

Song of Solomon 5: v.2 – 6: v.12

The Restoration of Love

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Welcome to our talk today from the Song of Solomon chapters 5 and 6. We will find how the love of the betrothed one for her bridegroom was put to the test. The title of our talk is The Restoration of Love. In our natural relationships there are times when our love for each other can be tested as our emotions go from high to low. The course of true love never runs smoothly. I'm sure you'll agree with me that both partners can be at fault at different times. When we come to our relationship with the Lord Jesus, we find that His love for us never wanes. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. His very nature is love. We read in Jeremiah 31:3 that the Lord declares of his own, that He loves us with an everlasting love. However, we fail in our consistency of love for the Lord Jesus. We, like many that we find in the Bible, have often strayed: Peter, when he rejected knowing the Lord Jesus; the believers at Ephesus, when the Lord had to say to them that they had left their first love; and Paul could say of Demas that he had forsaken him having loved this present world.

Let's now read together the passage from Song of Solomon 5: v.2 to 6: v.12.

The Shulamite:

"I sleep, but my heart is awake; It is the voice of my beloved! He knocks, saying, "Open for me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one; for my head is covered with dew, my locks with the drops of the night." I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them? My beloved put his hand by the latch of the door, and my heart yearned for him. I arose to open for my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the lock. I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and was gone. My heart leaped up when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen who went about the city found me. They struck me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took my veil away from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am lovesick!"

The Daughters of Jerusalem:

"What is your beloved more than another beloved, O fairest among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you so charge us?"

The Shulamite:

“My beloved is white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand. His head is like the finest gold; his locks are wavy, and black as a raven. His eyes are like doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are like a bed of spices, banks of scented herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh. His hands are rods of gold set with beryl. His body is carved ivory inlaid with sapphires. His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of fine gold. His countenance is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet, yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!”

The Daughters of Jerusalem:

“Where has your beloved gone, O fairest among women? Where has your beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with you?”

The Shulamite:

“My beloved has gone to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed his flock in the gardens, and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He feeds his flock among the lilies.”

The Beloved:

“O my love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners! Turn your eyes away from me, for they have overcome me. Your hair is like a flock of goats going down from Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep which have come up from the washing; every one bears twins, and none is barren among them. Like a piece of pomegranate are your temples behind your veil. There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, the favorite of the one who bore her. The daughters saw her and called her blessed, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. Who is she who looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?”

The Shulamite:

“I went down to the garden of nuts to see the verdure of the valley, to see whether the vine had budded and the pomegranates had bloomed. Before I was even aware, my soul had made me as the chariots of my noble people.”

Over the past 3 weeks, the other speakers have brought before us some lovely thoughts regarding the love of King Solomon for the Shulamite woman, the shepherdess who was to become his bride. We have seen how much the bridegroom loves his bride; and how the bride responds to that love, which brings out that true passion for her beloved. Some people question the need for these love poems to be in the Bible, but as we study these portions of scripture, we can surely see that the bridegroom is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. The bride would indeed be a true picture of God's earthly people, Israel, and how their hearts are awakened to love their true Messiah. For us today, those who have trusted Jesus as our Saviour, who form part of the church and are the heavenly bride, we can apply these words of love and affection to ourselves as companies of believers, or in our individual relationship to the One who has redeemed us from our sins. It

challenges us to see if He is the true object of our hearts. As we go through the passage that we have read together today, may it stir our hearts to be overflowing with such love for the Lord Jesus.

We find in chapter 5: v.2 something that has affected many believers over the years, that their love for the Saviour has waned. So, too, our affection and our communion with the Lord Jesus may not be what it was when we first trusted in Him. Earlier, in chapter 3, the bride had rested, but here we find her sleeping. We see that it is not a sleep of peace because her heart was awake. Is this like so many of us, who take our ease in the pleasures of this world, but our consciences pricks us? We cannot find true peace. The world can't satisfy us, and our spiritual life is weak because of a lack of communion with the Lord Jesus. In her slumber she hears His voice, "Open [to] me." There is much love in the words of the bridegroom towards his bride. He could have been angry and displeased at her indifference towards himself, but no. He appeals to her with tenderness, "Open for me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one." His love for her is unchanged. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever. His love for us will never alter, will never cease.

We get a similar picture in Revelation 3, where the Lord Jesus is outside of the church in Laodicea. Such is the condition of that church, we hear Him say,

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me"
(Revelation 3: v.20).

But His loving request is met with indifference and very trivial excuses. Similarly, He requires us to unlock the door of our hearts to have that full communion with Him again.

In chapter 5: v.3, the bride makes excuses, which reveal that it was easier for her to take off her coat and to be at ease, than it was to put it on. How true it is that to slip out of fellowship with the Lord Jesus is so easy, but it requires action and energy for restoration to take place. How sad when we see, or hear, of believers in Christ who at one time were so bright for the Lord, but who have slowly drifted away, their seat empty at their place of fellowship. How this must truly touch the heart of Jesus. Having washed her feet, she was reluctant to get them dirty and so have to wash them again. How trivial!

