

ADDRESSES ON THE SONG OF SOLOMON

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

SONG OF SOLOMON 8:6, 7

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned" (Song of Solomon 8:6, 7).

IT is, of course, the love of the bridegroom for his bride that is thus spoken of. We have been tracing the manifestations of it throughout this little book, from the time when the shepherd first looked upon the shepherdess and his heart went out to her until the time when they were united in marriage. It is a beautiful picture, first of the love of Christ reaching us in our deep, deep need, and then that glorious union with Him which will be consummated at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Now you hear the bride exclaiming, **"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm."**

The seal speaks of something that is settled. One draws up a legal document and seals it and that settles it. And so Christ and His loved ones have entered into an eternal relationship, and He has given us the seal, the Holy Spirit. **"After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."**

This is **"the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession."**

That seal is the pledge of His love, and you will notice that in the words that follow we have love spoken of in four ways, at least we have four characteristics of love.

First, there is *the strength of love*. “**Love is strong as death.**”

Second, *the jealousy of love*. In our Version we read, “**Jealousy is cruel as the grave,**” and of course that is often true of human love. It may be a very cruel thing indeed, the word translated “**cruel**” is the ordinary Hebrew word for “*firm*” or “*unyielding*.” It may be paraphrased, “*Jealousy is unyielding as the grave.*” “**The coals thereof are coals of fire, a vehement flame,**” and this expression, “**a vehement flame,**” in the Hebrew text is “*a flame of Jah.*” That is the first part of the name of the Lord God and it is one of the titles of God.

In the third place we have *the endurance of love*. “**Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.**”

And then lastly, *the value of love*. “**If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.**”

First let us meditate on the strength of love; and we are thinking, of course, of the love of our God as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, for Christ is the Bridegroom of our souls.

“**Love is strong as death.**” This He has already demonstrated. “**Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.**” And that giving Himself meant going into death to redeem His own.

“**Love is strong as death.**” We might even say in His case, “*It is stronger than death,*” for death could not quench His love. He went down into death and came up in triumph that He might make us His own, and it is of this we are reminded as we gather at the Lord’s Table. It is this which He wishes us to cherish in a special way when we come together to remember Him. He knows how apt we are to forget; He knows how easy it is to be occupied with the ordinary things of life, and even with the work of the Lord, and forget for the moment the price He paid for our redemption; and He would call us back from time to time to sit together in sweetest and most solemn fellowship, and meditate on that mighty love of His which is “**strong as death.**” Nothing could turn Him aside.

“Love that no thought can reach,
Love that no tongue can teach,
Matchless it is!”

Because there was no other way to redeem our souls, “**He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.**”

When He went through that Samaritan village, they did not receive Him because they realized that there was no desire upon His part to remain among them at that time, but they saw “**His face as though He would go to Jerusalem,**” and they said as it were, “*Well, if He prefers to go to Jerusalem rather than remain here with us, we are not going to pay attention to His message. We are not interested in the proclamation that He brings.*”

How little they understood that it was for them, as truly as for the Jews in yonder Judea, that He **“set His face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem.”** If He had not gone to Jerusalem and given Himself up to the death of the Cross, there could be no salvation for Samaritan, Jew, or Gentile. But oh, the strength of His love! He allowed nothing to divert Him from that purpose for which He had come from heaven. Before He left the glory, He said, **“Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God”** (Hebrews 10:7).

And to do the will of God meant for Him laying down His life on the cross for our redemption. Do we think of it as much as we should? Do we give ourselves to meditation, to dwelling on the love of Christ, a love that passeth knowledge, and do we often say to ourselves, **“The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me”**? Oh, the strength of His love!

Then we think of the jealousy of love.

I know that jealousy in these poor hearts of ours is often a most contemptible and despicable thing. Jealousy on our part generally means utter selfishness. We are so completely selfish, we do not like to share our friends with anyone else; and what untold sorrow has come into many a home because of the unreasonable jealousy of a husband, of a wife, of parents, or of children. But while we deprecate a jealousy which has selfishness and sin at the root of it, there is another jealousy which is absolutely pure and holy, and even on our lower plane someone has well said that, *“Love is only genuine as long as it is jealous.”*

When the husband reaches the place where he says, “I do not care how my wife bestows her favors on others; I do not care how much she runs around with other men; I am so large-hearted I can share her with everybody,” that husband does not love his wife, and if you could imagine a wife talking like that about her husband, you would know that love was gone, that it was dead.

Love cannot but be jealous, but let us see that it is a jealousy that is free from mere selfishness and unwarranted suspicion. When we think of it in connection with God we remember that one of the first things we learned to recite was the Ten Commandments, and some of us were perplexed when we read, **“I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.”**

We shrank back from that because we were so used to thinking of jealousy as a despicable human passion, that we could not think of God having it in His character. But it is He who has a right to be jealous. God’s jealousy is as pure as is His love and it is because He loves us so tenderly that He is jealous.

In what sense is He jealous? Knowing that our souls’ happiness and blessing alone will be found in walking in fellowship with Himself, He loves us so much He does not want to see us turning away from the enjoyment of His love and trying to find satisfaction in any lesser affection, which can only be for harm and eventual ruin. **“The end of these things is death.”**

Paul writing to the Corinthian church says, **“I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ.”**

And then he gives the ground of his jealousy. **“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”**

You see Paul was a true pastor. He loved the people of Christ’s flock and knew that their only lasting joy was to be found in living in communion with their Saviour; and His heart was torn with a holy jealousy if he saw them turning aside to the things of the world, following after the things of the flesh, or being ensnared by the devil. Every God-anointed pastor will feel that way.

Young believers sometimes imagine that some of us who try to lead the flock of God are often needlessly hard and severe, and they think us unsympathetic and lacking in compassion and tenderness when we earnestly warn them of the folly of worldliness and carnality. They say, “Oh, they don’t understand. That old fogey preacher, I have no doubt, had his fling when he was young, and now he is old and these things no longer interest him, and so he wants to keep us from having a good time!”

Let me **“speak as a fool,”** and yet I trust to the glory of God.

As a young believer coming to Christ when I was fourteen years old, the first lesson I had to learn was that there is nothing in this poor world to satisfy the heart, and by the grace of God I sought to give it all up for Jesus’ sake.

The only regret I have today is that there have ever been times in my life when I have drifted into carnality and fallen into a low backslidden state, and so allowed myself something which afterward left a bad conscience and a sense of broken fellowship, and I never was happy until it was judged, and I was once more in communion with the Lord.

If sometimes we speak strongly to you about going in the ways of the world, reminding you that God has said, **“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing,”** it is because we have learned by years of experience that there is no peace, there is no lasting joy, there is no true unspoiled happiness for those who walk in the ways of the world. If you want a life of gladness, a life of enduring bliss; if you want to be able to lie down at last and face death with a glad, free spirit, then we beg of you, follow the path that your blessed Lord Jesus took.

Oh that we might not be turned aside but that we might rouse our souls to a godly jealousy.

I wonder if you have ever noticed that the blessed Holy Spirit who dwells in every believer is Himself spoken of as jealous. There is a passage found in James 4: 4, 5, that I am afraid is not often really understood, but it is a very striking one:

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?”

Take that home, dear young Christian. Do not be seduced by the world and its folly; do not be turned aside from the path of faithfulness to Christ by the mad rush for worldly pleasure and amusement; do not allow the flesh to turn you away and rob you of what should be your chief joy

“The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

It is the next verse that perhaps we might not understand. **“Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?”** One might gather that this expression, **“The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy,”** was a quotation from Scripture, as though He were asking, **“Do you think the Scripture [that is, the Old Testament], saith in vain, ‘The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?’”**

But you can search the Old Testament from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Malachi, and you will not find those words or anything that sounds like them. So it is clear that that is not what is meant. In fact, there are really two distinct questions in the Greek.

First there is the question, **“Do ye think that the Scripture speaketh in vain?”** Do you? Do you think that the Scripture speaks in vain? Having read its warnings and its admonitions against worldliness, against the unequal yoke, against the pleasures of sin, against following the path of the flesh, do you sometimes say in your heart, “I know it is all in the Bible, but after all, I am not going to take it too seriously?” Do you think that the Scripture speaketh in vain?

Why has God put these things in His Word? Is it because He does not love you, and desires to keep you from things that would do you good? That is what the devil told Eve in the beginning. He insinuated that God did not love her. He said, **“God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil”** (Genesis 3:5). And Eve said, **“I am going to eat of it; I will try anything once.”**

Is that what you have been saying too? If you can only do this or do that, you think you will have an experience you have never had before. The whole world is looking for new thrills today. Before you act, put the question to yourself, **“Does the Scripture speak in vain?”**

It tells you that the end of all these things is death and you may be assured the Scripture does not speak in vain.

Then there is a second question, **“Doth the Spirit that dwelleth in us jealously desire?”** And the answer is, “Yes.”

The Holy Ghost dwelling in the believer jealously desires to keep us away from the world and to keep our hearts true to Christ. Do you realize that you never tried to go into anything that dishonored the Lord, you never took a step to go into the world, but the Spirit of God within you was grieved, and sought to exercise you because He jealously desired to keep you faithful to Christ? I am talking to Christians. If you are not a Christian, the Spirit does not dwell in you, and you do not know what this is.

Our blessed Lord wants you all for Himself. People say sometimes, “Well, I want to give the Lord the first place in my heart,” and they mean that there will be a lot of places for other things. The Lord does not merely want the first place; He wants the whole place; He wants to control your whole heart, and when He has the entire control, everything you do will be done for His glory.

A striking little incident is told by Pastor Dolman.

Before the world war he was in Russia holding some meetings in the palace of one of the Russian nobility. Among those who attended the meetings was a Grand Duchess. She was a sincere evangelical Christian. Dr. Dolman was talking one day about a life devoted to Christ, about separation and unworldliness, and when he finished, the Grand Duchess stepped forward and said, “I do not agree with everything Pastor Dolman said.”

“What did I say with which you do not agree, Your Imperial Highness?” asked Dr. Dolman.

“You said it is wrong to go to the theater. I go to the theater, but I never go without first getting down on my knees and asking Him to go with me, and He does.”

Pastor Dolman said, “But, Your Imperial Highness, I did not say a word about the theater.”

“I know; but you meant that.”

“Your Imperial Highness,” said Dr. Dolman, “are you not turning things around? Who gave you or me authority to decide where we will go or what we will do, and then to ask the Lord to be with us in it? Instead of getting down on your knees and saying, ‘Lord, I am going to the theater, come with me,’ why don’t you wait until He comes to you and says, ‘Grand Duchess, I am going to the theater, and I want you to go with Me?’”

She threw up her hands and was honest enough to say, “Pastor Dolman, you have spoiled the theater for me. I cannot go again.”

“Where He leads me, I will follow,” but don’t you start and ask Him to tag along. Let Him lead. Because He knows that your real, lasting happiness and joy are bound up in devotion to Him, He is jealous lest you should be turned aside.

Now we notice the endurance of love. “**Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.**”

How precious that is! How blessedly it was proven in His case. He went down beneath the floods of divine judgment. He could say, “**Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me**” (Psalm 42:7). But it did not quench His love, and through all the years since His people have had to endure many things; they have had to pass through deep waters, to go through great trials, but He has been with them through it all.

“In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them” (Isaiah 63: 9).

In Isaiah 43: 2 we read, **“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”**

Don't you love to have somebody to whom you can go with all your troubles and know He will never get tired of you?

Some years ago I became acquainted with a poor little old lady in a place where I was ministering the Word. She was going through all kinds of sorrow, and she came to me and said, “I would just like to tell you about my troubles.”

I felt like saying, “Dear sister, I wish you would tell them to the Lord.” But I sat down and listened, and now for over ten years I have been getting her troubles by mail, and I try to send her a little encouraging and sympathetic word in reply.

Recently I met her again and she said, “You must be getting awfully tired of my troubles,” and if I had told the truth, I would have had to say, “Yes, I am,” but I said, “What is troubling you now?”

“Oh,” she said, “it is not anything new, but it is such a comfort to find somebody who will enter into them and understand!”

And she was so effusive in her gratitude I was ashamed that I had not entered into things more deeply.

Ah, we have a great High Priest who never wearies of our trials. We weary of hearing of them sometimes because they stir our hearts and we would like to do that which we cannot do; but He has power to see us through. No trial, no distress, can quench His love. **“Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end”** (John 13:1). Somebody has paraphrased it this way, **“Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them all the way through.”** Through what? Through everything. He even loved Peter through his denial, through his cursing and swearing, and loved him back into fellowship with Himself. His love is unfailing. Having taken us up in grace, He loves to the end.

Let us look now at the value of love.

Can you purchase love? Can you pay for it? I was in a home at one time where a very rich man of seventy years of age, worth millions, had married a girl of eighteen. Her ambitious, worldly-minded mother had engineered the marriage. I could not help noticing that young wife off in a corner sobbing to herself and crying bitterly, but I tried never to interfere, for I did not want her to tell me what was in her heart. But one day the husband said, “Do you notice how downhearted my wife is?” I said, “She must have had some great sorrow.”

“I am her sorrow,” he said. “She was a poor girl, very beautiful and talented, and, as you know, I have been very successful, and I just thought that I could give her every comfort and could surely make her love me. I know that we do not seem to be suited; she is so much younger than I. But she can have everything, all the beautiful clothes and jewels she wants, and surely any girl ought to be happy in a home like this. But, you know, it is all in vain; I cannot seem to buy her love.”

Of course not. He ought to have known that he did not have that in his heart to which she could respond. They belonged to two different ages, as it were.

“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.”

You cannot buy love, but oh, His love to us creates love in us. It is not the wonderful things that He has done for us, it is not the fact that He has enriched us for eternity, but it is because of what He is. **“We love Him because He first loved us.”**

“His is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above;
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death.”

What a blessed thing to know Him and love Him and be loved by Him!

Oh, to be kept from wounding such a Lover, from grieving His Holy Spirit! For we read, **“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.”**

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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