

The Affectionate Love of Christ for Us

Song of Solomon 8:5b - 7

30 January 2022

11:00 AM (Halifax); 3:00 PM (Glenholme & Livestream)

Introduction:

Today we continue in our sermon series in the Song of Solomon.

- We are in the last chapter where the bride's desires for her husband's love are passionately expressed to Him.
 - The whole Song of Solomon opened this way.
 - In chapter 1, verse 2, we found the bride yearning for His kisses: **Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is better than wine**) and the whole Song ends with her calling upon Him to keep on pursuing her (chapter 8, verse 14: **Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.**)
- We have seen that the traditional, and best understanding of the Song is that the bride is the church and that her beloved groom is Christ. It speaks of their love for each other.
 - Before Jesus came, the Jews mostly understood the Song in this way—as speaking of Israel and her promised Messiah.
 - After Jesus came, the church throughout most of her history continued to understand it as the love that is between Christ and His church.
 - We see the testimony of this in the scriptures themselves where the prophets and the apostles, after this Song was written, very often spoke of the church as a woman who is loved by the Lord Jesus as her husband who has betrothed her to Himself.
 - We see references to this bride and groom relationship most notably in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea, then with John the Baptist who calls himself the friend of the bridegroom who is coming to redeem His church—we have Paul speaking of the church as the bride of Christ that He is going to present to Himself, and we have John in Revelation speaking of the fulfilment of this in Rev. 21.

So here we are now, in the last chapter,

- And most of it is taken up with the church expressing her earnest desire for Jesus Christ to keep on manifesting His love to her as His bride.
 - That is certainly true of the portion that I am preaching from today.
 - Last week, I only covered the first part of verse 5 where it says, **“Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?”**
 - This week, I intend to cover the rest of verse 5, along with verses 6 and 7.
 - Here, we see the bride strongly expressing her desire for His love.
 - Here, I believe that she addresses Him—because the pronouns used of the person who is being addressed (as indicated in the Hebrew Masoretic text which is the text that is most generally received) are masculine singular as I have indicated on your handout with the letters **ms** for masculine singular.

- Because the Syriac text has feminine pronouns here, and because it makes interpretation easier if they are feminine, many commentators (both ancient and modern) take it as feminine rather than masculine.
- The original text does not have vowels, so we cannot say for sure, but the Masoretic text is generally thought to be the one that reflects how the text was originally read.
- Moreover, though the passage is more difficult to interpret, it has been beautifully interpreted this way by commentators like James Durham, Matthew Henry, and John Gill, and like them, I prefer not to deviate from the Masoretic pointing (inclusion of the vowels).
- Listen now as I read this passage to you—picking up from the middle of verse 5, Song of Solomon 8:5, after the first sentence.

Song of Solomon 8:5-7: I awakened you (ms) under the apple tree. There your (ms) mother brought you (ms) forth; there she *who* bore you (ms) brought you forth. ⁶ Set me as a seal upon your (ms) heart, as a seal upon your (ms) arm; for love *is as strong as death,* jealousy *as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame.* ⁷ Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised.

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His holy Word.

This, I believe, is the bride's response to the question that we looked at last week when somebody, looking at the church, said (verse 5), **"Who is this, coming up out of the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?"**

- We saw that it was likely the Daughters of Jerusalem, whom we have seen to be the young disciples in the church, who ask this question about the church.
 - They are delighted to see the church, of which they are a part, coming up from the wilderness of sin and death, leaning on her beloved Jesus.
 - They see how the church relies on Him to deliver her from the wilderness of sin and death and to bring her into His house.
 - She leans on Jesus, her beloved.
 - To put it in theological terms, she has faith in Jesus for salvation.
 - The church leans on Him for forgiveness, justification, sanctification, and glorification.
 - She does not look to her own resources or strength, she leans on Him who loved her and gave Himself for her.
 - And we noted that she does not lean on Him merely in the way a person might rely on a tram to bring them out of a wilderness canyon...
 - a mere tool to convey her...
 - but she leans on Him as the one that she dearly loves.
 - As He brings her out of the wilderness of this world and into His Father's house of glory, her love for Him grows stronger and stronger.

- She trusts in Him more and more and she delights in Him more and more.
- And so, seeing the admiration of these young disciples, the bride (we, the church), turn to our beloved Jesus to address Him about His love.
 - There are three things we will look at here:
 - First, from the middle of v.5, we remind Him about how His love for us began.
 - Second, in verse 6, we plead with Him to love us like this forever.
 - Third, in the remainder of v. 6 and v. 7, we speak in praise of love.

