufferings, and all the difficult situations are not that serious, and you realize that they are nothing but your flesh. When such a brother shines upon you as the bright sun, all that is hidden within you will be exposed.

The fifth aspect of her maturity is her being a fearsome victor—she is “as terrible as an army with banners.” She is able to deal with the enemy, and she is constantly in victory. Moreover, she has another banner, that is, the banner of love (2:4). She goes from victory to victory carrying the banner of love.

## Laboring with the Lord

### *The Garden of Nuts*

*“I went down to the orchard of nut trees  
To see the blossoms of the valley,  
To see whether the vine had budded  
Or the pomegranates had bloomed.”  
– Song of Songs 6:11*

Here we see that, by God’s mercy, the Shulammitte is beginning to cooperate with the Lord in His work; she has some real-

ization of how to labor for Him and serve Him. Her seeing the freshness of the valley means that she is able to discern the work of God and the operation of God's life. When she labors, she doesn't ask others to take the same way that she did to experience the Lord's blessing. She doesn't expect that others should be blessed in the way that she was blessed. It was the Lord who led her; others should follow Him, rather than imitate her seeking after the Lord. She goes down to the gardens to see the Lord's work. She goes to see the freshness in the valley where all the plants are under God's care, and to find out whether "the vine had budded." This means that she wants to see whether the Lord has a further operation or leading in the saints. What she intends to do is to see whether the Spirit is leading His children forward.

### *Among the Chariots*

*"Before I was aware, my soul set me  
Over the chariots of my noble people."  
– Song of Songs 6:12*

As she is so intent upon the work of God, she is lifted up in the Lord's triumph before she is even aware of it. She realizes now that she and the Lord are truly one. Whenever the Lord moves forward, she also moves forward. When the Lord moves forward in the saints, she moves with Him, progressing along with the brothers and sisters. Moreover, as she is with the brothers and sisters, she manifests the king's authority. She has impact among them and leads them further. Before she is even aware of it, she is bearing responsibility for the church and helping others to go forward with the Lord.

## *The Shulammite*

*“Come back, come back, O Shulammite;  
Come back, come back, that we may gaze at you!”  
– Song of Songs 6:13*

As she departs, the other believers are earnestly longing for her return, for they are eager to learn more from her of the secret of her progress and victory.

They also testify that she is now indeed a “Shulammite.” This description shows that she and the Lord are truly one at this point, for “Shulammite” is simply the feminine form of the name “Solomon.” When they see the Shulammite now, it is as if they see the Lord. When they sit before her, it is as if they are sitting before the Lord. When they fellowship with her, they seem to be in fellowship with the Lord. As they gaze after her, they are eager to be with her.

## *Two Companies*

*“Why should you gaze at the Shulammite,  
As at the dance of the two companies?”  
– Song of Songs 6:13*

“The dance of the two companies” refers to Jacob’s vision of God’s angels after he left Laban; He called that place “Mahanaim” (Gen. 32:2), which literally means “two companies.” The phrase, “the dance of two companies” can also be translated, “the company of two armies.” Jacob didn’t pay the price to gain the company of two armies; God prepared them. This beauty of the Shulammite, however, comes at a price. No doubt, the dance of two companies is fascinating and exciting,

but the Shulammitite's beauty is not merely a matter of excitement. Rather, her beauty is wholly a result of the work of the Spirit. She has paid a great price, and every part of her being bears the mark of this work. Whatever spiritual capacity she has, whatever heavenly experiences she has gone through, it is entirely the result of the Spirit's work.

According to the Bible, when the Lord's people dance before Him, it is a sign that the Lord has gained the victory over the enemy (Exo. 15:20) and entered into His rest (1 Sam. 18:6). Those who are not experienced would rather watch the dance of the two armies than pay the price and struggle to gain the victory themselves. In a similar way, the daughters of Jerusalem are unable to appreciate the Shulammitite's heart, the price she has paid, her tears, or her absolute obedience. Therefore, when they call for her to come back, the Lord seems to tell them, "Why can't you appreciate her as you should? Why should you simply gaze upon her just as upon the dance of the two companies? You should appreciate her with a deeper understanding than that."

We need to realize that the Shulammitite's experiences are a result of her paying the price. This is different from merely appreciating her as the dance of the two camps. Do we know how many times she has wrestled with the Lord? Do we know how many times she was required to obey Him? Do we know how much opposition she has suffered? We should not admire her as if we were merely looking for some spiritual excitement while watching the dance of two companies; rather, we should appreciate the price such a one has paid, and appreciate as well the victory the Lord has gained in her.

## The Qualities of the Worker

### *The Prince's Daughter*

*“How beautiful are your feet in sandals,  
O prince's daughter!”  
– Song of Songs 7:1*

At this point, it is the turn of the Holy Spirit to praise her. According to Watchman Nee, her being called a “prince's daughter” here refers to her being one of many in the royal household, and to her noble origin. As a victor, she is manifested as a royal personage and is fully united with Christ.

### *Preaching the Gospel*

The “feet,” or “footsteps” (Darby) in Song of Songs 7:1 speak of the gospel, for in the Bible, the feet are related to the work of the gospel (Rom. 10:15). Thus, here the Spirit is describing her as wearing the “sandals” of the gospel. As one who serves the Lord she is always walking in the way of the gospel, and so the “footsteps” she leaves behind to trace her path indicate that she has lived the life of a serving one. How beautiful is her preaching of the gospel!

### *The Power to Stand*

*“Your rounded thighs are like jewels,  
the work of a master hand.”  
– Song of Songs 7:1, ESV*

Her thighs refer to her power to stand. Her standing before God comes entirely from God's sculpting, that is, from His work upon her. Here the Lord refers to Himself as a skilled artist, one with a "master hand." He tells the maiden, "I will work in you and on you as a skilled artist until you are able to stand as one transformed in My life."

### *Power in Faith*

*"Your navel is like a round goblet  
Which never lacks mixed wine;  
Your belly is like a heap of wheat  
Fenced about with lilies."  
– Song of Songs 7:2*

The "navel" and "belly" refer to the maiden's inner being, while "mixed wine" refers to the life of the Holy Spirit she received based on the Lord's shed blood. She has not only experienced the Lord's redemption, but has even been constituted with it. It has become her reality and her portion.

Moreover, her belly is not merely a grain of wheat, but a heap of wheat! A grain of wheat refers to the Lord Jesus and His death (John 12:24). A heap of wheat refers to her experiencing the work of the Lord and thus having His life supply (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17). She not only experiences the Lord's redemption but also His resurrection. She experiences resurrection in many ways, and her words and behavior issue from the work of the Lord's resurrection. Death holds no sway over her when she moves and works, nor will discouragement, anger, or intolerance. She fully manifests the condition of being in resurrection.

Although she might experience death in a variety of environments, and although death's billows often threaten to swallow

her up, she is still able to stand, because she is “fenced about with lilies”; she still realizes her need to look to the Lord in faith. She has both faith and the power of faith so that she can go forward. In the same way, we should worry for nothing, since the Lord cares for us as we follow after Him and trust in Him.

### *Feeding Others*

*“Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle.”  
– Song of Songs 7:3*

Here the Spirit repeats the praise found in 4:5. Again, the reference to her two breasts indicates that the seeker is full of life, with the capacity and ability to feed others.

### *Suffering*

*“Your neck is like a tower of ivory.”  
– Song of Songs 7:4*

Here her neck is not like the tower of David (4:4), but like a tower of ivory. This indicates that she has been dealt with by God, for ivory is produced out of death. When she stands for God, she is as strong as a tower in her union with Him. In nothing will she disobey. She has so experienced the Lord's work that she is joined to Him in all her purposes.

### *Solely for the Lord*

*“Your eyes like the pools in Heshbon  
By the gate of Bath-rabbim.”  
– Song of Songs 7:4*

Her eyes are like pools here, not a flowing spring. Being quiet and stable, a pool is open to the light and reflective. This tells us that her eyes reflect the Lord. She is also quiet and restful before God. Her heart is pure and simple toward Him. As such a one, whose eyes reflect the Lord, she is full of wisdom, for “Heshbon” means “intelligent.” Moreover, she is also with the saints, for “Bath-rabbim” means “the daughters of many.”

### *Her Discernment*

*“Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon,  
Which faces toward Damascus.”  
– Song of Songs 7:4*

Only those possessing spiritual maturity have a spiritual sense of smell; those whose experiences are shallow lack this sense. If you have a spiritual “nose,” you will easily “smell” others’ feelings and be able to discern their intentions through their words.

“The tower of Lebanon” is heavenly, tall, upright, and facing Damascus. Therefore, her nose is heavenly, and it can identify a person’s flesh, temper, or deceit. As one who is spiritually mature, she can discern others’ spirit, feelings, and inner condition.

## *One with God*

*“Your head crowns you like Carmel.”*  
– *Song of Songs 7:5*

Mount Carmel was where Elijah demonstrated his power before the prophets of Baal, slaying four hundred and fifty of them. He then prayed to Jehovah for rain in the midst of the drought, and it rained mightily (1 Kings 18). Hence, Elijah was a man of victory and prayer. Like Elijah, the maiden's heart is one with God. She is victorious, and God answers all her prayers.

## *Her Obedience*

*“And the flowing locks of your head  
are like purple threads;  
The king is captivated by your tresses.”*  
– *Song of Songs 7:5*

Here we see that she is reigning with the Lord, for her hair is “like purple threads”; in the Bible, purple signifies royalty (cf. John 19:2). Moreover, the king is captivated, or “fettered” (Darby), by her tresses. Her obedience brings in her kingship. Originally, her locks reposed like goats upon Mount Gilead. Now, she and the Lord are so united that we can't tell who submits to whom. Actually, she and the Lord obey each other. The Lord's heart is fully captured and “fettered” by her.

## The Lord's Further Praise of Her

### *Her Stature*

*“How beautiful and how delightful you are,  
My love, with all your charms!  
Your stature is like a palm tree,  
And your breasts are like its clusters.”*  
– Song of Songs 7:6-7

In 7:6-11 we turn to the Lord's praise for her. Her stature being like the palm tree indicates that she has reached the full stature of Christ in her spiritual growth and in her capacity to impart life. Palm trees are rooted in water, and their upper part is straight and green. Hence, she has grown up and has become mature. She is tall and straight, at the full stature of Christ.

Moreover, her two breasts again denote her maturity. They are like the “clusters” of the palm tree, meaning that she is able to supply others' needs because of her mature capacity in life.

### *His Desire for Her*

*“I said, ‘I will climb the palm tree,  
I will take hold of its fruit stalks.’”*  
– Song of Songs 7:8

Here the Lord is saying, “In the past, it was you who sought and pursued Me. You held Me and would not let Me go. Now, I want to come to you; I will take hold of your branches and fellowship with you.”

## *Her Fragrance*

*“Oh, may your breasts be  
like clusters of the vine,  
And the fragrance of your breath like apples,  
And your mouth like the best wine!”*  
– *Song of Songs 7:8-9*

Apples here refer to the Lord Himself. She has enjoyed the Lord to the extent that she gives forth the fragrance of the Lord (cf. 2:3). In this regard, she is truly like Him.

The best wine refers to the wine of the millennium (Matt. 26:29). It gives the Lord the best joy. Just as the Lord changed the water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11), her words are full of the Lord's working. They are a masterpiece sculpted by the Spirit, and they make the Lord joyful.

## *The Seeker's Reply*

*“It goes down smoothly for my beloved,  
Flowing gently through the lips  
of those who fall asleep.”*  
– *Song of Songs 7:9*

The seeker is now satisfied, and so she inserts this word after the Lord speaks of the “wine.” She is saying that, after the Lord's working upon her, she has been turned from water into the best wine, a wine that is for Him and His enjoyment. Because of her union with the Lord, the wine goes down smoothly for her beloved.

Moreover, this wine flows “gently through the lips of those who fall asleep.” The sleeping ones here are those who have lost

consciousness of themselves and are only living to God. They are in the same position as the beloved. Wine not only satisfies but also refreshes us. Hence, besides satisfying the Lord, she also refreshes those who share the Lord's position.

## Working with the Lord

### *The Characteristics of a Servant of the Lord as Portrayed in the Shulammite*

How should we truly serve the Lord? In Song of Songs 7:1-9 we see, in the king's praise of his beloved, a portrait of ten characteristics a servant of the Lord should possess. In keeping with the picture in the Song of Songs, as we consider these characteristics, we will portray the Lord's servant here as a female.

First, a healthy servant of the Lord must be full of movement. She puts on the sandals of the gospel and walks with beautiful footsteps. Second, she must have the power to stand; her rounded thighs should be like jewels, the work of the hands of a skillful workman. Third, she should have rich experiences and equipping. Her navel is a round goblet that never lacks mingled wine, and her belly is a heap of wheat set about by lilies. Fourth, she should be full of life. Her two breasts should be like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Fifth, her neck should be like a tower of ivory, for she has experienced the work of the Lord. Sixth, her eyes should be like pools; her pure heart and her love reflect the Lord. Seventh, her nose should be like the tower of Lebanon, showing that she has a rich spiritual intuition; she is able to differentiate between good and bad through a spiritual sense of smell. Eighth, her head should be like Carmel, the place where Baal and the idols cannot stand against the Lord. Ninth, her locks

should be purple threads, expressing the Lord's kingship, and captivating the Lord through her obedience. Tenth, her stature should be like that of the palm tree, showing that she has arrived at the stature of the fullness of Christ.

We need to learn of the Lord's seeker in the Song of Songs regarding these characteristics. Perhaps we are not yet the same as the seeker at this point, but we can still pursue the Lord so that we may gain these characteristics. Only by grace and with these characteristics can we serve the Lord in a healthy way.

### *Belonging to the Lord Alone*

*“I am my beloved's,  
And his desire is for me.”  
– Song of Songs 7:10*

At this point the Shulammitte has an assurance that she is her beloved's alone. At first she said “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (2:16) but after a time she progressed so that the Lord became the center, and at that point she said, “I am my beloved's, and he is mine” (6:3). Now, however, she has progressed still further, so that she no longer speaks of herself at all, except in relation to the Lord's desire for her.

This indicates that at this point the seeker only cares for the Lord's desire, not for her own pleasure. She exists for the purpose of satisfying His desire. Her satisfaction no longer is rooted in her gain, her loss, or her work; it is now found only in the Lord's desire toward her. And indeed, when the Lord sees her He does desire her, is attracted to her, and longs to be with her. This is the result of the Lord's work within His seeking one.

## *Initiating the Work*

### *a. Going Forth*

*“Come, my beloved, let us go out  
into the country.”*  
– *Song of Songs 7:11*

From this point on, the Lord and His seeker work together. In the following verses, we see their fellowship in the work. Since the union between the seeker and the Lord is so absolute at this point, she can now speak to the Lord and even initiate the work. Her word here is different from what it was in chapter 1, when she said:

*“They made me caretaker of the vineyards,  
But I have not taken care of my own vineyard.  
Tell me, O you whom my soul loves,  
Where do you pasture your flock,  
Where do you make it lie down at noon?”*  
– *Song of Songs 1:6-7*

At that time, she focused only upon the little work in her hand, but now she calls her beloved to go forth with her unto the country, or “field” (KJV), which refers to the world. In the book of Matthew, there is a clear picture of the field (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). When she says, “Let us go forth into the field,” she doesn’t mean she wants to love the world. She means that the whole world is the sphere of her work. She is enlarged because the Lord has worked in her. She has been delivered from her own work and her own feelings. She realizes that the Lord’s work is upon the whole earth.

## *b. To the Villages*

*“Let us spend the night in the villages.”*  
*– Song of Songs 7:11*

She also sees that there are many villages in the world where she can serve. She shares the Lord's heart and she cooperates with Him. It seems that she has a universal view. Her vision, her desire, and her hope are on the same level as the Lord's. Her capacity is so broad that she can say, “Let us spend the night in the villages.”

Her statement here also indicates that she realizes she is just a sojourner in this world. She cannot be confined to one place, taking care of just certain ones, nor can she only focus on certain matters. To her, every place has something for the Lord to work upon and gain. Now she can be a blessing to the church wherever she goes.

Here we see that her view is far-reaching, and her understanding is broad. Nonetheless, in the depths of her being, she doesn't want to work. Instead, she would rather be in love with the Lord. Her feeling is that there is no village that belongs to her. She works from one village to another and is not confined to any particular one. There is neither a work nor a place that belongs to her. She has nothing of her own; rather, her desire is wholly for the Lord.

Like the seeking one in the Song of Songs, we also should serve the Lord as a sojourner. If the Lord calls us to do something, we should do it with Him in love. We lodge, rest, and enjoy the work together with Him. We can see in these verses how closely the maiden's heart and the Lord's heart are united. She only cares for Him, and so even though she has the entire earth in view, her heart is set on the Lord. She feels that without Him, nothing is accomplished and all is vain. She would never

sacrifice her relationship with Him for a certain work or need. Rather, her desire is that the Lord would come with her.

This is a picture of a believer's normal service unto the Lord:

*“I am my beloved's,  
And his desire is for me.”  
– Song of Songs 7:10*

As we “lodge in the villages” with the Lord, we should tell Him, “Lord, the work is Yours, and so is the need. Come; let us lodge in any place You desire. Have Your way and be free to work in any place.” What a wonderful relationship the seeker has with the Lord! She doesn't focus on the effectiveness of her work, but only on the Lord Himself.

Why are there so many problems in our service today? It is because we focus on working for the Lord, rather than on loving Him. If you turn to the Lord and only love Him, you will find it simple to serve Him and work for Him. We should be deeply united with the Lord and only focus on having a close relationship with Him, rather than on doing a work for Him. Our victory should be in our relationship with Him, not in our work.

When you love the Lord in this way and His desire is for you, you will see the real need as you lift up your eyes and look at the field. All work is meaningless if it does not issue from the Lord and His love. We need to tell the Lord as we serve, “Lord, we must lodge together in the villages. I cannot go without You.”

A person who knows how to serve the Lord surely has a proper view of the field; this is a principle. With such a proper view, our consecration will be absolute and we will hold nothing in our hands. If we love the Lord in simplicity, we will know that we are just lodging in the villages with our Beloved today. Without the Lord's leading, we will not go forth to work.

### c. *To the Vineyards*

*“Let us rise early and go to the vineyards.”*  
– *Song of Songs 7:12*

This is still a story of love. Here the vineyards are plural in number. Because she loves the Lord, she no longer cares for her own vineyard, but for the Lord's vineyards. The work of the Lord has become her work.

### d. *Being Diligent*

*“Let us see whether the vine has budded  
And its blossoms have opened,  
And whether the pomegranates have bloomed.”*  
– *Song of Songs 7:12*

This word indicates that she is very diligent. She always moves with the work of the Lord. When He moves, she also moves. She is always watching for the signs of life.

Grapes and pomegranates are both fruits that refer to the richness of life. The budding of the vine and the blooming of the pomegranates are indications of fruit bearing. Before the fruit comes forth, there are certain signs. This reveals that when she cares for others, she doesn't focus on numbers, but rather, on the signs of life. She labors diligently according to the manifestation of life.

We all like to look for fruit. However, as we see here, a real servant of the Lord looks for the budding of the vine. Moreover, the seeker is not settled, but rather, has many “fields” in view. She comes to one field today and goes to another tomorrow. She knows that where there is budding and blossoming,

there life is operating, and fruit will issue forth. The Lord is responsible for the fruit bearing, whereas we are responsible for the feeding in life. We plant and water, but it is the Lord who causes the growth (1 Cor. 3:6).

In our service we should simply bring others into life. We need to treasure people who are in life rather than focus on the outward success of our work.

### *e. Giving Her Love to the Lord*

*“There I will give you my love.”*

*– Song of Songs 7:12*

What a wonderful expression of her heart toward the Lord! Even though she supplies life and carefully watches for the budding of the vine and the blooming of the pomegranates, her purpose is only to love her Lord. She only desires a deeper union with Him.

### *f. With a Fragrance of Love*

*“The mandrakes have given forth fragrance.”*

*– Song of Songs 7:13*

Leah hired Jacob from Rachel for one night with mandrakes (Gen. 30:14-16). Hence, it is a plant of love. It signifies the union between husband and wife. The fragrance here is given forth from the love of the seeker in her union with the Lord.

### *g. With Much Fruit*

*“And over our doors are all choice fruits,  
Both new and old,  
Which I have saved up for you, my beloved.”  
– Song of Songs 7:13*

She realizes that she has had many fruits in her life, and she has stored up all the choice fruits over the door for the Lord to enjoy. “Our doors” are the places where the seeker and the Lord go in and go out. Whether the fruits are those borne in the past or in the present, they are for Him. She has stored up the result of her labor only for the Lord’s enjoyment, not for her own enjoyment.

### Summary

In 7:11-13, we see three conditions that are manifested in a healthy servant of the Lord, as pictured in the seeker’s words. The first is that her attitude is simple and she has the ability to initiate the Lord’s work:

*“Come, my beloved, let us go out  
into the country,  
Let us spend the night in the villages.”  
– Song of Songs 7:11*

Wherever she may be, she is but a sojourner who moves and lives with the Lord. Also, she is delivered from work and is enlarged by the Lord. Wherever she goes, there is a village where the Lord can lodge. There she gives her love to Him. She no longer feels, “My own vineyard I have not kept.” She is willing to

fully cooperate with the Lord and cares only for His vineyards. The whole world is the sphere of the Lord's work, and it is hers also.

The second is that she labors diligently and focuses on life:

*“Let us rise early and go to the vineyards;  
Let us see whether the vine has budded  
And its blossoms have opened,  
And whether the pomegranates have bloomed.  
There I will give you my love.”*  
– *Song of Songs 7:12*

She cares for the Lord's desire and work to such an extent that it causes her to rise up early. When the Lord leads, she follows immediately. If the Lord goes forward, she will follow. She is a diligent person.

Moreover, she is not only diligent, but she is also in a deep union with the Lord. She knows what the Lord wants, and she is clear about the Lord's burden. She doesn't grope along on her own, but closely follows the Lord's leading. When she labors, she focuses on whether the vine has budded and the pomegranates are in bloom. She feels that it doesn't matter how many grapes and pomegranates there are; what matters is the flowing of the Lord's life and whether others are touching life. She only cares whether people are enjoying and experiencing life. In her labor, grapes are not as important as the vine's budding, and pomegranates are not as important as the blossoming.

Brothers and sisters, it is foolish just to focus on the number of attendants in a meeting. The Lord's servant should focus on the vine's budding and the pomegranates' blooming. If there is budding and blossoming, there will naturally be a harvest of fruit.

The third condition is that her harvest of fruit is for the Lord:

*“The mandrakes have given forth fragrance;  
And over our doors are all choice fruits,  
Both new and old,  
Which I have saved up for you, my beloved.”*  
– *Song of Songs 7:13*

Although she is very fruitful, none of the fruit she gains is for herself. She consecrates the result of her labor to the Lord for His enjoyment. She has grown out of being for her own enjoyment into caring only for the Lord's satisfaction. What she cares about now is whether or not the Lord is satisfied; she no longer has her own gain in view. Her vision matches that of the Lord, because she has matured. She follows the Lord's feeling as she rises up early in the morning, and the result of her work fulfills the Lord's desire and is fully for His enjoyment.

As she lives in this condition, others will praise her, and so will the Lord. As she lives before God in this way, she and the Lord will never grow apart.

## Song of Songs 8:1-14

*“Oh that you were like a brother to me  
Who nursed at my mother’s breasts.  
If I found you outdoors, I would kiss you;  
No one would despise me, either.  
I would lead you and bring you  
Into the house of my mother,  
who used to instruct me;  
I would give you spiced wine to drink  
from the juice of my pomegranates.  
Let his left hand be under my head  
And his right hand embrace me.”*

*“I want you to swear,  
O daughters of Jerusalem,  
Do not arouse or awaken my love  
Until she pleases.”*

*“Who is this coming up from the wilderness  
Leaning on her beloved?”*

*“Beneath the apple tree I awakened you;  
There your mother was in labor with you,  
There she was in labor and gave you birth.”*

*“Put me like a seal over your heart,  
Like a seal on your arm.  
For love is as strong as death,  
Jealousy is as severe as Sheol;  
Its flashes are flashes of fire,  
The very flame of the Lord.”*

*“Many waters cannot quench love,  
Nor will rivers overflow it;  
If a man were to give  
all the riches of his house for love,  
It would be utterly despised.”*

*“We have a little sister,  
And she has no breasts;  
What shall we do for our sister  
On the day when she is spoken for?  
If she is a wall,  
We will build on her a battlement of silver;  
But if she is a door,  
We will barricade her with planks of cedar.”*

*“I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers;  
Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace.  
Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;  
He entrusted the vineyard to caretakers.  
Each one was to bring  
    a thousand shekels of silver for its fruit.  
My very own vineyard is at my disposal;  
The thousand shekels are for you, Solomon,  
And two hundred are for those  
    who take care of its fruit.”  
O you who sit in the gardens,  
My companions are listening for your voice—  
Let me hear it!”*

*”Hurry, my beloved,  
And be like a gazelle or a young stag  
On the mountains of spices.”*



# Awaiting His Return

## Constrained by the Flesh

It may seem to us that the experience of a saved one should conclude with chapter 7, for in that chapter the maiden reaches the highest peak she could possibly reach. She is altogether beautiful. Everyone praises her as one who looks forth like the morning, is as fair as the moon, as clear as the sun, and as terrible as an army with banners. In the eyes of both God and man, she is matured. From the standpoint of her experience, she enjoys total oneness with the Lord. She has indeed become someone who satisfies the Lord.

However, in spite of all this, at the beginning of chapter 8 she still speaks of a deep inward dissatisfaction. To her own feeling, even at this point she is despised, even despicable. The reason for such a feeling is that, even after all the progress she has made, she is still in “our body of humiliation” (Phil. 3:21, Darby). To her feeling there is still something short, and she is unworthy to stand before the Lord. It seems to her that everyone—the Lord, the brothers and sisters, and Satan—will find her loathsome as long as she remains on the earth, for she has a

deep feeling that she still possesses weaknesses and limitations that prevent her from being like her grand and glorious Christ in every way (cf. 1 John 3:2). In fact, only one who has reached the highest peak of spiritual experience, one who is in complete union with the Lord and so satisfying to Him, could experience this kind of feeling.

## A Brother

*“Oh that you were like a brother to me  
Who nursed at my mother’s breasts.”  
– Song of Songs 8:1*

Those who reach this stage are painfully aware of their failure and weakness before the Lord, yet they can only await the Lord’s return, when their situation will finally be changed. Here the Lord’s seeker laments that the Lord is not a “brother” to her. What she is saying is that, if they had the same mother, then in every way she could be like the one she loves, for then they would share the same life. Although the seeking one actually does have the life of the Lord, she feels that she still does not match Him—she still experiences weakness, bondage, limitation, and shortcomings, while the Lord is so perfect, holy, strong, free, glorious, and grand, and lives completely for God’s purpose. Although the Lord praises her, she groans that she is only to be despised.

Everyone praises the seeker’s riches, and even the Lord praises her perfection. Yet, despite all her glorious experience of knowing the Lord and the work of the cross all these years, she herself still feels that she is only to be despised. There is a groaning deep within her, in which she feels, “Lord, I have Your presence, I know the secret to being an overcomer, and I live in fellowship with You, yet I long for the redemption of my body. Until I am

transfigured, I cannot match You. O that You were like a brother to me! I want to be like You and to be in the glory together with You.”

Brothers and sisters, perhaps you have had this experience. As you were enjoying the height of sweetness in your fellowship with the Lord, you realized the frustration and barrier of the flesh. In such a state you will sigh and tell the Lord, “How I long to be delivered from the power of self and from the law of sin! I would like to experience complete union with You. I desire that the body of my humiliation would be transfigured that I might be conformed to the body of Your glory.”

This is the meaning of her saying, “Oh that you were like a brother to me!” This statement appears in this book only once. At the beginning, she pursued spiritual things. She desired to be victorious and experienced in the things of the Lord. Then, after she gained these things, she only desired to gain the Lord Himself. Now that she has gained Him, she yearns for the redemption of the body. She desires to be as free as the Lord, released from all that is negative and anything that would frustrate her fellowship with Him. She desires that the holiness of the Lord would become her holiness.

She now has only one desire, namely, that none would despise her. Nonetheless, because of her condition she despises herself and longs for the transfiguration of her body. Therefore she longs for the Lord’s coming, for His coming will solve all her problems.

Is she not in victory? She has triumphed. Has she not experienced the cross? She has deeply experienced the working of the cross. Does she know the Lord? She knows Him intimately. All this, however, cannot prevent her from lamenting, “Lord, I have followed You now for so many years, and people consider me a spiritually mature person. Even You appraise me as being someone who is mature before You. However, deep within me, I feel

I am worthy only to be despised. How I long for the redemption of my body!”

## Kissing the Lord

*“If I found you outdoors, I would kiss you;  
No one would despise me, either.”*  
– *Song of Songs 8:1*

In the beginning, she asked the Lord to kiss her (1:2). Here she desires to kiss Him. In chapter 1, she cared for no one but herself, whereas in chapter 8, she belongs to the Lord completely. She has learned the secret in everything and in all things and is able to express her love to the Lord in every circumstance (cf. Phil. 4:12-13).

## Her Mother’s House

*“I would lead you and bring you  
Into the house of my mother,  
who used to instruct me.”*  
– *Song of Songs 8:2*

This is what she desires to do when the Lord comes back, after she has been delivered from the body of her humiliation. Her thoughts no longer focus on herself. She does not expect to say on that day, “Hallelujah! I am transfigured! There is no more self, no more sin, no more sorrow, and no more death. Everything is new!” On the contrary, her thoughts here are solely of her Lord and how she will come to Him at that time. When I come to this part of the Song of Songs, I am deeply moved.

In chapter 7, we see that the seeker has come to love the Lord with her whole heart, soul, strength, and mind (cf. Luke 10:27). She invites the Lord to the village and gives Him her love in the fields. In eternity, her love for the Lord will remain unchanged. Her mother's house here typifies grace. She has the feeling, "O Lord, in this evil generation, You have chosen me, loved me, and given Yourself to me. When I recount all my experiences of grace, I fully appreciate that my life has been full of Your love and the work of grace. I am but a sinner saved by grace. I would lead You to enjoy Your grace in me."

When she began to pursue the Lord, she asked the Lord to bring her into His chambers in order that she might know her real situation. Here, however, she leads the Lord into her mother's house so that she might be instructed to know the grace of God. This indicates that, although she has known the Lord in the present age, she does not yet feel that she knows Him in full. Even in eternity she intends to be instructed in order that she might fully know Him as she is fully known (1 Cor. 13:12). She asks the Lord to reveal Himself further to her so that in the eternal ages she might fully possess the knowledge of His grace.

## Giving Him Spiced Wine

*"I would give you spiced wine to drink  
from the juice of my pomegranates."  
– Song of Songs 8:2*

Here the seeker is saying, "Lord, I will love You for eternity. I will also exhibit the work of Your cross that You might be satisfied." As one who has followed the Lord on the earth in this age, she has received the Lord's supply of "spices." Therefore, in eternity, she will exhibit the work of the Lord's cross—the

myrrh and the frankincense and the fragrant powders of the merchant—for the Lord’s satisfaction. At that time, she will indeed make “spiced wine” from the stores of her experience to satisfy Him. This indicates that not only will she enter into rest herself, but she will also bring the Lord into a union of love to enjoy the spiced wine she has gained throughout her life. This is the crystallization of all her experience of the cross. All that she has experienced will be presented to the Lord for His enjoyment and satisfaction.

## The Lord’s Embrace

*“Let his left hand be under my head  
And his right hand embrace me.”  
– Song of Songs 8:3*

In chapter 2, the Shulammitte also enjoyed a face-to-face fellowship with the Lord (2:6). That experience, however, was in her spirit. Now she testifies that she will fellowship with Him physically in that day when there will no longer be anything to separate them. She will enjoy unclouded union with the Lord forever. Never again will she experience being apart from Him, once she has experienced the final stage of the Lord’s redemptive work, the redemption of her body.

## Without Distraction

*“I want you to swear, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
Do not arouse or awaken my love  
Until she pleases.”  
– Song of Songs 8:3*

The Lord spoke a similar word earlier in this book:

*“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,  
That you do not arouse or awaken my love  
Until she pleases.”*  
– *Song of Songs 2:7*

At that time, the maiden was anxious regarding what the Lord had planned for her. Like a gazelle or a hind, she was easily startled away. Now, in contrast, she is experienced, and so she is unaffected by her environment and no longer reacts to false alarms. Therefore the Lord says, “Do not rouse her up while she is living in the hope of My return.” Since she lives by awaiting the Lord’s coming and in the hope of the redemption of the body, she is in the last stage of the experience of life. “While she is in this final stage,” the Lord is saying, “let her be as one who is waiting for My coming; do not distract her.”

## Leaning on Him

*“Who is this coming up from the wilderness  
Leaning on her beloved?”*  
– *Song of Songs 8:5*

In chapter 3 the saints asked:

*“What is this coming up from the wilderness  
Like columns of smoke,  
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
With all scented powders of the merchant?”*  
– *Song of Songs 3:6*

At that time, they admired her manifestation, for she was full of the power of the Spirit and bore the evidence of the work of the cross. Here, she no longer has much manifestation, and all that is said of her is that she is “leaning on her beloved.” She is simply like one who comes up from the wilderness, nothing more.

The wilderness here is somewhat different from that in chapter 3, for now it refers not only to the world, but also to the flesh and the soul life. Her coming up from the wilderness reveals that she has overcome her flesh and soul life and lives absolutely in the fullness of the Spirit. She doesn’t merely manifest the marks of God’s work; she is indeed a spiritual person and lives in the heavenly realm. When people see her, they know she is completely separated unto the Lord; she is truly “leaning on her beloved.”

In the Old Testament, Egypt signifies the flesh, the wilderness signifies the soul life, and the Good Land signifies the spirit. Here the Lord’s lover is coming up from the wilderness. She has been delivered from her soul life as well as from her flesh. Her soul life can no longer hinder her. She doesn’t live in her mind, in her emotion, or in her will. She lives in the spirit and in union with the Lord. Seeing this, those acquainted with her are prompted to ask:

*“Who is this coming up from the wilderness  
Leaning on her beloved?”*

## Seeking Him in Love

*“Beneath the apple tree I awakened you.”  
– Song of Songs 8:5*

Here the Lord is saying, “Do not leave your first love. When you began to follow Me, your soul was awakened, and in My shade you delighted and sat down. My fruit was sweet to your taste (2:3). You were awakened to depart from sinful things and from religion. I roused you up in My shade with the fruit of My love. Now I want to remind you, do not leave your first love. You cannot be spiritual to the extent that you cease to love Me, or leave your first love while you are waiting for My coming. Just as you first loved Me and were attracted by My love, in the same manner you have to love Me and be attracted by My love all the rest of your days.”

No matter how high or how deep our spiritual experience becomes, we can never depart from our love relationship with the Lord. In this book, the love between the maiden and her beloved never fails. Whenever you touch the Lord, you touch love. As the hymn says:

*To bring thee to thy God,  
Love takes the shortest route.*

If you desire to follow Him, if you desire to be an overcomer, if you desire a deeper knowledge of the truth, then all your pursuing must be in the sphere of love.

## Growing through Grace

*“There thy mother was in travail with thee,  
There was she in travail that brought thee forth.”  
– Song of Songs 8:5, ASV*

These words are so excellent! He is telling her, “Your mother was in labor with you. She delivered you and brought you up. It

was love that awakened you and led you. It is grace (symbolized by the mother) that has followed you all your life. Grace is laboring over you, working to bring you forth. You began to follow Me because of love. Now you must continue to live in grace and enjoy My love. The way of grace and love must be with you to the end.” This is so simple, yet it is also so wonderful!

How will your life proceed? Grace will be in labor with you throughout all your life. You will experience victory through the support and the supply of grace. This becomes the testimony and characteristic of the experienced believer.

## Living in His Love and Grace

Perhaps even now we are considering our own future as well as the future of the church. Our mind is so clear as we consider these things. However, often when our mind is so clear, our love for the Lord begins to fade. The way we should take may seem clear to us, yet our experience of His love disappears! No wonder the Lord reminds His seeker at the conclusion of this book of how her journey with Him began, telling her, “Don’t forget how I awakened you under the apple tree. Don’t forget My banner over you, which is love. Don’t depart from love. You have to live in love all the time. Grace will be with you.”

Brothers and sisters, we all will carry a heavy load as we are serving, and the more you love the Lord, the heavier the burden will become. However, you have to tell the Lord as you are serving, “O Lord, the basis of my serving is love. I give the fruit of my labor to You, because I love You.” You must abide in the freshness of this love forever.

Love is the motive of our journey. Sometimes a new believer grows very quickly soon after being saved, but then gradually his growth slows down and eventually stops. I am sometimes

surprised to see a desirous one remain the same even after ten years in the church life. This happens because there is a problem with his love toward the Lord. It seems that he is for the Lord, but in fact there is no love, only service. This is why many good brothers and sisters remain unchanged even after many years; apart from love, there can be no grace to labor with us and take us on with the Lord.

It is necessary for the church to recover its first love, but we have to experience this ourselves before we seek it in others. The Lord will eventually lead you into some area of service. However, no matter where you go, you must tell Him, “Lord, I want to be one who loves You all the time.” You can never depart from this. If you are filled with the love of the Lord, then regardless of how difficult the situations are that you have to face, you will not fear. He as the One who is grace will be “in labor” with you, work for you, and support you all the way in your journey. All that matters is that you live in such a love.

When we consider our future before the Lord, the first priority is to remain in the freshness of our first love for Him. If there is a problem with our love, all our labor will be in vain. If there is a problem with our love, we will find that nothing else in our lives is worthwhile. In the future the Lord will render you a higher leading, a deeper dealing, or a stronger wounding that you may find difficult to understand or endure. You may need to pay the price of tears and even of blood. Nevertheless you must be able to tell Him, “Lord, You know I love You.” As a result, you will experience grace and discover that all things truly work together for good to those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).

## Hoping in His Love

*“Put me like a seal over your heart,  
Like a seal on your arm.”*  
– *Song of Songs 8:6*

After the Lord speaks to her in this way, this is the Shulammitte’s response. The heart is where love resides. She seems to be saying, “You have reminded me that it was You who awakened me under the apple tree. I want to remind You in return that I am the one on Your heart. You have to love me and set me as a seal on Your heart so that there is no possibility that I could ever be blotted out. I would also like to remind You that I am weak. Therefore, You have to set me as a seal on Your arm. Please shelter me, support me, and preserve me with Your power. It is my earnest desire to continue forever in this union with You and never depart from You.”

## As Strong As Death

*“For love is as strong as death.”*  
– *Song of Songs 8:6*

The strongest thing on earth is death. When death comes, no one can withstand it or overpower it. There are many in history who have sought to escape death, but regardless of how powerful or wealthy they were, death has taken every one of them. Since death is so strong, the maiden tells the Lord, “I trust that the love between us is as strong as death. Since that is the case, nothing will be able to shake it.”

## As Severe As Sheol

*“Jealousy is as severe as Sheol.”*  
– *Song of Songs 8:6*

Jealousy always accompanies love. In fact, if jealousy is not present, it may indicate that the love is not very genuine. Here she is saying, “Lord, You love me so much, and I know You are jealous over me. Be jealous over me to the uttermost. If I am not faithful, or if my yearning turns from You to something else, or if my love begins to fade, then deal with me in the most severe way. Purge away every other thing in Your jealousy.”

She loves the Lord to the extent that she doesn’t fear His severe dealings, so long as they are carried out in His jealous love over her. Her fear is that her heart might incline itself toward something other than the Lord, so she asks that the Lord’s jealousy might become her protection against such a falling away.

## The Flame of the Lord

*“Its flashes are flashes of fire,  
The very flame of the Lord.”*  
– *Song of Songs 8:6*

Fire comes to enlighten and to kill. In the past, you might have been able to love many things besides the Lord and have no feeling about it. When the Lord flashes forth in the fire of His jealousy, however, you have to bow down before Him and allow Him to take away whatever else is occupying your heart. If the Lord is not jealous over you, His fire will not come to you, and you can continue loving the world untroubled; how poor is

such a one! In the eyes of the Lord, such a one is not a Shulamite who ravishes His heart, but merely one of the daughters of Jerusalem.

The seeker of the Lord, however, is not like that. Rather, because she loves the Lord so much and gives herself unreservedly to the Lord, He is full of jealousy over her. She asks that the Lord would not let her go, and that the Lord's Spirit of jealousy would continue to work in her life to insure that she would never love anything other than Him. Therefore she even asks for the flashes of the Lord's fire to enlighten her, to kill the dross of base desire, to crush any idol, and to burn up anything that is not of Him or His love.

## Many Waters Cannot Drown It

*“Many waters cannot quench love,  
Nor will rivers overflow it.”  
– Song of Songs 8:7*

*The waters compassed me about, even to the soul;  
The deep was round about me.  
– Jonah 2:5, ASV*

Jonah 2:5 shows us that the “many waters” and “floods” (KJV) in Song of Songs 8:7 signify trials. When we join ourselves to the Lord in such a relationship of love, we may still be surrounded by tribulation and trials, but they cannot hinder our love toward Him. Neither trials, symbolized by many waters, nor persecutions, typified by floods, will be able to separate us from His love (Rom. 8:35-39). We just love Him.

## It Cannot be Bought

*“If a man were to give  
all the riches of his house for love,  
It would be utterly despised.”  
– Song of Songs 8:7*

This is a word of experience. The seeker desires only the love of the Lord. She has many riches from her past experience with the Lord. She has experienced the Lord’s incarnation, death, and resurrection, as well as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, as a result, her own labor has become very fruitful. Yet, none of these can be exchanged for His love. She is telling Him, “Even if I tried to offer up all of my previous experiences in exchange for this love, they would be utterly despised.”

In fact, sometimes this is what we ourselves try to do. That is, when our relationship with the Lord is not healthy, we want to give Him something to please Him in exchange for His love. We tell Him, “Lord, remember how I loved You for many years.” The Lord might reply, “If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, he would utterly be despised. Don’t tell Me how you loved Me then; do you love Me now? If you do, there is no problem. If you don’t, even the love that you loved Me with twenty years ago will be despised.” All our past experiences of Christ cannot take the place of our love for the Lord today.

## An Excellent Praise of Love

How excellently does the Shulammitte describe this love in these verses, and how wonderful is her prayer to the Lord! First, she beseeches the Lord to seal her in His heart, for she desires to be in His heart forever, and she asks that His power would cover

her so that her union with Him might be protected. This means that she wishes their love would be so strong that nothing could ever shake it. Then she asks that He would make her the object of His jealousy; He should not allow her to love anyone but Him, and the fire of His jealousy must enlighten her and cleanse her from any other attraction in her heart. Surely, this is one who knows the reality of love! She desires that nothing would ever threaten or compete for her heart's love toward the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, we all should have this prayer. We need to tell the Lord, "O Lord, don't let me go. Watch over me in Your jealousy. I would like to be Your prisoner of love."

Moreover, we should all be able to declare, "Trials and persecutions cannot hinder me from loving the Lord. His love will bring me through every trial and persecution."

And may we also tell the Lord, "I know that if I were to give all the substance of my house for love, it would be utterly despised. I would like to live in Your fresh, new love."

## Caring for the Young Ones

*"We have a little sister,  
And she has no breasts;  
What shall we do for our sister  
On the day when she is spoken for?"*  
– *Song of Songs 8:8*

As one who is mature and experienced, the seeker truly knows how to labor. Rather than caring about the number in the meetings, she cares for the saints' growth in life.

The Lord wants to gain every brother and sister to be His lover. We might ask Him, "Lord, these brothers and sisters are still in their flesh. They don't know the things of the Spirit. How

can You gain them?” The mature ones, however, care about each person, not the work or the number. Those who know the Lord’s heart continually are seeking the way for others to be personally gained by Christ, one by one. This is the way to serve.

No matter what position you have, or whether you are in the lead or not, you always have “little sisters” around you, and you need to care for them. However, your service must bring them to the Lord, not to yourself. You should care about whether the Lord is satisfied, not about taking up a position.

## A Wall and a Door

*“If she is a wall,  
We will build on her a battlement of silver.  
But if she is a door,  
We will barricade her with planks of cedar.”  
– Song of Songs 8:9*

A wall is for separation and also indicates building up, while a door provides a way to pass through the separation. A normal Christian should be a wall on the one hand and a door on the other; one separated from the world for God’s building, yet one who also provides a way for the Lord to reach others. If there is one who has neither this wall nor this door, they are probably a Christian in name only, without the reality of being born again.

## Strengthening a Wall

Because this little sister is not yet mature, it may be that the wall spoken of here is not strong enough to resist the world. Therefore, the seeker speaks of building up a “battlement of

silver” upon her. It seems that initially this wall was not very sturdy, but after their building up of the battlement it is able to bear a testimony, and it becomes stable and firm.

It is sweet that here she says “we.” It is not her work alone, nor the Lord’s work alone. Rather, she is co-working with the Lord; they work together for the building up of the saints.

Moreover, she doesn’t seek to bring the saints to follow her experiences step by step, imposing on others what she has passed through herself. Instead, she supplies others according to their need, based upon what the Lord already has given them. That is, instead of attempting to bring others to retrace the same steps of her spiritual journey, she renders help according to their needs. In doing so, she is able to supply the saints from the storehouse of her own experiences with the Lord.

In addition, when she refers to building on this little sister “a battlement of silver,” she is indicating that her own experience of what the Lord has accomplished in His redemption (signified by silver) will become the experience of the little one. The fact that the Shulammitte is willing to build her experience upon the experience of the others shows that she is not thinking of herself; rather, all she has is for the building up of the church.

## Barricading a Door

*“But if she is a door,  
We will barricade her with planks of cedar.”  
– Song of Songs 8:9*

A “barricade” is for protection. As one who manifests Christ’s humanity the seeker can say, “I live for the protection of this little sister.” She not only co-labors with the saints and supplies them, but also becomes their protection.

## Considering Others Above Ourselves

Brothers and sisters, the Lord not only desires that we love Him, pursue Him, and gain Him; He also desires that we would take care of the saints who are younger in life than we are. If we mean business with Him, He will eventually lead us to say of the younger saints,

*“If she is a wall,  
We will build on her a battlement of silver;  
But if she is a door,  
We will barricade her with planks of cedar.”*

When we see the brothers and sisters, we should be full of burden and feeling. We should sympathize with the Lord as well as with the saints. When we grow to be mature and experienced, we will cease to care for our own enjoyment; instead we will be willing to pour out all we have for the need of the brothers and sisters. We will tell the Lord, “Lord, these brothers and sisters are still young. They haven’t grown up. However, You desire for them to gain all You have for them. Lord, I am willing to labor with You to carry out Your desire.”

Perhaps, instead, even now you care more for your “own things” than for “the things of others” (Phil. 2:4, KJV). The Lord needs some who are matured to co-labor with Him, who can perfect many “little sisters” for Him.

## Finding Peace

*“I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers;  
Then I became in his eyes  
as one who finds peace.”  
– Song of Songs 8:10*

Towers are for watching and fighting, but breasts are for supplying life. With her breasts she can supply and nourish others, and she can also look out clearly over the fighting. As such a person, she can be built up with others. On the one hand, she is one who helps and blesses others. On the other hand, she is one who builds others up.

What does she mean by declaring that she “became in his eyes as one who finds peace?” It means that the more she serves, the more restful she is. What a wonderful thing such service is! It is not a burden, but an enjoyment. Brothers and sisters, we should all desire this kind of serving life.

## In Solomon’s Vineyard

*“Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;  
He entrusted the vineyard to caretakers.  
Each one was to bring  
a thousand shekels of silver for its fruit.”  
– Song of Songs 8:11*

The Lord’s work is mentioned here, for Solomon signifies the Lord Jesus, and Baal-hamon means “Lord of all.”

The fact that Solomon has a vineyard, which he leases out to keepers, means that the fruit is for the keepers’ enjoyment. The price is 1,000 shekels. “A thousand” was also mentioned in 4:4,

where we were told that the Shulammite's neck was like a tower upon which 1,000 bucklers were hung. A thousand indicates that something is enough, or fulfilled. The Lord has a need. Through the vineyard He leases out to us, we enjoy fruit to our satisfaction, and the Lord is fully satisfied through our enjoyment.

## Offering to the Lord

*“My very own vineyard is at my disposal;  
The thousand shekels are for you, Solomon,  
And two hundred are for those  
who take care of its fruit.”*  
– *Song of Songs 8:11*

It is not that the Lord is asking for the thousand; rather, she is the one who desires to give it to Him. She is telling Him, “Lord, I will give You what You want. I am for Your satisfaction.” At this point it is no longer as though she is dealing with a merchant. She is in love, and her life is for the Lord's enjoyment. Thus, all her fragrant laboring is for His satisfaction.

The fact that those who keep its fruit will have 200 shekels means that those who labor with her will also be satisfied. She is a person co-laboring with others and being built up with the brothers and sisters in the church. Whosoever labors with her and is built up with her will share with her in the same enjoyment and satisfaction.

## Longing to Hear Him

*“O you who sit in the gardens,  
My companions are listening for your voice—  
Let me hear it!”  
– Song of Songs 8:12*

Here the “you” refers to the Lord. This is a deep experience. She doesn’t need to say anything, but only desires to listen to the Lord.

In this verse she speaks of “You,” referring to her beloved, in such a way as to indicate that her experience in chapter 8 is something ordinary; it is not like the high experiences of chapter 3, chapter 5, or chapter 7. After she reached the highest peak in chapter 7, people marveled at her, seeing her as one who was so spiritual. However, in chapter 8, the Lord brings her back to a situation in which everything is common and ordinary, just reminding her not to leave her first love, nor to neglect the grace that has been with her all her life. He leases out the vineyard to her so that He could be fully satisfied through her enjoyment of Himself.

At the same time, there are feelings within her. She feels that she is one who is despised by others, and she longs for the transfiguration of her body, which she will experience at His coming again. Before He returns, she reminds Him to set her as a seal on His arm and on His heart. She desires His power to cover her so that they could be joined in a stronger union. She also asks that His jealousy would be as cruel as Sheol over her so that no trial or persecution might cause her love for Him to change. Although she has loved Him for many years, yet she still desires to live in the freshness of His love today. She does not want her sweet experiences in the past to become a substitute for, or a hindrance to, His love today.

The maiden is so rich, and yet at the same time she is so simple. She doesn't care for her own spirituality or the praise of others; she simply desires to be joined in love with the Lord and to live before Him. She co-labors with the Lord to carry out His desire, whether in the village or the field. She cares not for work, but for people. As others are perfected through her labor with the Lord, they are "the thousand shekels" for Solomon; that is, they are for the Lord's satisfaction. Moreover, her co-workers are satisfied as well, for they keep the fruit and the "two hundred shekels." At the same time, she is together with others in the church listening for His voice. She is simply a member of the body and enjoys the supply the Lord provides to the body.

### "Make Haste, My Beloved!"

*"Make haste, my beloved,  
And be thou like to a roe  
or to a young hart  
Upon the mountains of spices."  
– Song of Songs 8:14, KJV*

At this time, regardless of how rich her life is or how deep her experience has become, she still cries out for the Lord to come.

Here, she herself is a mountain of spices (cf. 4:6). The work of the Lord's cross upon her has become the ground for His return. The Lord will not only come back through her, but also through many others who have experienced the discipline of the Holy Spirit and the breaking of the cross, and who have also become "mountains of spices." They have been through death and are in resurrection. They are completely sanctified and enjoy complete union with the Lord in love. Together their cry is,

“Lord, there are so many mountains of spices on the earth. Oh Lord, make haste to come!”

## Conclusion

I worship the Lord for this book. Even if today we are not that mature, the Lord will eventually make us all like the Shulamite, who is herself like Solomon in every way. May the love of the Lord and the work of the Spirit pervade this book. We can be very slow in our response to follow the Lord and in our submission to Him, but He will not let us go, nor will He in His grace ever stop working on us.

Eventually He will lead us to such an extent that each of us will have the same heart as He does and will carry out the same work as Him. Moreover, we will dwell in the freshness of His love as we await His return. May we all soon be able to join the chorus of the saints who cry out:

*“Make haste, my beloved!  
Make haste, my Lord, to come!”*





























# Key to Hymns Cited

All of the hymns cited in this book may be found in *Songs and Hymns of Life*, using the hymn numbers in the “Reference” column below. Edited by Del Martin and Richard Yeh, Good Land Publishers, 2009.

<u>Citation</u>	<u>Reference</u>
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Page 27:	“Hast Thou Heard Him, Seen Him, Known Him?” #258. By Ora Rowan.
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Pages 62, 150:	“First the Blood and then the Ointment,” #316. Attributed to Watchman Nee.
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Page 76:	“Lord Jesus, When I Think of Thee,” #110. By James G. Deck.
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Page 200:	“If the Path I Travel,” #321. By M.E. Barber.
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Page 232:	“O Breath of God,” #178. By M.E. Barber.
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Page 273:	“Though Christ a Thousand Times,” #348. Possibly by Johann Schleffer.
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