

I am starting today's message with Spurgeon's introduction to his sermon on verse seven. *WE need to lift up our hearts to God and ask to be quickened in grace, or the precious truths in our text will not prove to us "as honey out of the rock" (Deut. 32:13ⁱ; Ps. 81:16ⁱⁱ), nor the "feast of fat things...a feast of wine on the lees well refined". (Is. 25:6ⁱⁱⁱ) We cannot appreciate the spirituality of this book unless God's Spirit shall help us. Many read these words and only see a proof of the imaginative power of an eastern mind. Some read to scoff and blaspheme, and others, even good people, neglect to read this book altogether, being unable to drink in its spirit because of their lack of that higher life of communion with the Beloved which is here so beautifully laid open to our view. Now, I am persuaded better things of you beloved. I am sure that you believe that every word of God is precious, and most certainly we say of this book, it is "more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Ps. 19:10^{iv}) This book of the Canticles (Songs) is most precious to us; it is the inner court of the temple of truth. It seems to us to belong to the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High. **We see our Saviour's face in almost every page of the Bible, but here we see his heart and feel his love to us. CHS***

Mitchel's commentary informs us that *In sum, chapter 1 consists of one complete cycle: the consummation of the marriage (1:2–4), the prior period of courtship (1:5–8), the wedding ceremony itself (1:9–11), and then another picture of the marriage's consummation (1:12–17).*^v

⁹ *I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.* Song of Songs 1:9 If Mitchell is correct in his overview of the passage, Solomon is looking at the Shulamite dressed for the wedding. The Egyptians would only have stallions pull their chariots. Solomon seems to be saying that she is like a mare loose among the stallions. In other words, she is desired by all the men. Horses are beautiful creatures. Here in the Southwest we admire their form in art. Solomon was continuing to reassure her of her attractiveness not just to him but to all men.

Horses represent strength. She may have seen herself as weak, but Solomon sees the strength of her character. He has addressed both her concern for her attractiveness and her insecurity in her strength. I believe the Lord does the same with us. He sees the image of God in us that we often fail to see (Genesis 1:27^{vi}). He delights in us as Solomon delighted in the Shulamite. Can you receive that? How does it change how you see yourself? How does it inform you of God's heart for you? Selah!

This reminds me of an expression from C. S. Lewis. He wrote that if we could see the future beauty of the believers we are speaking with today, we would be inclined to fall down and worship them.^{vii} The glory of our future state will be the glory of God shining through us (Revelation 21:9-11^{viii}). Throughout this song we will be reminded how each of us is special to God, His work of art, or as Paul wrote in Ephesians, we are His poem (Ephesians 2:10 Greek^{ix}).

¹⁰ *Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels.* Song of Songs 1:10 She is beautifully arrayed with jewelry for the wedding in such a way as to accent her natural beauty. This may have a connection with the way Pharaoh decorated the stallion's bridle that pulled his own chariot. Pharaoh's chariots were for warfare, but during the reign of Solomon Israel was at peace with Egypt, one of their trading partners.

Solomon cemented the peace by marrying a daughter of Pharaoh. To see the Shulamite as a mare among Pharaoh's chariots may picture the church within the world. The beauty of the gifts of the Spirit causes us to be desirable to those seeking truth.

¹¹ *We will make for you ornaments of gold, studded with silver.* Song of Songs 1:11 If “we” here is the voice of the choir, they tell her they will make such adornments to accent her beauty. Being from an agricultural family, her ornamentation was probably not her own but a gift from Solomon. The choir seeing Solomon’s favor on her want to add wedding gifts of ornaments of gold and silver. Can we see these as the gifts of the Spirit expressed in our lives as we mature in Christ, beautifying us for our wedding with Christ (Galatians 5:22,23^x)? And when others see His gifts in us, they want to honor those God given gifts., All Bible readers should understand that in the making of the temple, gold represented holiness and silver redemption. The picture then is of the bride of Christ redeemed and adorned with holiness.

Glassius takes a different approach. *“The church, the bride of Christ, is beautiful because she has been endowed with many spiritual gifts and virtues (Ps 45:14–15^{xi}; 1 Pet 3:3–4^{xii}). Glassius considers the plural “we will make for you” (Song 1:11) to be the assurance spoken by Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and he relates the verse to Jn 14:23^{xiii}, where Christ refers to himself and the Father and says that if anyone believes in him, “we will come to him and we will make [our] dwelling beside him.” God will grant even more spiritual gifts (Phil 1:6^{xiv}, 9^{xv}; Col 1:9^{xvi}).^{xvii}*

¹² *While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance.* Song of Songs 1:12 Nard is likened to the fragrance of Christ and is the anointing substance for kings. This is what Mary anointed Jesus with before the last week (John 12:3^{xviii}). The scent of a king went with Him through the whole gruesome ordeal.

Spurgeon wrote, *Certain divines have doubted the inspiration of Solomon’s Song; others have conceived it to be nothing more than a specimen of ancient love songs, and some have been afraid to preach from it because of its highly poetical character. The true reason for all this avoidance of one of the most heavenly portions of God’s Word lies in the fact that the spirit of this Song is not easily attained. Its music belongs to the higher spiritual life, and has no charm in it for unspiritual ears. The Song occupies a sacred enclosure into which none may enter unprepared. “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Ex. 3:5^{xix}) is the warning voice from its secret tabernacles.* CHS

The couch is translated in the KJV as the couch that one lay on around a dining table. The context however shows it is probably referring to the king’s bed. This is the consummation of their union, another way of expressing verse 4, *The king has brought me into his chambers.* It seems clear that the whole song is about the joys of marital love and intimacy that this couple experience. O’Donnell writes, *“My beloved is mine, and I am his” (v. 16a). That’s language of mutual possession. That’s Bible talk for “leave and cleave [ESV, hold fast] ... [and] become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24; cf. Hosea 3:3; 1 Corinthians 7:3, 4). That’s covenant formula language—“I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 7:23; 11:4; cf. 1 Peter 2:9, 10). That’s the material of marriage vows—“Do you take this man to be your husband? And do you take this woman to be your wife?”^{xx}*

Was this nard upon her body, and if so, it is like the Pauline passage. ¹⁵ *For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are*

perishing. ¹⁶ *To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?* 2 Corinthians 2:15,16 (NIV) Indeed, who is equal to such a task, to carry the fragrance of Christ into the world? It must be the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Our intimacy with Christ, the time we spend with Him in the Word and prayer, means His fragrance becomes our fragrance. The more time we spend with Him the more His fragrance clings to us.

This is symbolic of the sense people have as we interact with them in all the fruits of the Spirit. The bride of Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, is hopelessly in love with Him. People can sense God's presence. We will see myrrh, nard, and henna throughout the song in association with the couples' intimacy. Fragrances are one of the ways in which our minds associate an experience and fix a memory.

¹³ *My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh that lies between my breasts.* Song of Songs 1:13 "My beloved" - the term will be used 25 times, sometimes by the man and sometimes by the woman. It is a term of endearment. The two belong to one another. Can you hear Jesus call you His beloved? Will you call Him "my beloved"? The most frequent quote from this book is engraved on my ring in Hebrew, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." It is an expression often used at weddings.

What a picture and what rich Biblical connections! Women of that day wore a sachet of myrrh on a necklace to mask body odors. Jesus covers our humanity and makes us a pleasant fragrance to those who are hungering after God. It is His life within our hearts that makes our lives beautiful to God and man. We find that without His presence life has no lasting joys, all is vanity and striving after the wind (Ecclesiastes 2:17^{xxi}). **It is the man or woman of God who has spent much time with Christ who has the most to add to the church,** not the scholar, or the eloquent, or the wealthy. It is the one who brings the fragrance of Christ among us who causes us to draw near to God (Hebrews 10:22^{xxii}).

Psalms 45 is a messianic psalm that parallels this song. Verse 8^{xxiii} of that psalm tells us the king's robe smells of myrrh and aloes. The psalm presents the king as the God man. It tells of His queen in gold of Ophir. Because Christ is King of kings, His bride is the queen clothed in His holiness (Romans 13:14^{xxiv}). It goes on to say that if we will forget our people (culture) and our father's house (family- which is to put Jesus first) the king will desire our beauty. Is Jesus more precious to you than your country and family? When He is first in our hearts, He sees us as beautiful, a reflection of His godliness.

