

For those who are joining us at this point in our meditation of this song I should inform you and remind us all that the song is written about Solomon and his bride but pictures for us the love of Jesus for His bride, the church, which is made up of the followers of Jesus (Ephesians 5:32ⁱ; Matthew 16:24ⁱⁱ). The expressions of the bridegroom in this song of songs represent the heart of Jesus for each of us, and for all of us together as those called to believe and follow Him (2 Corinthians 6:17ⁱⁱⁱ).

¹ *I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.* Song of Songs 2:1 Spurgeon and older commentaries read this first verse in chapter two as the words of Solomon. NKJV, ESV, and others interpret this first verse as the bride from chapter one finishing her words to her beloved which now is generally accepted to be the case. Solomon has praised her beauty, and she has praised his, but she is still struggling to see what he sees in her.

According to Trapp, the Septuagint translates rose of Sharon as flower of the field. We do know that the rose of Sharon describes not a proper rose, but a flower found in the Sharon, the low coastal plain stretching south from Mount Carmel in the northern part of Israel. The word translated rose here actually means “to form bulbs.” Some think it refers to the bulb-like fruit produced by a rose bush, the rose hips. Yet according to Carr, “The general consensus is that the plant described here is one of the bulb family. Crocus, narcissus, iris, daffodil are the usual candidates.”^{iv} It is not the small white bell like flowers that we call the Rose of Sharon today.

If this is the correct understanding of her words, then she is saying she is just one of many flowers and does not stand out at all. It goes along with what she said about herself in the first chapter, “Do not gaze upon me because I am dark.” (1:6^v). We can certainly relate. We might well ask the Lord why of all people He has chosen us (John 15:16^{vi}).

Jesus looks at what He is making of you and says what He has said to the bride in 1:15. *Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.* The next verse affirms that in his eyes she stands out as very special. The challenge to us is to receive the words and let them change the way we see ourselves. This is not physical but spiritual. The proud will have no trouble applying it to themselves, but it is pride that causes us to be ugly spiritually. The meek and humble who are disappointed over their spiritual failures and recognize what sinners they truly are will find it difficult to accept, yet they are the very ones to whom it is spoken. We can see the blackness of our soul.

Spurgeon comment on Colossians 1:28^{vii} apply here. *Perfect in Christ. Do you not feel in your own soul that perfection is not in you? Does not every day teach you that? Every tear which trickles from your eye, weeps “imperfection”; every harsh word which proceeds from your lip, mutters “imperfection.” You have too frequently had a view of your own heart to dream for a moment of any perfection in yourself. But amidst this sad consciousness of imperfection, here is comfort for you—you are “perfect in Christ Jesus.” In God’s sight, you are “complete in him;” (Col.2:10^{viii}) even now you are “accepted in the Beloved.” But there is a second perfection, yet to be realized, which is sure to all the seed. Is it not delightful to look forward to the time when every stain of sin shall be removed from the believer, and he shall be presented faultless before the throne, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing? The Church of Christ then will be so pure, that not even the eye of Omniscience will see a spot or blemish in her; so holy and so*

glorious, that Hart did not go beyond the truth when he said—“With my Saviour’s garments on, Holy as the Holy One.”

Then shall we know, and taste, and feel the happiness of this vast but short sentence, “Complete in Christ.” Not till then shall we fully comprehend the heights and depths of the salvation of Jesus. Doth not thy heart leap for joy at the thought of it? Black as thou art, thou shalt be white one day; filthy as thou art, thou shalt be clean. Oh, it is a marvellous salvation this! Christ takes a worm and transforms it into an angel; Christ takes a black and deformed thing and makes it clean and matchless in his glory, peerless in his beauty, and fit to be the companion of seraphs. O my soul, stand and admire this blessed truth of perfection in Christ.^{ix}

It is our recognition of how desperately we need Jesus that draws Him to us, for that recognition comes from the Holy Spirit. And once we have surrendered ourselves to His Lordship, He sees past our present failures to the glorious finished work. He can say, “You are beautiful,” even now because He will finish the work He has started in you (Philippians 1:6^x). That humbles us even more as we behold the generosity of His grace. If we could see as He sees we would say, “What a beautiful bouquet is sitting in these pews this morning with the fragrance of Christ in the air” (2 Corinthians 2:15,16^{xi}).

² **As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women.** Song of Songs 2:2 Solomon takes his expressions of love even further than the first chapter. He rejects her description of herself as a common flower of the field of which there are many, and says she is superior by far, “*a lily among the brambles. So is my love among the young women.*” In other words, when she is among the young ladies, she stands out like a flower in a patch of thorny weeds. That is how special she appears to him, and that is how special you are to God!

Let us not skip over the fact that He calls her “my love” again as he did in 1:9^{xii}. The expression in Hebrew is “companion”, but in this context it might be translated as “my darling,” like terms of endearment that we use for our spouse. This was a common word but used in an uncommon way. The Lord Jesus should be that to us. He has chosen us as his eternal companion. He should be the one we turn to for counsel, direction, comfort, assurance, and love, as our constant companion.

If only a few enter the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13^{xiii}), and they are those who are clothed in Christ Jesus, the application to each of us who are in Him is certainly valid. As you walk in this world, God sees you as a lily among the brambles. Will you let your heart receive this truth? To God you are beautiful and unique because you are accepted in the Beloved (1:6^{xiv}). You have chosen Jesus instead of the world. Jesus says, “*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.*” John 15:9 It should give us confident assurance knowing that it does not matter what the world thinks of us, we are the beloved of God. The world may reject us, but we are accepted in Christ by God. Hear Him call you “my love, my darling, my companion.”

Spurgeon comments, *You may each one of you say with the Apostle, “He loved me” (Gal 2:20^{xv}), and you may read it in any tense you please — He loved me; he loves me; he will love me, for he gave himself for me. This shall be your song in heaven — “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood”, to him be glory! (Rev. 1:5^{xvi}) Let your hearts saturate themselves with this honeyed thought; heaven lies hid within it; it is the quintessence of bliss — Jesus loves me. It is not in the power of words to set out the charming nature of this fact, it is a very simple proposition; but the*

heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of it, surpass our knowledge. That such a poor, insignificant, unworthy being as I should be the object of the eternal affection of the Son of God is an amazing wonder; yet wonderful as it is, it is a fact! To each of his people he says this morning by the Holy Spirit, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3^{xviii}) Each one of us may rejoice in the title under which our Lord addresses us — "My love".

I read this book every year to break my heart anew. I have some idea of how short I fall from God's glory (Romans 3:23^{xviii}), how my thoughts and actions are so often repugnant. And yet, His grace sees past all my present failures to the day I see Him face to face and my whole being is conformed to His likeness (1 John 3:2^{xix}). What grace! What love! What forbearance and mercy! How could I not love such a One who loves me so. This love is manifested even now in the good gifts of this life, for which I should be so grateful. Every good gift we receive is a gift from the One whom our soul loves, who has chosen us and showers us daily with His love and grace (James 1:17^{xx}).

Again, from Spurgeon: *This love, wherever it has been revealed to its object, is reciprocated. If the Lord has really spoken home to your soul and said, "I have loved you", your soul gladly answered, "This is my Beloved and this is my Friend; yea, he is altogether lovely." (Song 5:16^{xxi}) For what says the spouse in another place? "My Beloved is mine and I am his." (Song 2:16^{xxii}) I am his beloved, but he is my beloved also. By this, dear hearer, you shall know whether this text belongs to you or not. What do you say when Jesus asks you, "Lovest thou me?" (Jn. 21:15-17^{xxiii}) Is your heart warmed at the very mention of his name? If you can truly say with Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee", then rest assured you love him because he first loved you. (1 Jn. 4:19^{xxiv}) Do not doubt the fact, but be well assured of it, that love in your heart towards Jesus is the certain and infallible pledge of his infinite, eternal, and immutable love for you. If his name is on your heart, then be sure of this, that your name is on his breast, and written on the palms of his hands. (Is. 49:16^{xxv}) You are espoused to him, and the bands of the mystical wedlock shall never be snapped. This is the first point of the relation of the church with her Lord: she is the object of his love.*

He sees us conforming to His likeness when we look to Him in prayer. He sees the beauty in our generosity and grace towards those made in His image. He counts it beautiful when we forgive as He has forgiven us. Certainly, He sees beauty in our repentance and desire to be holy. Even the little acts of kindness and courtesy that we do and should not count as anything worthy of praise, but He sees us as a lily among the thorns and His heart goes out to us. There is no love that compares with His love. That is what the bride is about to express in the following verses.

³ As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. Song of Solomon 2:3 The woman with more words than the man, as women are prone to do, responds in kind by telling her beloved how she values him. She is no longer laboring under the sun, but comfortably under his shade (Isaiah 49:2^{xxvi}, Psalm 91:4^{xxvii}). She no longer has to labor for her brothers but is under the king's care. This is the place of peace and security in which we find ourselves when we are in the care of the King of kings.

North of my home, in the middle of an enormous patch of blackberries is a wild apple tree. I have climbed through the thorny bushes to get at those tangy apples in late summer and so have the bears. But here the picture is of a woman in a forest that happens

upon a lone apple tree loaded with apples. (This is probably referring to a citron or large pomegranate bush. To the Hebrews pomegranates were a symbol of fruitfulness and often displayed at weddings). That is how she sees him as special among all young men. To be with him is like sitting in the shade of its dense leaves, relieved from the heat of the sun, and then enjoying the sweet fruit that is in abundance.

As a teenager I worked on apple trees in Oak Creek Canyon with beautiful red rock cliffs in the background. There is pruning in the winter, thinning in the spring, irrigating in the summer, and harvest in the fall. It is hard work. But sitting under the shade on an Indian summer morning and enjoying the fruit still cold from the night is so pleasant. We laugh as we watch the bees drunk from fermented apples on the ground as they attempt to fly. But step out of the orchard and into the wild with scrub oak, mountain mahogany, and cat-claw and things are not so pleasant. I can relate to my beloved being an apple tree among the trees of the forest.

Married couples must maintain this view of how uniquely beautiful their spouse is. It keeps marriage intact by warding off glances toward others and the lying fantasies in our minds that follow. The spiritual parallel is that we must always ponder the goodness of God and how blessed we are in our relationship with Jesus to keep us from the world's idols and lying fantasies.

⁴ *He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.* Song of Songs 2:4 This verse convinces me this is about Solomon as king. Shepherds do not have banqueting houses, which is literally “house of wine,” and wine has already twice been associated with love. The shepherd theory would say it is metaphorical and that the banquet is the shepherd's love. Perhaps, but either way, the woman feels so special, the guest of honor, like *the queen in gold of Ophir* in Psalm 45, with *the people of Tyre seeking her favor with a gift, the richest of the people* (Psalm 45:9^{xxviii}, 12^{xxix}). Love has made her feel that she could not be more honored. That is how we feel being in Christ.

This may be a figurative expression that Solomon publicly made known his love for her. The banner over you who are in Christ is love. All that sit at that table see we are uniquely honored by this banner hung over our place at the table: LOVE. It is a declaration to all that He loves us. It is John 3:16^{xxx} with your name in the place of the word “world.” For God so loved me that He sent His only Son.

⁵ *Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love.* Song of Songs 2:5 At this feast, she asks to be nourished with raisins and apples as she is faint with love. His presence with her and his honor of her make her knees weak. She is asking for more of him. Is that how you feel about Jesus' love and honor of you? You are seated with Him in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6^{xxxi}); is there a higher place of honor? Is not His banner over you, LOVE, the greatest love (John 15:13^{xxxii}). He sustains us with living water (John 7:37,38^{xxxiii}) and the bread from heaven (John 6:35^{xxxiv}). He is always ready to give us more of Himself.

Certainly, there is a concern that too much emotion in the church can be distracting. However, I think most services have too little. The emotion we are reading about is so intense as to be overwhelming. Maybe we need to pass out raisins and apples to sustain us while we ponder the greatness of His love for us. When you think of how greatly you are loved, does it make you weak with love? Do tears of joy well up in your eyes. Are you in need of apples and raisins? If not, I would suggest you go to Him in prayer and ask Him to reveal to your hard heart the depths of His love personally for you.

⁶ *His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!* Song of Songs 2:6 Try to take this in. Jesus' embraces you. His eyes a flame of zealous love fixed on your eyes (8:6^{xxxv}). Sometimes when young lovers embrace the woman's knees will go weak. It is from a hormone released in our brain. It is what we call falling in love. But overtime that hormone decreases and another takes its place.^{xxxvi} That second hormone promotes commitment. Let Jesus spiritually embrace you. Melt in His arms. Yield yourself fully to Him. Then move on to lifelong commitment.

Men, I know you are having a hard time seeing yourself as the bride. Let me help you with this part. Imagine your best friend was even better than he is. Imagine he died to save you - pushed you out of the way and took the hit that killed him. Then one day you see him alive. He runs up to you and gives you the hug of a long-lost friend. You know he would do anything for you. Here he is. Alive! What would you feel? That best friend is Jesus (John 15:15^{xxxvii}). He wants to be closer to you than a brother (Proverbs 18:24^{xxxviii}).

⁷ *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.* Song of Songs 2:7 This chorus appears four times in the song (Song 3:5; 5:8,9; 8:4). To adjure someone is asking them to make a pledge or an oath. The Shulamite is asking for a commitment from the virgins.

We can take a lesson from these shy animals. They know the season in which they should mate and wait for it. The instruction is that there is a proper time in each life for marriage, intimacy, and a family. We are to wait on God while keeping our passions in check until that time. O'Donnell takes it to be an admonition from Solomon's beloved to the young virgins to keep this passion in check until they each find the right man and the right place, which is marriage. While the Proverbs tell sons to take a cold shower and watch out for the cougars and hookers, Song of Songs tells the young ladies that love is wonderful, but until the time is right, take a cold shower. Keep your passions in check (Ecclesiastes 3:5^{xxxix}).

Mitchell comments: *The entirety of the canon (OT and NT) confirms that the one and only context for sexual intimacy is marriage. "Do not awaken or arouse" the ardor of passion, says the Song (2:7; 3:5; 8:4), until the wedding day has arrived. Within the bond of matrimony, lovers are free—even encouraged—to express fully the desires with which God has endowed them. Marriage provides a kind of safety net or bond of surety for the one-flesh union, enabling man and woman each to give all for the sake of the loved one in the confidence that the bond is permanent—at least until death parts them, though love is even stronger than death (Song 8:6^{xl}; 1 Corinthians 13). God's longsuffering love moves and enables one to wait until marriage, no matter how long or short the time might be. One must mortify one's own sinful desires. "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the flesh, you will live" (Rom 8:13^{xli}).^{xlii}*

And yet, something more subtle may be going on that you would only hear. in Hebrew. A number of Hebrew scholars have noticed that the Hebrew word for "gazelles" is *sebaoth*, which could suggest the name "Yahweh of *Sebaoth*" (the Lord of Hosts or Armies). And the Hebrew words for "wild does" are *ayeloth hassadeh*, which sound similar to "*El-Shaddai*".^{xliii} In other words, the plea to keep your passions in check is from God, and it is for your good.

But as far as our spiritual life is concerned, you cannot love our Beloved Savior too much. You cannot let Him love you too much. He is the perfect spouse. Marriage in this life points to our relationship with Jesus, but it was never meant to be our ultimate

satisfaction. People search for their soul mate, only to be disappointed time after time because mankind is seeking their own desires. They try to put a human in the void in their heart as they search for unselfish love. It is only found in Jesus. He is the soul mate our hearts long for. Go to the banqueting house of the Word and let His words romance your soul. Let Him embrace your spirit with His own and be enraptured with His love. My prayer is that as you receive this message, you, like the Shulamite, become lovesick and in need of being sustained with raisins and refreshed with apples from His tree.

Questions:

- 1 How does the bride describe herself?
- 2 Who has the same honest tendency as the bride?
- 3 What is Jesus' response to that? Why?
- 4 Review the first Spurgeon quote.
- 5 How can we be assured of our place in Christ?
- 6 How does the bride describe her groom?
- 7 How do we keep ourselves from the world's allure?
- 8 What does His banner over you declare? Who sees it?
- 9 What does the Shulamite adjure the virgins?
- 10 How does this apply to your marriage?
11. How does it apply to your betrothal to Jesus?

ⁱ **Ephesians 5:32 (ESV)**

³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

ⁱⁱ **Matthew 16:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

ⁱⁱⁱ **2 Corinthians 6:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you,

^{iv} David Guzik, *Song of Solomon*, David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), So 2:1.

^v **Song of Songs 1:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept!

^{vi} **John 15:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

^{vii} **Colossians 1:28 (KJV)**

²⁸ Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

^{viii} **Colossians 2:10 (KJV)**

¹⁰ And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

^{ix} C. H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1896).

^x **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.

^{xi} **2 Corinthians 2:15-16 (ESV)**

¹⁵ For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing,

¹⁶ to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?

^{xii} **Song of Songs 1:9 (ESV)**

⁹ I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.

^{xiii} **Matthew 7:13 (ESV)**

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

^{xiv} **Ephesians 1:6 (KJV)**

⁶ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

^{xv} **Galatians 2:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

^{xvi} **Revelation 1:5 (ESV)**

⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

^{xvii} **Jeremiah 31:3 (ESV)**

³ the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

^{xviii} **Romans 3:23 (ESV)**

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

^{xix} **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.

^{xx} **James 1:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

^{xxi} **Song of Songs 5:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

^{xxii} **Song of Songs 2:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies.

^{xxiii} **John 21:15-17 (ESV)**

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.”

¹⁶ He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.”

¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.

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

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

^{xxv} **Isaiah 49:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.

^{xxvi} **Isaiah 49:2 (ESV)**

² He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away.

^{xxvii} **Psalms 91:4 (ESV)**

⁴ He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

^{xxviii} **Psalms 45:9 (ESV)**

⁹ daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

^{xxix} **Psalms 45:12 (ESV)**

¹² The people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of the people.

^{xxx} **John 3:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

^{xxxi} **Ephesians 2:6 (ESV)**

⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

^{xxxii} **John 15:13 (ESV)**

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

^{xxxiii} **John 7:37-38 (ESV)**

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

^{xxxiv} **John 6:35 (ESV)**

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

^{xxxv} **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.

^{xxxvi} Phenylethylamine is the hormone that is responsible for feeling like we are falling in love, but oxytocin the hormone that causes us to bond and increases commitment.

^{xxxvii} **John 15:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

^{xxxviii} **Proverbs 18:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

^{xxxix} **Ecclesiastes 3:5 (ESV)**

⁵ a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

^{xl} **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.

^{xli} **Romans 8:13 (ESV)**

¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

^{xlii} Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Song of Songs*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 2003), 700.

^{xliii} Christ-Centered Exposition - *Exalting Jesus in Song of Songs*