Let's get started.

I. We, the bride, remind Him about how His love for us began.

- A. It began when we awakened Him under the apple tree.
 - We say to Him in v. 5 (from the middle) **"I awakened you under the apple tree."**
 1. Do you remember the apple tree (Song 2:3)?
 - First we observed that our beloved stood out from all the other trees like an apple tree.
 - **Song 2:3: Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons.**
 - Then, we **sat down in his shade with great delight...**
 - And declared that **His fruit was sweet to my taste.**
 - 2. This speaks of our faith—our looking to Him for salvation.
 - Sitting under His shade is coming to Him for protection.
 - Eating His fruit is receiving the blessings of His transforming grace.
 - 3. To use the language from last week,
 - It was here that we began to lean on Him that He might bring us from the wilderness of sin and death to live in His house forever and ever.
 - We began to love Him and to lean on Him as He is offered to us in the gospel.
- B. As soon as we came to Him, His heart was stirred with delight in us.
 1. The word "awakened" means "aroused," or "stirred."
 - It is used here of the arousal or awakening of His love for us.
 - There was nothing to attract Him to us before we came under the tree.
 - In fact, we were repulsive to Him.
 - We hated Him and His Father.
 - We were full of sin and defilement, devoid of beauty.
 2. But as we have seen before in the song,
 - It only took one look of love from us to stir up His affection.
 - In 4:9, He said: **You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; you have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes...**
 - He knew that this faith, this looking to Him to bring us out of the wilderness with a desire to be His disciples, was the beginning of new life in us—eternal life.
 - It was the fruit of His saving work.

- One result of His powerful call was that, by the working of His Spirit, He caused us to see that we were hopeless sinners and that He was the only Saviour—it was the call that renewed our heart so that we wanted to be reconciled to Him—to have Him as our God and Saviour.
3. He was thrilled to see it.
- It drew out His affection.
 - He was smitten.
 - He had loved us from before the foundation of the world with a kind of love—a committed love that was resolved to redeem us and draw us to Himself,
 - but it was not until we believed that we became delightful to Him.
 - Before He loved us *even though* we were sinners, but He had no delight in us—we were repulsive and obnoxious to Him.
 - But as soon as we looked to Him for deliverance, His heart was awakened with deep affection and delight in us—He was ravished with our love for Him and we became His bride that He dearly loves.
 - He was awakened to love us as soon as we came under His shade as our apple tree and began to taste His fruit with great delight.
 - What a fine day that was—the day of our espousals, our betrothal.
- But we add something more in verse 5.
- Something about the apple tree.
- C. It was under this same apple tree that He, our beloved, was born.
- Look at what it says:
 - From the middle of verse 5: **I awakened you under the apple tree. There** [under the same apple tree] **your mother brought you forth; there she *who* bore you brought you forth.**
1. This is unique to our Saviour!
- He is both our Husband and a Son born to us.
 - We are, in fact, His mother as well as His wife and we are the children that He brings forth by her.
 - Remember that this is an allegory—using the physical to illustrate the spiritual.
 - The scriptures speak to us of the multifaceted relationship with Him.
 - There nothing crass here, nothing inappropriate.
2. The point is, the church, His wife, received the promise that He would be born to her and would redeem her, and she believed.
- She believed the promise and leaned on Him in the wilderness of sin and death, looking to Him to be born to her as a Son who would save her.
 - She came under Him as her apple tree, delighting in His protection and fruit, and it was in that place of faith that He was conceived and brought forth.
 - Sarah is described as the mother of believing women, and what does the Bible say about her?

- **Heb 11:11: By faith** [leaning on her beloved—under the apple tree] **Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.** ¹² **Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.**
- She and Abraham were under the same apple tree, the place of dependence on Christ, when they brought forth Isaac... from whom Christ eventually came.
 - The church (the woman) continued to look for Christ, remaining under Him as her apple tree, until she brought Him forth.
 - And then He went to the cross to save her, and rose again from the dead with eternal life for her who bore Him under the apple tree.
- Isaiah says, Isaiah 54:1: **“Sing, O barren, You *who* have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you *who* have not labored with child! For more *are* the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman,” says the LORD...** [and then in verse 5 He adds:] **For your Maker *is* your husband, the LORD of hosts *is* His name; and your Redeemer *is* the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.**

TRANS> So you see that everything happens under Him as our apple tree.

