

We have been considering the love between Solomon and the Shulammitte woman as a picture of the love between Christ and the church. Spurgeon beautifully put the parallel this way. *THE things which are seen are types of the things which are not seen. The works of creation are pictures to the children of God of the secret mysteries of grace. God's truths are the apples of gold, and the visible creatures are the baskets of silver.* In our passage for today we continue to look into the mystery of the love that Christ has for us and consider the love with which we should respond.

⁸ The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. ⁹ My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, looking through the lattice. Song of Songs 2:8,9 The first exclamation, "The voice of my beloved," reminds me of a missionary woman, Darlene Rose, who survived being a Japanese prisoner of war.ⁱ She endured horrendous conditions for years and was often on the verge of starvation. Her husband was beheaded. But through the trials she drew near to God and saw God do miracles. When she was finally liberated, she boarded a ship to the USA. Approaching the mainland, she was able to use the ship's phone to call her mother and let her know she had survived. Her mother answered with normal greeting, "Hello." She knew her mother's voice. A flood of emotion poured out from her at the sound she thought she might never hear again in this life. She later said it was so similar to the times the Lord spoke to her in her hour of need. She knew His voice, and the sound of it in her spirit had the same effect. The One she loved was speaking words of love. Jesus said of the good shepherd, *"The sheep follow Him, for they know His voice"* (John 10:4ⁱⁱ, 16ⁱⁱⁱ). Do you know the voice of your Beloved?

The Shulammitte describes Solomon as a gazelle or young stag leaping and bounding through the mountains and hills to arrive at her home. It speaks of his virility and passion to be with her. He is described not as a lion or some other ravenous beast, but as a powerful eager young stag. He is peering in, hoping she is there. Young love stands outside the house tossing tiny pebbles up to the window of her room, hoping not to rouse the parents but to see the face he loves and that she will sneak away to be with him. This is a description of how eager Jesus is to have our love and devotion. (Jeremiah 31:3^{iv}).

We sometimes have the impression that with all God must deal with, how could God have time for us as an individual. Solomon is a limited example in that regard for he was ruling Israel at the height of its expansion. There were affairs of state too numerous to count, and yet, love for his bride took priority. God in His infinite capacities can handle the universe, the billions of people whom He loves individually, along with the myriad of angels, with ease. Never think He is too busy to hear your heart. He is eager to meet with you and longs for us who have limited capacities to focus our all on Him and His love for us (Hebrew 4:16^v).

¹⁰ My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, Song of Songs 2:10 She opens the window and hears his words of love and invitation. He calls her his love, his beautiful one. The human voice is capable of so much variation that we can discern intentions and even sincerity in spoken words. His words went straight to her heart. Can you hear her heart pounding as she savors these words?

The passion and excitement of young love is what the Lord has for us and what He wants us to have for Him. Do you remember it? It is what marriages should endeavor to keep alive. It is what we must keep alive towards our Lord, or we will become like the church of Ephesus that abandoned its first love (Revelation 2:4^{vi}). They did not lose it; they forsook it. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8^{vii}). His love for us does not change and His words will ever be spoken to us in love.

The Greek word that describes the Laodiceans abandonment of their first love, translated as "left," is a forceful form of the verb to go. They chose to leave it behind. We can do that in marriage, and we do that with Jesus. But we can also choose to return, for God says *return to me and I will return to you* (Zechariah 1:3^{viii}). Can you hear the intensity and desire in those words?

To do that, we must be willing to hear the Lord invite us to come away and not put off responding. We often think, "Yes Lord, I will come away as soon as..." But Jesus' call is for that moment, and we must drop whatever priorities would keep us from taking time to be with Him or the moment will pass. Even as I wrote this, I heard the call. My flesh is always arguing that something else is more important. I know many of you can relate. And do you know why that is so? It is because **our old nature knows it will be crucified afresh when we hear His voice and receive His love (Galatians 2:20^{ix})**. Is that not your experience as well? Let us ask the Holy Spirit to always remind us of the choice before us and to recognize how superior the call of Christ is to that of our selfish nature.

¹¹ for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. ¹² The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. ^{13a} The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Song of Songs 2:11-13a The time was right. Spring brings new life and invites us to get out and see the beauty of the flowers and hear the birds singing. The cooing of the turtle dove is one of the signs that spring has arrived. The first ripe figs so sweet to the taste are waiting to be plucked. Grape vines in blossom promise an abundant harvest for wine. When the right time for love comes whatever the season, it is springtime to lovers. It should ever be springtime in our relationship with Jesus who makes all things new. In Him, winter is past, beauty surrounds us, there are pleasant delights and the promise of even more in the future (Psalm 16:11^x).

We can see these same cycles in our lives. There are times of hardship and discouragement, falling into sinful behavior, but then winter turns to spring. We become hopeful again when we fix our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2^{xi}). Then we hear Him say those words He spoke in Revelation. *Come out of her my people* Revelation 18:4^{xii} Come out of Babylon, the hope placed in the things of this world. Gaze on the grace and love of Christ and hear His call to come away. In Him it is always spring and fruit that delights our spirit is abundant.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, our loved One is coming. He has set a date when He will peer through the lattice of the clouds and call out to us, *"Arise my love, my beautiful one, and come away. Winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The time of singing has come."* (1 Thessalonians 4:16^{xiii}). And what a day of rejoicing that will be for all who are in Christ. What songs of praise will be sung by those without number coming out of great tribulation (Revelation 7:14^{xiv}). Not only will the physical war against us have been won by our Savior but the war within us against our old nature will be won as well. We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2^{xv})!

^{13b} *Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.* Song of Songs 2:13b Again He repeats the invitation, calling us His love, His beautiful one, and invites us to rise to new life and come away with Him. Why would we not? What better thing do we have to do? Did he ask twice because she was hesitant, knowing where this would lead? Are we reluctant, because we fear where intimacy with Jesus in prayer might take us, abandoning ourselves to Him so that we follow wherever He leads us? The One who sees us as beautiful, who calls us “my love” invites us again and again to arise and come away with Him and find true soul satisfaction in fellowship with Him.

To do so we must first arise. We must shake off the heavy blankets of the comforts of this world that make us so lethargic. We must forcefully cast those blankets of false security aside by fanning the flame of passion for our love of Jesus. We must know that though the air is brisk and the labor awaits us, that the robe of righteousness is a better comfort in the light of eternity. And when we experience the joy of His presence and the peace that passes understanding in prayer and godly activity, we realize those blankets we left behind were a poor substitute (Romans 13:14^{xvi}). We labor not for the things that perish but for the things that endure to eternal life (John 6:27^{xvii}). *Awake O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you!* Ephesians 5:14 Will you hear His call to you personally, “Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away”?

¹⁴ *O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.* Song of Songs 2:14 A dove in the cleft of the rocky cliff is unreachable, but its whiteness stands out as so lovely. The king invites her to come down, poetically describes her beauty and his longing to look upon her face and hear her voice. Absence has made the heart grow fonder.

When we do not take time to be with the Lord, this is how He feels. He is calling to us to step away from our busyness, to put away the distractions of this world. He longs to be with us and hear our prayers. The personal uniqueness of your voice is what He desires to hear. He made you uniquely in His image (Genesis 1:27^{xviii}). Your voice is sweet to Him. Your face turned toward Him reflecting His glory like the shining face of Moses is lovely to Him (Exodus 34:29^{xix}). Can you accept that this is how He feels about you? Can such love from our Creator be true? If we doubt it, we need to look at the cross (John 15:13^{xx}).

Let me see your face also means to give Him your full attention as in the Aaronic blessing, "make His face shine upon you." It means to look and listen and focus upon you. The groom wants this from YOU, his bride. Will you come down from your busyness, from the distractions of this world and lock your eyes upon His eyes? Just looking upon His face takes the concerns and worries from our face. 2 Corinthians 3:18 tells us ¹⁸ *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* It is in beholding the glory of the Lord that the Spirit transforms our countenance from one degree of glory to another.

¹⁵ *Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.*” Song of Songs 2:15 The vineyard is their fruitful relationship, and little foxes are those attitudes or behaviors or influences that keep the relationship from bearing fruit. What is it that keeps us from spending that time with Him? Foxes were said

to damage the tender grapes before they ripened. Grapes were one of the three essential crops of Israel. Protecting the crop was essential.

