

Song of Solomon ch 8: vv.5-14 The Triumph of Love

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

Today we come to our final meditation on The Song of Solomon, which is a unique love song. It's about the love and affection between the bridegroom, King Solomon, and his bride-to-be, a Shulammitte shepherdess. Previous speakers in our series have commented that this pure love relationship pictures Christ and His heavenly bride, the Church, so that present-day believers can learn to appreciate His supreme love for us. But, they've also applied it prophetically to Jehovah's love-relationship with the nation of Israel. That application concurs with Hosea ch 2:19-23:

"I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD. And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'"

Readings from the ESV. I now will read ch.8 vv.5-14:

"Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved? Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labour with you; there she who bore you was in labour. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he 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 enclose her with boards of cedar. I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace. Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and the keepers of the fruit two hundred. O you who dwell in the gardens, with companions listening for your voice; let me hear it. Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices."

First, let me summarise the experiences through which the bride had passed, which climax in The Triumph of Love. Her love for him, which although generally fervent, had sometimes waned. This can be seen in her statements about him throughout the book:

- “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine” (ch 1: v.2).
- “He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love” (ch 2: v.4).
- “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (ch 2: v.16).

By then, she was convinced that he belonged to her. However, at this point she was separated from him, and she had lost him. By searching she found “him whom my soul loves” (ch 3: v.4, repeated in vv.1, 2, 3, and also in ch 1: v.7).

But there followed another separation period. Then as she slept at home, her beloved called and knocked at her house. But her lethargy was such that he withdrew. However, such experiences only served to increase her affection for him. So she sought him again. She enlisted the help of the daughters of Jerusalem and the city’s watchmen, from whom she received abuse. It was then she realised that not only did he belong to her, but she belonged to him:

“I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine” (ch 6: v.3).

Having found him again, their relationship thereafter never faltered. Then they married and their relationship reached its climax, the very pinnacle of pure affection. She exclaimed:

“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me” (ch 7: v.10).

Now, as his wife, she became completely “one flesh” with him, and her affections were wholly centred on her beloved.

We’ve studied these experiences of true love in this series of broadcasts by applying the following titles to the successive canticles, or songs: ‘The assurance of love’; ‘The awakening of love’; ‘The communion of love’; ‘The restoration of love’; ‘The witness of love’; and, for today’s talk, ‘The triumph of love.’ These divisions and titles were derived from a book, *The Song of Songs*, by an early 20th century writer, Hamilton Smith. Second hand copies of this book are available from Scripture Truth Publications, Crewe.

But before we study this final canticle, I want to refer back to ch 8: v.4:

“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.”

It’s the third of such statements in the book, which denote the development of true love. The other two are ch 2: v.7 and ch 3: v.5. It’s a matter of judgement as to whether the refrain is, “that you do not stir up or awaken love until it pleases”, or “that you do not stir up or awaken my love until he pleases.” If we apply the exhortation to a man and a woman in love with each other, the former refrain is more appropriate – that is, the love they express one for the other is constrained to the stage of their relationship, is it courtship or are they married? But the application made to the love that Christ has for His people, either Israel or the Church, would favour the latter refrain because it’s always He who takes the initiative in both cases. Ch 8: v.4 is the last refrain and that means that this final canticle is about a fully matured love relationship. In it, love is seen to have triumphed!

This canticle opens in verse 5:

“Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?”

The wilderness is mentioned in Hosea ch 2: vv.14-19:

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband’. ...And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever.”

We’re not told who it is that asks the question in v.5. It probably was the daughters of Jerusalem. Although the question might be somewhat enigmatic, it provokes a very lovely reaction from Solomon. He and his bride were seen emerging from the wilderness, the place where he was seen on his wedding day (ch 3: vv.4-11). But the focus of the remainder of ch 8: v.5 is on the bride leaning in total dependence upon him; and on what he said to her. It seems to me that when he referred to under the apple tree, where she was born, he was inferring that it was an appropriate place for them to have sexual intimacy. Answering her request (of the daughters of Jerusalem) in v.4, he said that he was pleased to awaken and arouse their love there. Now a married couple, the circumstances were right. Scripture teaches that marriage is consummated by sexual intercourse. It was designed by God to be the fulfilment of every marriage, for it is the act by which they show they are “one flesh.” It is proper, good, and healthy. But is exclusive to them:

“Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous”
(Hebrews ch 13: v.4).

In verse 6, the bride now fully appreciated how much Solomon loved her. Now in perfect harmony with her bridegroom, she asked that his total commitment to her, and his total possession of her, be made public. The seal of their love was in two places: one, upon his heart (the seat of his affections) and two, upon his arm (the symbol of his strength). [Such symbols featured on Israel's high priest, who bore the names of the tribes of Israel both upon his breastplate and upon his shoulders.](#)

The bride continued in v.6 to describe true love. “Love is as strong as death” is an apt statement as both are irresistible in force and in overpowering people. In 2 Corinthians ch 5: v.14, Paul said that the love of Christ constrains, or controls, believers. It overmasters us (Weymouth translation). But true love is also jealous for its object. The bride described jealousy as being “fierce [or, cruel] as the grave.” Israel knew Jehovah as a consuming fire, a jealous God, who is unyielding in His holiness (Deut. ch 4: v.24). Solomon himself wrote in Proverbs ch 6: v.34 that jealousy makes a man furious and that he will not spare when he takes revenge. Every spouse wants their partner always to be faithful to them. [Paul displayed this attitude towards the Corinthian church. He said that he felt a divine jealousy for them because he'd betrothed them to one husband, Christ. He wanted the church to be totally devoted to Christ as a spiritual virgin \(2 Corinthians ch 11: vv.2-3\).](#)

The final aspect of true love in v.6 is that such ardour is exhibited in a most dramatic way, “Its flashes are flashes of fire.” Solomon’s love for his bride consumed all opposition to his marriage to his Shulammitte. Its flashes were “the very flame of the LORD” and could be likened to the sight of the burning bush that Moses experienced (Exodus ch 3: v.2). Likewise, God’s love for us, was not, is not, could not, indeed cannot, be extinguished by any human or spiritual power. The triumph of His love at the cross of Christ is testimony to that!

Indeed, I have often used the opening statement of v.7, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it”, in thanksgiving to the Lord during the communion service at church. “Many waters” always remind me of (Psalm 42: v.7):

“Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me”

that prophetic experience of Christ upon the cross.

Furthermore, it can be said of the Saviour’s love, “neither can floods drown it.” The floods would prophetically represent the waves of inhumanity, of Satan and his spiritual forces, of sin, of death itself and of the grave, which engulfed Him.

Lord, e’en to death Thy love could go,
A death of shame and loss,
To vanquish for us every foe,
And break the strong man’s force.

Oh! what a load was Thine to bear
Alone in that dark hour,
Our sins in all their terror there,
God’s wrath and Satan’s power!

The storm that bowed Thy blessed head
Is hushed for ever now,
And rest divine is ours instead,
Whilst glory crowns Thy brow.

Within the Father’s house on high,
We soon shall sing Thy praise;
But here, where Thou didst bleed and die,
We learn that song to raise.

(H. L. Rossier, 1834 – 1928 & translated
by Miss C. A. Wellesley)

‘Tis as risen, Lord, we hail Thee,
Shadows passed away;
Love has triumphed;
Thou hast made us Thine for aye.

(I. Fleming, 1859 – 1955)

The final triumph of love in v.7 is that true love cannot be purchased. In fact, any attempt to put a price on it to buy it only results in utter scorn. So when we think of divine love, we recall that the Lord Jesus is likened to the merchant, who sold the entirety of His possessions to buy the field in which the treasure was buried; and who took the same action for the pearl of great price (Matthew ch 13: vv.44-46). The treasure and the pearl represent God’s people, Israel and the Church, respectively. The latter He obtained “with the blood of his own” (Acts ch 20: v.28, Darby).

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians ch 8: v.9).

In vv.5-7, the bride triumphs in the fullness of love. She was absolutely confident in Solomon's exclusive love for her. That gave her absolute confidence that their love would endure and would triumph over every test of their relationship. So no matter what life threw at them, or whatever were the difficulties of life they had to pass through together, their love for each other would overcome each and every one of them.

We now come to vv.8 & 9, which are somewhat difficult to explain. For myself, the most satisfactory suggestion I've read about them is that it's probably the bride's brothers who are speaking. They refer to their little sister who has not yet reached the age of maturity or full development. Much of chapter 8 is, I believe, retrospective and it's in this respect that I think these verses are a recap of her youth. In those days, brothers in families protected their sisters from what we nowadays call child sexual abuse. Also, there was a strong family discipline to encourage daughters to maintain their virginity and reserve their body for their husband-to-be. The expression, "on the day when she is spoken for", at the end of v.8, means when she became an age to marry.

In v.9, the expression, "If she is a wall", an obstacle that separates and protects, meant she'd resisted any false love approaches. So her brothers enhanced her own moral defences with reinforcements, called battlements or turrets. On the other hand, "if she is a door" and was prone to open up to the carnal approaches of any male, they would place their own cedar board defences around her to protect her and prevent her from acting immorally. Either way, their father would then be able to provide some kind of proof of her virginity to her husband on their wedding day.

In v.10, the bride said that she'd reached womanhood and was both mentally and physically mature. She testified to her bridegroom that she'd always acted with propriety:

"I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers."

In other words she'd guarded her virginity wholly for Solomon, which gave him confidence that she was a virtuous woman. She proved herself to be entirely acceptable to him and so was able to say:

"Then I was in his eyes as one who finds [or, brings out (v.10b, footnote)] peace."

Thus husband and wife found true and lasting contentment and wholeness in their exclusive marital relationship.

In vv.11-12, the bride continued with a kind of parable. Although Solomon owned a very profitable enterprise, his vineyard at Baal-hamon, he could not buy true love, a reference back to v.7. But his bride effectively said:

'My vineyard, my very own being, is yours, O King Solomon, Master of multitudes. I freely and willingly give my whole self to you.'

I think that the best way to apply vv.8-12 to the truth that Christ finds in the Church an eminently suitable bride for His eternal pleasure is to quote two New Testament Scriptures:

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians ch 5 vv.:25-27).

““Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints”” (Revelation ch 19:vv.6-8).

Verses 13 and 14 record the last words of the bridegroom and bride to each other. It's a 'they-were-happy-ever-after' ending. He saw her speaking to her companions – no doubt she was telling them what a wonderful husband she had. He interrupted her with, “Let me hear [your voice].” How he delighted in the expressions of love from His bride and so, once more and finally, he draws her from everything else to himself. She responded, “Make haste, my beloved”, for in reality, she cannot bear even the smallest separation from him. These two verses pick up on their earlier exchanges of fervent desire to be with each other, to commune with each other, and to experience true love with each other.

We must apply these thoughts to ourselves by using Paul's words in Philippians ch 3:vv.10-12, where he expressed his heart's desire was to know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and to share in His sufferings. Paul's goal in life was to obtain the prize in Christ Jesus, for he himself had been taken possession of by Christ Jesus. What in reality do we know of Christ Jesus, our eternal lover? And if we apply these thoughts to Christ and His love for His Church, we've already seen that He wants His bride to be with Him in the embrace of His eternal love. But applying these thoughts to restored and redeemed Israel, Jehovah will say to them:

“Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. [I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach. Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.](#) At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” says the LORD” (Zephaniah ch 3: vv.14-20).

And so we come to the end of our series about, perhaps, one of the most mysterious books in all Scripture. The Song of Songs has one great theme, love. It poetically expresses that pure husband/wife intimate affection, which should characterise every Christian marriage. But we've rightly applied these expressions to divine love, to the Christ and His Church relationship. Brothers and sisters, fellow believers in Him, let's read The Song of Songs again and let's take in afresh the utterances of our Lord as He speaks to, and speaks of, His beloved, you and me, who are members of His body, His eternal Bride. Let's reread the words of the bride as she gives expression to her feelings for the one who had taken total possession of her – that:

“He is altogether lovely” (ch 5: v.16, NKJV).

But we must finish with the bridegroom’s overriding desire, in ch 8: v.13, to hear his beloved’s voice. Previously he’d said to her:

“Come away [my beautiful one]” (ch 2 :v.10)

“Come with me...my bride” (ch 4: v.8).

In ch 8: v.14, her response was:

“Make haste, my beloved.”

These exchanges remind me of those in Revelation 22, where the Lord Jesus says:

“Behold, I am coming soon” (v.12).

To which:

“The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price” (v.17).

“He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen” (vv.20-21).

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk, The triumph of love, from our series on The Song of Songs, talk No. T1263.

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