John 19:39^{xxv} tells us Nicodemus anointed Jesus' body with myrrh and aloes. It was with Jesus' death that Jesus purchased His queen and made her holy, that golden robe. He could not be nearer or dearer than lying between her breasts near her heart. This may imply that even when He is not near her, the assurance of his love is always with her.

This preciousness of our fellowship with Christ in this fallen world is brought out in these verses from Benjamin Beddome: *What is the world with all its store? 'Tis but a bitter sweet; When I attempt to pluck the rose A pricking thorn I meet. Here perfect bliss can ne'er be found, The honey's mixed with gall; Midst changing scenes and dying friends, Be Thou my all in all.*

¹⁴ *My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi.* Song of Songs 1:14 Henna was used for cosmetics and perfume. Like the well-watered fragrant henna blossoms, she loved his appearance and fragrance. Engedi is a stream near the Dead Sea. All around is an almost barren landscape, but as you approach the mouth of this canyon the effect of water is seen in the date palms and in that day the vineyards.

In other words, in a life that can be routine and lacking in zestful freshness, Solomon was like an oasis of invigorating and pleasant change. He was her spice of life, a reason to work on through the daily routines, something that was set before her to keep her going and looking forward to their time together. What a beautiful way to say how she longed to be with Him always.

Is Jesus your beloved, like a pleasant oasis to you? Do you long for that time in His Word and hearing His Spirit speak to your heart? Or has religion been to you a dry desert? **Her all-consuming relationship with her beloved is something our hearts long for. It is only found in Christ.** You may find a shadow of it in a committed marital relationship, but there is so much more. If this sounds like a fantasy to you, let me encourage you to ask Jesus to make it a reality in your life. Ask to have a greater revelation of His love for you. Let His Word speak to your heart. Take time with Him and enjoy His presence like a fragrant beautiful stream in this desert world. He promises, “*Seek and you will find!*”

¹⁵ *Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.* Song of Songs 1:15 In verse 8 the king already told her she is the most beautiful of women. Now in the intimacy of their marriage bed he tells her two more times in this verse. Men, take note! Our wives need to know we are attracted to them. He is saying, Look! I think you are gorgeous. Did you hear me? You are gorgeous! They are obviously face to face because his next words are a complement to the windows of her soul, her eyes. I am not sure what is meant by doves, but it may be the oriental shape and pure white of a dove to which he is referring. He will use the expression again later in the song and she will use the same expression of his eyes (5:12^{xxvi}). It must have been the ultimate expression of that day of beautiful eyes. Verbally complementing each other heightens desire and intimacy.

I often think what it would be like to look into the eyes of Jesus, and see His eyes fixed on mine. He would be looking into the depths of our soul. And yet, even then, He would say, “You are beautiful my love!” That is because He sees the work in us complete, and we will be on that day we see Him face to face (1 John 3:2^{xxvii}). In the sermon on our final chapter of Revelation, I described His eyes as flames of love and zeal toward us (Revelation 22:4^{xxviii}; Song of Songs 8:6^{xxix}).

Will you hear Him say this to you? “*Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful!*” It is not a physical desire as expressed here in the song, but something much deeper. **It is a desire to be united in heart forever.** Think of it. The One who made you, formed you, set out the days of your life (Psalm 139:16^{xxx}), knows all that you have thought and done, and still He desires to bring you to perfection and to share wondrous eternity with YOU. Selah!

Do you want to know how to be beautiful in His eyes even now? Again, Psalm 45 is the key. *Forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty* (verses 10b, 11a). In other words, put Him first above culture and family. He must be our first love. Because love begets love, as you receive His love you love Him more and then you experience more of His love, and then you love Him more and ... well, increasingly experiencing God's love is increasing bliss (1 John 4:19^{xxxi}).

In this world our ego or selfishness is offended and love ebbs and flows. There will be no ebbing in eternity, only increase. Begin to experience it now in your quiet times with Jesus. Look into His eyes of love and let that love wash over you. The more

that we accept His love the more enamored with Him we become. The transient things of this world fade in comparison (2 Corinthians 4:18^{xxxii}). Clara Scot's hymn reads, *Open my ears that I may hear, Voices of truth Thou sendest clear; And while the wave notes fall on my ear, Everything false will disappear.* It is not that we must force ourselves to pull away from what distracts us from Him, but rather that those things lose their appeal because we have found the One who is incomparable. We cry out with the Apostle, ³³ *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!* ³⁴ *“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”* ³⁵ *“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”* ³⁶ *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* Romans 11:33-36

You might think this pastor is losing it, applying this love poem to Jesus' love for us, but I *know* it is about Jesus, for Jesus told His disciples the entirety of Scripture is about Him (Luke 24:27^{xxxiii}). Yes, it does address marriage, but it is so much more. Jesus said so!

¹⁶ *Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful. Our couch is green;* ¹⁷ *the beams of our house are cedar; our rafters are pine.* Song of Songs 1:16,17 She responds in kind. The beauty is His. He is her beloved, and not only is He beautiful and the source of our beauty, but he is truly delightful. His love brings us great delight. The couch being green, represents the fruitfulness of their time together. The couch is the furniture upon which people reclined to have fellowship as they dined together. It reminds us of Revelation 3:20^{xxxiv}. It is time spent leisurely enjoying one another. Do you open the door when He knocks and take that time or are you in too big a hurry? Or it may refer to an even deeper intimacy of the marriage bed and the children that will come from their love.

King David's house was made of cedar which was inherited by Solomon (2 Samuel 7:2^{xxxv}). Cedar is a fragrant wood that resists decay. Their home will endure the test of time. As I began writing notes of this sermon, I noticed I was sitting in a room with a green couch with pine rafters. It bowled me over. I felt it is personal to me, but it is just as personal to each of you. You are loved. Your destiny is eternity in the glorious city of Zion, face to face with Jesus, basking forever in His wondrous love!!!

The chorus of Clara's hymn can be the prelude of our time alone with Jesus. *Silently now I wait for Thee, Ready, my God, Thy will to see; Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit Divine!*

Questions:

- 1 With what does Spurgeon compare this book?
- 2 In verse 9 what does Solomon call her? Compare her to?
- 3 How does he see her? How does God see us?
- 4 What are the two interpretations of "we" in verse 11?
- 5 Why is Song of Songs avoided by so many?
- 6 What does her nard represent?
- 7 In verse 13 how does she refer to Solomon? Can you relate?
- 8 What does the nard represent?
- 9 Why refer to Engedi?
- 10 Take a moment and imagine Jesus speaking verse 15 to you!

ⁱ Deuteronomy 32:13 (ESV)

¹³ He made him ride on the high places of the land, and he ate the produce of the field, and he suckled him with honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.

ⁱⁱ Psalm 81:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ But he would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Isaiah 25:6 (ESV)

⁶ On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

^{iv} Psalm 19:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

^v Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 2003), 643.

^{vi} Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

^{vii} “It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dulllest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare.

From C.S. Lewis *Weight of Glory*

^{viii} Revelation 21:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

^{ix} Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

^x Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

^{xi} Psalm 45:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ In many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions following behind her. ¹⁵ With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king.

^{xii} 1 Peter 3:3-4 (ESV)

³ Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.

^{xiii} John 14:23 (ESV)

²³ Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

^{xiv} Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

^{xv} Philippians 1:9 (ESV)

⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,

^{xvi} Colossians 1:9 (ESV)

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

^{xvii} Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 2003), 647

^{xviii} John 12:3 (ESV)

³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

^{xix} **Exodus 3:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

^{xx} Douglas Sean O'Donnell, *The Song of Solomon: An Invitation to Intimacy*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 55.

^{xxi} **Ecclesiastes 2:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

^{xxii} **Hebrews 10:22 (ESV)**

²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

^{xxiii} **Psalms 45:8 (ESV)**

⁸ your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;

^{xxiv} **Romans 13:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

^{xxv} **John 19:39 (ESV)**

³⁹ Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.

^{xxvi} **Song of Songs 5:12 (ESV)**

¹² His eyes are like doves beside streams of water, bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool.

^{xxvii} **1 John 3:2 (ESV)**

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

^{xxviii} **Revelation 22:4 (ESV)**

⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

^{xxix} **Song of Songs 8:6 (ESV)**

⁶ 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.

^{xxx} **Psalms 139:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

^{xxxi} **1 John 4:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

^{xxxii} **2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

^{xxxiii} **Luke 24:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

^{xxxiv} **Revelation 3:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

^{xxxv} **2 Samuel 7:2 (ESV)**

² the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent."