

ADDRESSES ON THE SONG OF SOLOMON

by

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CHAPTER SIX

SONG OF SOLOMON 5:2-8:5

"I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undented: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love" (Song of Solomon 5:2-8).

WE have a very long section before us beginning with the second verse of chapter five and concluding with the fifth verse of chapter eight.

In this entire portion we have traced out for us in a very wonderful way the interruption of communion and its final restoration. We have already had one similar picture in this book where the bridegroom's absence produced a temporary sense of estrangement. We have that dealt with more fully in this section, where the bridegroom's advances are coldly spurned. If we will remember that the bride speaks of any regenerated soul and that the bridegroom is our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, I am sure we shall have no difficulty in getting the spiritual lesson of these chapters.

We have all experienced interrupted communion. We have all known such periods of glad joy in the Lord as those brought before us in the previous chapter. But how often have we found that, following almost immediately on a period of great blessing and delightful fellowship with the Lord, there may come a time of spiritual dearth and broken fellowship. You recall that in Israel's history they were scarcely through rejoicing over the wonderful victory at Jericho before they were wringing their hands in despair because of the defeat at Ai.

How often in our Christian lives we have similar experiences. Perhaps you go to an edifying meeting where your whole soul is stirred by the singing, by the prayers, and by the ministry of the Word, and you feel as though you would never again lose sight of your blessed Redeemer's face; and yet the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, and within a very short time you find yourself inquiring,

“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?”

And everything seems dark and cloudy and you no longer discern your Saviour's presence. Is there anyone who has had uninterrupted communion with the Lord throughout all the years? I am sure there is not. Even if we imagined so, it would simply be because we lacked that sensitiveness which would enable us to apprehend the fact that He was in some sense grieved because of our behavior.

We have a wonderfully beautiful picture here.

The bride has retired and she is drowsing, just about asleep, and yet a bit restless, when there comes a knock at the door. It is the knock of the beloved one who has returned from a distant journey and he cries, **“Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.”**

We have the same picture in the New Testament in the third chapter of the book of Revelation, in which we see the Lord Jesus waiting outside the door of the Laodicean church. He says, **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”**

But what lethargy there is! How few respond to His gracious request! And so here the bride exclaims, **“I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?”**

There is a fretfulness about it. Why am I disturbed at this hour? Why did you not come at some other time? I have taken off my coat; why should I put it on now? I have washed my feet; why should I defile them? This refers to the eastern custom of washing the feet before seeking repose, for in that land they wore sandals and the upper part of the foot had no covering. In other words, she did not want to bestir herself even so much as to open the door to him. Have you never known similar experiences?

Have you never been so much concerned with your own affairs, with seeking your own ease, with self-pleasing, that when His voice called you for an hour of communion and fellowship with Him, you really repelled His advances, instead of gladly throwing open the door and saying, ***“Blessed Lord, nothing else is worthwhile but to enjoy the sunshine of Thy smile, to enjoy fellowship with Thyself?”***

In this instance, we may see in the bride’s behavior evidence of just such a state of soul. But then, as she lies there drowsing, neither actually asleep nor awake, she discerns something that moves her heart. She says, **“My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door.”**

We will not understand the simile unless we are familiar with those eastern doors and locks. The lock was on the inside of the door, and there was an opening where the owner could, if he had the key, reach in and use the key from the inside to open the door. He comes, but he does not open the door in that way. He has asked admission and wants her to rise and open for him. She sees that hand come through the opening and the moment she does so, her heart is stirred and she cries, **“Oh, I must let him in.”**

And now she rises and hurries to the door and even as she lays hold of the lock, she exclaims, **“My hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.”**

That refers to another eastern custom.

When a lover came to visit the one who had won his heart and found that she was not at home, or if at home, she did not respond to his advances, he covered the lock of the door with sweet-smelling ointments and left flowers as a token of his affection. And so the bride says, **“My hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh.”** It was not a dream then; he had really been there and had gone. But she threw the door open to enable him to hear her cry, “Come, come in!” but there was no answering response. **“My beloved,”** she said, **“had withdrawn himself and was gone.”**

Love is very sensitive. The trouble with many of us is that we fail to recognize this. We have an idea that the beloved one should be ready whenever we are for a time of gladness together, but it is not always so. And so, sometimes when He comes to the heart’s door we practically say, “No; it is inconvenient. I do not want to drop things right now.” But later when we would enjoy His presence we find He has gone.

Have you never had such experiences? Has He come to you and said, ***“I want you to sit down with Me over My Word; I want you to spend a little time in prayer; to dismiss other things from your mind and commune with Me,”*** and you have said, “Oh, but I have so much to occupy me; I cannot do it now.”

Plenty of time for self but very little for Him. And then some wonderful token of His loving-kindness came to you, and you said, “Oh, I must respond to His heart,” and you threw open the door as it were and called, but He was not there.

And did you ever know what it was to go on for days and weeks without any real sense of His presence? **“My beloved had withdrawn himself.”**

If you do not respond to His voice when He comes to you in tender grace, you may seek Him for a long time before you will enjoy fellowship with Him again. Such is the sensitiveness of love. He wants to make you feel that His love is worthwhile, and wants to test you as to whether you are really in earnest when you profess to desire fellowship with Him.

And so as the story goes on, she leaves the house and goes out into the city seeking after him, and as she makes her way from street to street, perchance calling his name and looking here and there and wondering where he has hidden himself, she says, **“The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.”**

You will always have to suffer if you refuse obedience to the voice of Christ when He calls you. You will always have to be tested before communion is restored.

There is a word in the New Testament that has troubled some of our sisters. In First Corinthians 11 we are told that a Christian woman, when she is engaged in worship with the people of God or in public prayer or testimony, is to cover her head with a veil. And people say, “Why the veil?”

The Bible says that the veil is her **“power.”** Is not that a strange thing? In the margin of our Bible we have a rather peculiar interpretation of that. I think it must have been suggested by a man. It says, *“Power, a sign that she is under the power of her husband.”* But I do not think that is it, at all.

This verse, I believe, explains what it means.

The covering on her head is her power. In what sense? Look at it this way. As long as her head was veiled that was her power, but when the keepers saw her going about the streets at night, they misunderstood her motive and character, and they took away her veil. The unveiled woman was marked out as one who was unclean and unchaste; but the covering on her head was the sign of the chaste and modest wife or maiden.

Years ago I was a Salvation Army officer. I remember that our Army girls could go anywhere with those little blue bonnets. I never knew but one in all the years I was connected with them, who was insulted by any one in any place as long as she had that little bonnet on. I have been seeking the lost in the lowest kind of dives on the Barbary Coast of San Francisco, and have seen them come in with their papers and go from one rough ungodly man to another, and ordinarily no one ever said an unkind or a wicked word to them. But once a drunken sailor dared to say something insulting to one of them, immediately practically the entire crowd jumped on him and knocked him down and gave him such a trouncing as he had never had before; and then threw him into the street for the police to pick up. The little blue bonnet was the power of the Salvation Army lassie.

Just so the covered head of the women in that oriental land.

The uncovered head bespoke the immoral woman, while the covered head was her power, and told that she was seeking to live a life of goodness and purity. So here, because the bride has lost the sense of her bridegroom's presence, she is branded as though she were impure and unholy. This shame has come upon her because she did not immediately respond to her bridegroom's call.

She turns for help to the daughters of Jerusalem as the morning dawns and she sees them coming down the street. **"I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love."** In other words, ***"Tell him my heart is yearning for him; tell him I repent of my indifference, of my cold-heartedness and my unconcern, and want him above everything else."***

Christian, is that what your heart says? Are you a backslidden believer? Do you remember times when you enjoyed communion with your Lord, when life with Him was sweet and precious indeed? But alas, alas, that fellowship has been broken, and you are saying with Job, **"Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!"** Does your heart say today, ***"Tell Him that I am sick of love, that my whole being is yearning after Him; I want to be restored to Him, to the sweetness of communion?"***

The daughters of Jerusalem say, **"What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?"**

This one that you say means so much to you, why is he more to you than you might expect another to be to us? The world says, "Why is Christ more to you than any other?"

Why does Jesus mean so much more to us than the things that you and I have known in the world? "Tell us that we may seek him with thee."

Then at once she begins to praise him and laud him. From verse ten to the end of the chapter in wonderful oriental imagery she praises his kindness, his graciousness, his aptness to help, his strength, and his tenderness. She cries, **"My beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand."**

And when she thus praises him they turn again and say, ***"Where has he gone? How is it that you have let him slip out of your sight if he is so much to you?"***

Is that not a proper question? If Christ is so precious to you, if He means so much to you, why is it that you so easily allow fellowship to be broken? Why do you so readily permit other things to come in and hinder communion?

"Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee."

And then instantly as she bears testimony to him, she recalls the last words he said to her before that eventful night, **“I am come into my garden,”** and her own heart was the garden, and she says, **“I know where he is. My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.”**

And instantly he speaks; he is right there. He had been waiting and watching for her to come to the place where he was everything to her soul, and at once he exclaims, **“Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.”**

And then through all the rest of the chapter he praises her; he expresses his appreciation of her as she had expressed hers of him.

In chapter seven, verses one to nine, he uses one beautiful figure after another to tell all his delight in her. It is a wonderful thing to know that the Lord has far more delight in His people than we ourselves have ever had in Him.

Some day we shall enjoy Him to the fullest; some day He will be everything to us; but as long as we are here, we never appreciate Him as much as He appreciates us. But as she listens to his expression of love, her heart is assured; she has the sense of restoration and fellowship.

In verse ten she says, **“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.”**

In other words, he has not turned against her. When we turn from Him, the natural thought of our hearts is that He has turned against us, but He has not. If He allows us to go through trial, it is like Joseph testing his brethren in order to see if there was genuine repentance of sin.

Three times in this little book we have similar expressions to this, **“I am my beloved’s and his desire is toward me.”**

In chapter two, verse sixteen, we read, **“My beloved is mine, and I am his.”** That is very precious. Are you able to say, **“My beloved is mine, and I am His?”**

In other words, Have you given yourself to Him? Have you trusted Him as your Saviour? If you have, He has given Himself to you. Just the very moment you give yourself to Him in faith, that moment He gives Himself to you and comes to dwell in your heart. This is the assurance, then, of salvation. **“My beloved is mine, and I am His.”**

And then in chapter six, verse three, she says, **“I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.”**

That is communion. I belong to him and he belongs to me, that we may enjoy one another together.

And then in verse ten of chapter seven, we read, **“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.”** Every doubt and every fear is gone. She has found her satisfaction in him and he finds his in her. What a wonderful picture! Shall it be only a picture, or is it to be a reality in our lives?

Is it not a fact that so often we do the very things the Shulamite did? So often we turn a deaf ear to the Bridegroom's voice. We can be so busy even with Christian work that we do not take time for Him. I can be so occupied with preaching that I do not have time for prayer. I can be so taken up with preparing sermons that I do not have time to feed on the Word. You may ask, "Why, how can you prepare sermons without feeding on the Word?"

It is one thing to study the Bible in order to prepare an address which I am to give to other people, but it is another thing to sit down quietly in the presence of the Lord and say, "*Blessed Saviour, as I open Thy Book I want to hear Thy voice speaking to my heart. I want Thee to talk to me, to express Thyself to me in tones of tender love.*"

As I read in that attitude, He speaks to my soul, and as I lift my heart to Him in prayer, I talk with Him. That is communion.

Do not be content with the knowledge of salvation; do not be content to know that your soul is eternally secure; do not be content to know that you are serving Him in some little measure.

Remember, there is something that means more to Him than all your service, and that is to sit at His feet and delight your soul in His love. As you read this description in the sixth chapter it will remind you of the fulness there is in Christ. It seems as though every figure is exhausted to show His wonder.

"Join all the glorious names
Of wisdom, love, and power,
That angels ever knew,
That mortals ever bore
All are too mean to speak His worth,
Too mean to set the Saviour forth."

Oh, to have the heart so occupied with Him that we shall lose sight of everything else, and Christ alone will satisfy every longing of our souls!

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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