In verse 4, we see that there is no response to the knock, or voice, of her beloved, but in tenderness he persists. The one who knows the state of her heart uses different means - he puts his hand on the latch of the door. See Psalm 44:20-21. Her heart was stirred. At last her affection for her beloved is once more rekindled. She responds to the bridegroom's hand upon the latch. In the eastern lands, there is a custom that when the loved one persists in refusing the advances of her beloved, he visits her family home during the night. He hangs garlands of flowers and puts sweet smelling flowers on the doorstep. He also anoints the lock and door handles with sweet smelling ointment. This shows the family that his affection is real. Verse 5 tells us that her hands, as she touches the door latch, are covered with the sweet-smelling myrrh. The myrrh given as a gift at the Lord's birth signified His death as it was used as an embalming oil. It is bitter to the taste, which would bring to mind the sufferings of the Lord Jesus on account of our sins. The sweet smell would signify the response of our hearts as we fully appreciate once more the position we have been brought into because of his death and resurrection.

In verse 6 she opens, seeks him, calls him. Her affections are renewed. The bridegroom becomes the object of her heart once again and not the desires for her personal ease. The picture here is certainly true for Israel. During the Tribulation, they will call on their Messiah but will have to endure suffering. How glorious for them when the Lord appears and saves them from their oppressors!

Dear believer, has your love grown cold of heart? Have you missed that communion with the One who loves you? Oh that your response would be like the bride in verse 6, "I sought him...I called him." We can come to the Lord and confess our sins knowing that He will forgive us.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 1: v.9 – 2: v.2).

The Lord is waiting for those who seek after Him. However, they may have to pass through painful experiences before their hearts are restored to the full enjoyment of His love.

Verses 7-8. The watchmen of the city find her and mistreat her. They were the people chosen to care and protect the city day and night (Ezekiel 3:vv.17-19 & Isaiah 62: v.6). They would represent the elders and pastors of the churches in our day. Very often the most painful experiences believers endure is being mistreated, or hurt, by church leaders. It is one of the most common reasons why people leave churches or assemblies. Some never get over their bitterness, offence, and disillusionment and stay away from the fellowship and cease to enjoy the true love of the Lord. This can be a true test to the soul when God seems silent, and you can't feel His presence anymore. Your world has been turned upside down by crisis and pain and it can last for various lengths of time. There are many people in Scripture who experienced this feeling of abandonment. David, Hannah, and Abraham all spent years waiting for God to respond and bless them. The bride in Song of Solomon gives her response to her time of sorrow, she is lovesick for her beloved. Why was she able to respond like this? Because:

1. Despite her beloved's absence and silence, she remains confident in his love for her. It never crossed her mind that he might be angry with her or that he was punishing her in some way. She doesn't take it personally.
2. She learned to wait, like in Psalm 27, where David learned to wait on the LORD. In verse 11 he asked, "Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a smooth path." In verse 14 we read, "Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!"
3. She let go of control. "If you find my beloved...tell him." God's ways are higher than our ways and we must trust in His timing. David was transformed into a man after God's own heart. Hannah's years of pain transformed her into the godly mother of Samuel. Abraham was transformed into the father of faith.

In verse 9, the bride's transformation (of one who has let God take control) is seen by the Daughters of Jerusalem. They see that she is not offended, and that she is confident in her love for her beloved and in his love for her. How good it is when those, who we rub shoulders with, notice from our demeanour that we belong to Jesus. Can it be said of us that we are different from those who are of this world? It's when our love is burning brightly again and our heart is restored to that first love, that we respond in some measure like the bride in our text, as we tell others about our Saviour.

So, in verse 10, when the period of darkness of the bride comes to an end, she is able, without hesitation, to break forth into this love song, which is borne out of separation and trial. Her love has been tested but remains true. She tells of these ten qualities of her beloved, which for us speak of Christ's:

1. He is white and ruddy. White: Christ's purity; and ruddy: His death and His blood shed.
2. His head is as fine gold, Christ's majesty. The head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory and honour.
3. His locks bushy (KJV) and black as a raven. Christ's youthfulness and beauty. The blackness of his locks show us that there is no ageing in Christ, the beloved. We find also in Him an everlasting vigour with no decline or decay. In Revelation 1: v.14, based on Daniel 7: v.9, Christ is portrayed, not as the bridegroom, but as the Ancient of Days. His head and hair are described as white like wool and as white as snow, signifying His eternal wisdom and his sovereignty.
4. His eyes are set (KJV) in perfection, that is, He misses nothing. And we have the full assurance that He will guide us with His eye. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye" (Psalm 32: v.8). His eyes are like doves, tender and bright shining as when bathed in the river. We recall the tenderness of the eyes of the Lord after Peter had denied Him three times, it says, "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter" (Luke 22: v.1). It reminds me of the line of a hymn "Tis the look that melted Peter."
5. His fragrant cheeks and His dripping lips. There is a sense that one has to be close to a person to appreciate the fragrance of his cheeks. The bride here recalls how intimate and precious is the presence of her beloved. His lips dripping with myrrh give us a picture of all that proceeds from his mouth. His words of compassion, of comfort, of pardon, of peace, and of love, explain what the psalmist said in Psalm 45:2, "Grace is poured upon Your lips."
6. His hands are as gold rings (KJV) set with beryl. The gold speaks of His divine character and the rings here have the meaning of folding or encompassing. Again, we recall the Saviour's words in John 10: v.28, "Neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." "Set with beryl" adds a beauty to the hands and we think of Luke 24: v.50, "And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them." Those hands that were pierced by the nails are the ones which bring blessing and security to believers.
7. His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires (KJV) . The belly would indicate the inward parts, the bowels and the heart, which speak of the manhood of Christ. The white ivory speaks of Christ as the sinless One. He was without blemish and without spot. Inlaid with sapphires, the blue colour of the stone speaks of the heavenly man, God manifest in flesh.
8. His legs as pillars of marble set in sockets of fine gold. We get the sense of strength, stability and security, no thought of weakness or deviation. The sockets of gold show us that the governmental ways of the Lord are based on divine righteousness.
9. She sums up his general appearance as being like the excellent cedars of Lebanon. It is said of these trees that they stand tall and straight. These true characteristics of Christ would refer to His dignity, majesty, and greatness.
10. She finishes her description by going back to his mouth. In the early days of courtship, she said, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (1: v.2). Here in 5:v.16, we have that full restoration of her love for her beloved. She finds herself in the place of nearness and intimacy with one who she can, not only call her friend, but also her beloved. She cherishes every thought of him and every aspect of his person. To us who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus, may we echo the words of the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2: v.7, "To you who believe, He is precious." Of old, Israel said, "There is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isaiah 53: v.2), but there will be future saints, along with all believers of the present dispensation, who will echo the words of the bride, "He is altogether lovely."

She has answered the question of the daughters of Jerusalem, "What is your beloved more than another beloved?" Without hesitation or thought, she responded with a heart full of love for him. As we are challenged as to our love for the Saviour, can we express to others how much He means to us? "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (chapter 6:v.3).

In response to her answer, the daughters of Jerusalem's hearts have been touched. They want to

know more, to see him, they ask, 'Where is he?' They saw something in this lowly shepherdess that had elevated her above other women. Their description of her as the fairest among women would challenge us to witness to others and/or to preach the Gospel. Oh that our lives would match the teaching of the scriptures as to what it is to be a saint of God!

In chapter 6: vv.2-3, she knows exactly where he is - in his garden. Solomon loved his gardens and parks and was very happy there (Ecclesiastes 2: v.5). The bride restored in love knows exactly where she needs to be. Christ loves the church and delights to be in the company of His loved ones. We, like her, need to be found in fellowship with other believers, where we can be fed by Him. In vv.4-9, we get the response of the bridegroom after communion is restored. He immediately expresses the beauty of his loved one. We have seen earlier (in chapter 4) how he described his beloved and again, here, he pays her more compliments. His first words are of praise to his bride, "O my love, you are...beautiful." Likewise, the father with the returning prodigal son, there were no words of rebuke or anger. He simply said,

"Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry" (Luke 15: vv.22-23).

The Lord is ever consistent in his love towards us. The bridegroom describes his beloved as he has already done in chapter 4: vv.1-3. These are not words of vain repetition. They show his love for her, that in his eyes, she hasn't changed; and that his admiration of her is unchanged. He not only compliments his bride, but he also tells others about her. She is the one who has a unique place in his heart's affections. So, if we bear Christ's rejection down here in this world, then in that coming day of glory, we will be displayed in robes of righteousness as His bride.

In versus 11-12, we find the bride reminiscing as to what she was in the past; and to where she has now been brought. The valley of nuts was back in Galilee, where she used to live. There, she would attend to the vines and the fruits in the valley. Then one day King Solomon came and stole her heart. He carried her away and made her one who now lives in a high and lofty place. When we reflect on how we were once dead in trespasses and sins, we see that, through the precious blood of Christ, we have been brought from the dung hill to His Father's house.

Oh what a home, but such is love
That He must bring us there
To fill that home, to be with Him
And in His glory share.
The Father's house, the Father's heart
All that the Son is giv'n
Made ours the objects of His love
And He our joy in heaven.

(Mrs. J. A. Trench, 1843 – 1925.)

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