The little foxes, those distractions that dart into our minds and keep us from being fruitful, ruin the fruit (intimacy) that we should have been sharing with our Beloved. Bitterness and negativity can be our little foxes that rob us of intimacy with our spouse. *Glickman lists several "little foxes" that may trouble couples: Uncontrolled desire that drives a wedge of guilt and mistrust between the couple. Mistrust and jealousy that strains or breaks the bond of love. Selfishness and pride that refuses to acknowledge wrong and fault to one another. An unforgiving attitude that will not accept an apology.*^{xxi}

We can also develop those hindering attitudes toward God. We may not have our prayers answered the way we desired. Instead of understanding that God knows best and so much more than we do, we become bitter (Proverbs 3:5^{xxii}). The Word tells us to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5^{xxiii}). The vineyard (our relationship with Him) is in bloom. There is so much potential for the future. Do not let those little foxes ruin that! See that your attitudes toward God and others are always gracious and godly. We cannot control our circumstances, but we can control our attitude toward them.

Thinking allegorically, Spurgeon considered aspects in the life of the believer that were like tender grapes that were in danger of being spoiled by the little foxes. He considered these to be tender grapes in the life of the believer: A secret mourning for sin. A humble faith in Jesus Christ. A genuine change of life. A life of secret devotion. An eager desire for more grace. A simple love to Jesus.^{xxiv}

Guard these tender grapes! The enemy of your soul will send little foxes of busyness, temptations, and encourage pride to keep you from being fruitful for the kingdom of God. Love Jesus with all your heart, for He is your Life (Deuteronomy 30:20^{xxv}). In fellowship with others, we learn how to catch those foxes.

16 My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies. 17 Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on cleft mountains. Song of Songs 2:16,17 The bride responds with the reassurance that they belong to one another (Hosea 2:19,20^{xxvi}). Variations of belonging to one another are repeated numerous times in this song. It is the reason for the phrase "until death do us part" in the wedding vows. Marriage is not finding the person that makes you look good, or who pleases you, but rather two people who commit to belonging exclusively to one another.

I have spent time in third world cultures where marriages are arranged. The divorce rate is much lower than it is in the USA. Couples determine to live together not because of the fleeting feeling of being in love, but because commitment is better for stability and for the children of that marriage. In most cases they learn to value what their partner adds to the union. Of course, there are exceptions and sometimes there is abuse, but rarely do arranged marriages separate because they "fell out of love."

Spurgeon wrote of *the ways that I belong to Jesus; ways that "I am my beloved's": I am His by the gift of His Father. I am His by purchase, paid for by His own life. I am His by conquest, He fought for me and won me. I am His by surrender, because I gave myself to Him.*

He followed that with *ways that Jesus belongs to me; ways that "He is mine": He is mine by connection in the same body; He is the head and I am part of His body. He is*

mine by affectionate relationship; He has given me His love. He is mine by the connection of birth; I am born again of Him. He is mine by choice; He gave Himself for me. He is mine by indwelling; He has decided to live inside me. He is mine personally, He is mine eternally. “It certainly does seem a great thing to call him mine; to think that he should ever be mine, and that all he is, and all he has, and all he says, and all he does, and all he ever will be, is all mine. When a wife takes a husband to be hers, he becomes all hers, and she reckons that she has no divided possession in him; and it certainly is so with thee, dear heart, if Christ be thine.” (CHS)^{xxvii}

The second line of 16 could be translated, "He pastures his flock." In other words, he is at work, caring for the flock of Israel. She cannot wait until the sun sets and he comes running to her and turns all his attention to her. Thankfully, we are Jesus' business. He never leaves us or forsakes us. He is big enough to give us each His full attention. We do not have to wait until the day is over. He is always with us (Hebrews 13:5^{xxviii}). But how much do we appreciate that wonderful reality? Are we like this adoring bride? Do we speak to Him often? Do we lift up prayers for the situations we face, seeking His direction? Is our desire to see Him glorified in our work (1 Corinthians 10:31^{xxix})?

The verse has also been interpreted as lilies being lips. She wants his kisses until morning. That would relate to the second verse in the beginning of the song (1:2^{xxx}). As I have already pointed out, this can be a metaphor for those intimate times in prayer when Jesus showers His love and forgiveness upon us. Do you see your times of prayer as duty? If so, it is no wonder it is hard to get around to it. But if we see it as a love feast with Jesus, we will be much more eager to enter our prayer closet and shut the door and forget about the clock and the demands of life in this world (Matthew 6:6^{xxxi}).

The last line is the Shulammitte saying, “Take me! I am yours,” in a poetic way. She is yielding to his request to see her face and hear her voice, and her voice says to fulfill his desire for her. While this is very descriptive of physical intimacy, we should understand that the analogy is spiritual. Rabbi would not allow the young men to study this book because they were concerned that they would dwell too much on the physical and miss the rich spiritual analogies. The Lord wants us to understand how passionate He is that we belong to Him and to know that He is ours. The closest human expression of that is of a couple’s longing and intimacy with one another.

here is a reason that so much is said of the eyes and the voice. The seed of God is His Word, and it is sown by the voice. In His care for us He longs to speak to us and to hear from us. The Word is implanted in us and saves our souls, transforming us into His beautiful bride. 1 Peter 1:23 ²³ *since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;* Romans 12:2 ² *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* Jesus told parables about seeds and declared that the seed is the Word of God (Luke 8:11^{xxxii}).

Young people should look forward to a godly spouse but heed the numerous warnings to keep their passions in check until they are married. Married couples should let this song rekindle their first love and remind them of earlier passion. Those called to be single should find Christ to be all they need. And all of us should see in this song Jesus’ passion for us to be His and our proper response being to surrender ourselves fully to Him.

I can find no better words to conclude this passage than those of Spurgeon. *Oh, that the believer would never be content with having drops and sips of love, but long for the full feast. Oh, my soul thirsts to drink deep of that cup which never can be drained, and to eat of all the dainties of that table which boundless love has furnished. I am persuaded that you and I are content to live on pence when we might live on pounds; that we eat dry crusts when we might taste the ambrosial meat of angels, that we are content to wear rags when we might put on kings' robes; that we go out with tears on our faces when we might anoint them with fresh oil. I am satisfied that many a believer lives in the cottage of doubt when he might live in the mansion of faith. We are poor starveling things when we might be fed; we are weak when we might be mighty, feeble when we might be as giants before God, and all because we will not hear the Master say, "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away." Now, brethren, is the time with you after your season of trouble, to renew your dedication vow to God.*^{xxxiii}

Spurgeon's benediction on this passage: *May God grant that the people who fear his name may be stirred up this morning, if not by my words, yet by the words of my text, and by the influences of God's Spirit! And may you, who have never had sweet seasons from the presence of God, seek Christ, and he will be found by you. And may we all meet in the land where winters of sin and sorrow shall be all unknown.*

Questions:

- 1 How unique is human voice?
- 2 Have you heard the invitation of verse 10?
- 3 Why do we resist the invitation?
- 4 How should we respond?
- 5 What does God desire of us?
- 6 What are the little foxes in your spiritual life?
- 7 What were Spurgeon's suggestions for little foxes?
- 8 In what ways Spurgeon suggest we are God's and He is ours?
- 9 Review the challenge of Spurgeon's final quote.

ⁱ Darlene Rose, *Evidence not Seen*

ⁱⁱ **John 10:4 (ESV)**

⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

ⁱⁱⁱ **John 10:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

^{iv} **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.

^v **Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

^{vi} **Revelation 2:4 (ESV)**

⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

^{vii} **Hebrews 13:8 (ESV)**

⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

viii **Zechariah 1:3 (ESV)**

³ Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

ix **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.

x **Psalms 16:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

xi **Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)**

² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

xii **Revelation 18:4 (ESV)**

⁴ Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues;

xiii **1 Thessalonians 4:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

xiv **Revelation 7:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

xv **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.

xvi **Romans 13:14 (ESV)**

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

xvii **John 6:27 (ESV)**

²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

xviii **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.

xix **Exodus 34:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.

xx **John 15:13 (ESV)**

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

xxi ¹ David Guzik, *Song of Solomon*, David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), So 2:15.

xxii **Proverbs 3:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

xxiii **2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)**

⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

xxiv ¹ David Guzik, *Song of Solomon*, David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), So 2:15.

xxv **Deuteronomy 30:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

xxvi **Hosea 2:19-20 (ESV)**

¹⁹ And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. ²⁰ I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.

xxvii ¹ David Guzik, *Song of Solomon*, David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), So 2:16–17.

xxviii **Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

^{xxix} **1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)**

³¹ So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

^{xxx} **Song of Songs 1:2 (ESV)**

² Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine;

^{xxxi} **Matthew 6:6 (ESV)**

⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

^{xxxii} **Luke 8:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

^{xxxiii} C.H. Spurgeon **A SERMON FOR SPRING** NO. 436 A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 23RD, 1862 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON