

ADDRESSES ON THE SONG OF SOLOMON

by

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CHAPTER TWO

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:4

“**He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love**” (Song of Solomon 2:4).

THE figure of the bride and the bridegroom is used very frequently in Scripture.

Isaiah in the Old Testament says, “**As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.**”

It is used of the Church in the New Testament, “**Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.**” And when the apostle Paul speaks of the divine institution of marriage he says, “**For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.**” And then writing to the Corinthian believers, he says, “**I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.**”

Therefore, this delightful figure of the sweet and intimate marriage relationship is used throughout Scripture to set forth our union and communion with the Eternal Lover of our souls.

I have said that the Song of Solomon is the Book of Communion. We have that beautifully set forth in the first seven verses of this second chapter.

The bride and the bridegroom are conversing together.

We delight to speak with those whom we love. One of the wonderful things about love is that when someone has really filled the vision of your soul, you do not feel that any time that is taken up communing with him is wasted.

Here then you have the lovers out in the country together and she exclaims, for it is evidently she who speaks in verse one, “**I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.**” Generally we apply those words to the blessed Lord; we speak of Him as the Rose of Sharon. We sing sometimes, “*He’s the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star.*”

It is perfectly right and proper to apply all of these delightful figures to Him, for we cannot find any figure that speaks of that which is beautiful and of good report that cannot properly be applied to the Lord. But the wonderful thing is that He has put His own beauty upon His people. And so here the bride is looking up into the face of the bridegroom saying, “**I am the rose** (really, the narcissus, a blood-red flower) **of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys**”—the lily that thrives in the hidden place, not in the town, not in the heat and bustle of the city, but out on the cool country-side, in the quiet field.

Does it not speak of the soul’s separation to Christ Himself?

It is when we draw apart from the things of the world, apart to Himself, that we really thrive and grow in grace and become beautiful in His sight.

I am afraid that many of us do not develop spiritually as we should, because of the fact that we know so little of this heart-separation to Himself. One of the great griefs that comes to the heart of many a one who is seeking to lead others on in the ways of Christ, is to know the influence that the world has upon them after they are converted to God.

How often the question comes from dear young Christians, “Must I give up this, and must I give up that, if I am going to live a consistent Christian life?” And the things that they speak of with such apparent yearning are mere trifles after all as compared with communion with Him.

Must I give up eating sawdust in order to enjoy a good dinner?

Who would talk like that? Must I give up the pleasures of the world in order that I may have communion with Christ? It is easy to let them all go if the soul is enraptured with Him; and when you get to know Him better, when you learn to enjoy communion with Him, you will find yourself turning the question around; and when the world says, “Won’t you participate with us in this doubtful pleasure or in this unholy thing?”

Your answer will be, “Must I give up so much to come down to that level? Must I give up communion with Him? Must I give up the enjoyment of His Word? Must I give up fellowship with His people in order to go in the ways of the world?”

That would be the giving up.

Dear young Christian, do not think of it as giving up anything to go apart with Him and enjoy His blessed fellowship. It is then the separated soul looks into His face and says, “**I am like the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys,**” and He at once responds, “**As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.**” It is the heart-satisfaction that He has in His people.

See the contrast between the beautiful, fragile, lovely lily and the rough, unpleasant, disagreeable thorn.

The thorn speaks of those who are still under the curse, walking in the ways of the world, and the lily sets forth His sanctified, devoted people, those who have turned from the world to Himself.

This is His estimate of His saints, and as this little colloquy goes on—for it is just the soul speaking to Him and He responding, a beautiful holy dialogue—the bride looks up and says, “**As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is My Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.**”

He says to her, “*You are like a lily to Me in contrast to the thorns.*”

And she says, “*And You to me are like a beautiful fruit-tree in contrast to the fruitless trees of the wood.*”

Scholars have wondered just what word should be used here to translate the name of this tree. Is it the apple-tree that we know, or is it the citron, a tree of a beautiful, deep green shade, producing a lovely fruit, like a cross between our grapefruit and orange, a most refreshing fruit?

But the thought that the bride expresses is this: You are so much more to me than any other can possibly be. I have shade and rest and refreshment in your presence. “**I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.**”

How often the Spirit of God employs the figure of a shadow.

To understand it aright you have to think of a hot eastern clime, the tropical sun shining down upon a wayfarer. Suddenly he sees before him a place of refuge, and exclaims as David does in the seventeenth Psalm, “**Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings.**” Again in Psalm 36:7, “**How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings.**”

Isaiah speaks of “**the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.**”

The figure is used very frequently in the Bible in speaking of rest and of comfort found alone in communion with Christ.

There is no drudgery here. You married folk who are here today, do you remember when you first fell in love with the one who afterward became your life-companion? Did you find it hard to spend half-an-hour with him?

Did you try to find an excuse for staying away from that young lady? Did you always have some other engagement so that you would not be at home when that young man called on you? No; but you tried to put everything else out of the way so as to have the opportunity to become better acquainted with the person who had won your heart.

So it is with the believer.

The more we get to know of Christ the more we delight in His presence. So the bride says, **“I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.”** Her bliss was complete.

“Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

You cannot delight in Christ if you are going after the things of the world. **“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon”** (Matthew 6: 24). And so you cannot enjoy Christ and the world at the same time.

Then we go a step farther in this scene of communion. **“He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.”**

This is the place of the soul’s deep enjoyment when all else is shut out, and Christ’s all-satisfying love fills the spirit’s vision, and the entire being is taken up with Himself. This is indeed the **“house of wine,”** the rest of love.

In verses five and six you have the soul so completely enthralled by the one who has won her heart that she does not care to think of anything else.

Then in verse seven we have his tender answer, for it is the bridegroom speaking now: **“I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till she please,”** not *“till he please.”* The word is in the feminine, and the point is this: He sees such joy in His people when they are in communion with Him that He says, **“Now do not bring in anything to spoil this until she herself please.”**

We have that illustrated in the Gospels. Jesus had gone to the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and Martha served and was cumbered about her serving. But Mary took her place at the feet of Jesus and listened to His words. She was in the banqueting house and His banner over her was love. He was enjoying communion with her. But Martha said, **“I have something more important for Mary than that; it is more important that she put the dishes on the table and get the dinner ready.”**

But Jesus said, as it were, **“Martha, Martha, I charge you that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till she please.”**

In other words, *“As long as she is content to sit at My feet and commune with Me, this means more to Me than the most enjoyable repast.”*

When the poor Samaritan woman came to Him at the well outside the city of Sychar, His disciples came and wondered if He were not hungry, but He said, **“I have meat to eat that ye know not of.”** It meant more to Him to have that poor sinner listening to His words, and drawing near to Him and entering into the love of His heart, than to enjoy the food that they had gone to the city to get. Service is a wonderful thing; it is a great thing to labor for so good a Master. But oh, there is something that comes before service, something that means more to Him and should mean more to us, and that is fellowship with Himself!

A husband and father was bereft of his precious wife and had just a darling daughter left to him.

In those lonely days after the wife had passed away, he found his solace and his comfort in this beautiful girl she had left behind, and evening after evening when he came home from work, they would have their quiet little meal together, and then after the dishes had been put away they would go into the sitting-room, and talk or read, and enjoy each other’s company.

But now it was getting on toward the holiday season, and one evening after doing up the dishes, the daughter said, “Now, Father dear, you will excuse me tonight; I have something to occupy me upstairs. You can read while I go up.”

So he sat alone, and the next night the same thing happened, and night after night for about two weeks he sat alone each evening. On Christmas morning the girl came bounding into his room saying, “Merry Christmas, Father dear,” and handed him a beautiful pair of slippers she had made for him.

He looked at them, and then kissed her and said, “My darling, you made these yourself?”

“Yes, Father.”

“Is this why I have been denied your company the last two weeks?” he asked.

“Yes,” she said; “this is my secret.”

Then he said, “That is very lovely, but next time I would rather have you than anything you can make for me.”

Our blessed Lord wants ourselves. Our heart’s affection means far more to Him than service.

And yet there will be service, of course, but service that springs out of communion, and that accomplishes a great deal more than when we are too busy to enjoy fellowship with Him.

Another section of the chapter is from verse eight to thirteen, and that we may call “Love’s Expectation.”

In this section he is absent from her and she is waiting for him to return. Suddenly she thinks she hears his voice, and she springs up saying, **“The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.”**

You and I who know His grace realize something of what this means. He has saved us, won our hearts, as this shepherd lover won the heart of this shepherdess, and He has gone away, but He said, **“I will come again, and receive you unto Myself,”** and when He comes, He will be the glorious King.

- It was the shepherd who won her heart;
- It was the King to whom she was wedded.

And so Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has won us for Himself, but He will be the King when we sit with Him upon the throne.

Does it not stir your soul to think that at any moment we may hear His voice saying, **“Arise, My love, and come away?”**

Listen to the way she depicts it here.

“My beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle [dove] is heard in our land the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

It is not merely the singing of bird as you have it in the Authorized Version, but **“the time of singing,”** when He will sing and we shall sing, and we shall rejoice together, when earth’s long winter of sorrow and trial and perplexity is ended and the glorious spring will come with our blessed Lord’s return.

You see this is just a little poem in itself, a complete love-lyric in anticipation of the bridegroom’s return. How soon all this may be fulfilled for us, how soon He may come for whom our hearts are yearning, we do not know. We have waited for Him through the years; we have known the cold winters, the hard and difficult days; we have known the trying times, but oh, the joy, the gladness when He comes back! He has said, “A little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry.”

“‘A little while’—the Lord shall come,
And we shall wander here no more;
He’ll take us to His Father’s home,
Where He for us is gone before—
To dwell with Him, to see His face,
And sing the glories of His grace.”

We shall then share the glory that He went to prepare. What will that mean for us and for Him! He will have the joy of His heart when He has us with Him.

The closing verses speak of that which should be going on during all the time of His absence.

In the first place, we ought to be enjoying Him anticipatively, and then there should be self-judgment, putting out of the life anything that would grieve or dishonor Him. The bridegroom speaks; may He speak to our souls. **‘O My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock.’** That is where we are resting, in the cleft of the rock.

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Grace hath hid me safe in Thee.”

“O My dove, that art in the clefts of that rock, in the secret places of the stairs,” or *“in the hidden places of the going up.”*

We are moving upward from day to day, soon to be with Himself.

“Let Me see thy countenance let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely.”

Have you heard Him saying that to you, and have you sometimes turned coldly away?

Probably when you arose in the morning you heard Him say, ***“Let Me see thy countenance before you begin the work of the day; spend a little time with Me, let Me hear thy voice; talk with Me before you go out to speak to other people; let Me enjoy a little time with you, the one for whom I died, before you take up the affairs of the day.”***

And you have just turned coldly away, looked at your watch, and said, “I am sorry, but I cannot spare any time this morning; I must hasten to the office or the shop,” and so all day He waited for you. When evening came, He spoke again and said, “Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice,” and you said, “Oh, I am so tired and weary tonight, I have to hurry off to bed.”

Have there not been many days like that? Are there going to be many more? Or will you seek by grace to respond to the love of His heart and let Him see your face and hear your voice a little oftener?

Then we have her response, **“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.”**

You see, her brothers had driven her out to be the vinedresser. Now she thinks of that, and sees a figure there, and says, ***“I know how I had to watch the vines so carefully, and now I have to watch the growth of my own spiritual life. As I set traps for the little foxes, so now I have to judge in myself anything that would hinder fellowship with Him, that would hinder my spiritual growth.”***

What are the little foxes that spoil the vine? I can tell you a good many. There are the little foxes of vanity, of pride, of envy, of evil speaking, of impurity (I think this though is a wolf instead of a little fox).

Then there are the little foxes of carelessness, of neglect of the Bible, of neglect of prayer, of neglect of fellowship with the people of God. These are the things that spoil the vine, that hinder spiritual growth. Deal with them in the light of the cross of Christ; put them to death before they ruin your Christian experience, do not give them any place. **“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines.”**

And now we have the closing words, **“My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.”**

We need to be reminded of this again and again.

The most intimate sweet, and unsullied spiritual relationship is brought before us here. And this is to continue, **“Until the day break, and the shadow flee away.”**

When will that be? When our blessed Lord returns. **“Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether,”** that is, the mountain of separation. He is the object of her soul she abides upon the mountains of separation until he comes back.

Oh, that these things were more real with us all!

We profess to **“hold”** the truth of our Lord’s near return. But does it hold us in such a way that we esteem all earthly things but loss for Him who is so soon to claim us wholly for Himself?

“Let us search and try our ways,” and make sure that we allow nothing in our lives that destroys the power of this **“blessed hope”** over our souls.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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