- There, we come to Him to lean on Him to bring us out of the wilderness of our sin and death and into His home forever, and His love for us will be aroused.
 - It was under this same apple tree of faith in Him that we, the church, brought Him forth as the Son that God promised who would redeem us.
 - And it is by Him as our husband on whom we lean in faith that we bring forth sons and daughters for His Kingdom who by faith become part of His family—who become also His bride—the one bride made up of many members.
 - We, the bride, are His wife, His mother, and His children, all at the same time.
 - How dearly He loves us—He delights in our faith and our affection.
 - He is ravished with one look of our eyes.
 - And so...

II. We, the bride, considering His ardent love, plead with Him to love us forever.

- Look at verse 6: **Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm.**
- A. A seal is a mark of ownership.
1. We have seals today that are used to authenticate official documents.
 - Corporations, lawyers, universities, and many others will imprint (often emboss) official documents with their seal to say, “This is authentic.”
 - It is a bit like a signature.
 2. In the ancient world, men of rank had seals that they carried with them to use for business transactions or to seal documents that were not to be opened by anyone but the recipient.
 - Each seal was unique, carved out to represent its owner.
 - They would affix it on important papers and letters to testify that “This is mine,” or “This is from me,” or “This is my document.”

- B. Here, we, the bride, are asking Him to testify to us that He will love us forever.
1. God established the pattern that marriage should be ratified with a covenant.
 - a. The couple testifies of their love and commitment before witnesses and before God.
 - They pledge their troth, their faithfulness, to each other until death parts them.
 - b. It is right for a bride to ask her man to testify of the authenticity of his love for her.
 - No woman should be willing to give herself to a man sexually unless he is willing to first pledge his committed love in a covenant of marriage,
 - and no man should take a woman without pledging his love to her.
 - There is to be a commitment to have her alone and her to have him alone until death separates them.
 - c. Seeing that Jesus loves us like a husband, we want Him to assure us that He will love us forever.
 2. We ask Him to set us as a seal upon both His heart and His arm.
 - a. As a seal upon His heart, we are asking for His affections.
 - We want to be engraved upon His heart forever as the one that He loves and cherishes.
 - We want Him, whom we have come to to save us, to see to it that nothing comes between us and Him that would turn Him away from us.
 - This is something unique about Jesus—that He is able to keep us by His powerful grace that drew us in so that our faith and love do not fail.
 - He is able to see to it that we never depart from Him—that we continue to lean upon Him as our beloved who delivers us out of the wilderness.
 - b. As a seal upon His arm, we are asking for Him to act for us.
 - The arm represents His strength by which He protects us, delivers us, and provides all things for us.
 - Ps 44:3 says: **For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them; but it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored them.**
 - We are asking Him to take care of us and to defend us with His mighty arm—that that arm will be employed for our salvation and for our good.
 - That He, who is sovereign over all, would work all things for our good as our husband who dearly loves us.
 - The request for a seal on the arm also speaks of a public display of His love.
 3. I might add that we have every reason to trust Him to do this if we are numbered with those who have come under His protection and care...

- If we are leaning on Him to bring us out of the wilderness of sin and death and to bring us into His Father's house to live with Him forever, we are continually upon His heart and He will continually employ His arm in our behalf.

TRANS> How wonderful it is to be forever cherished and blessed by Him!

- To be set as a seal on His heart and on His arm!

III. Now we, the bride, speak of the excellence of this love.

- You can see this in the remainder of verse 6 and in verse 7.

A. First, this love is excellent because it is as strong as death.

- **vs. 6: For love is as strong as death.**

1. Like death, it pursues the one that it wants until it gets him.

- It doesn't matter how strong you are, death will conquer you, unless the Lord returns before you die.
- No matter how strong you are, if it wants you, it will get you.

2. And I say, is it not a marvellous thing that our love actually overpowers Christ?

- Keep in mind, of course, that it is the love that He works in us.
- But as we saw, He cannot resist us when we have answered His call, when we have come to Him to save us that we might be His forever.
- As soon as He sees our faith which is always joined with our love and desire to belong to Him—the very thing we trust Him for is to deliver us from sin so that we might be His forever...
 - And I say that once He sees that faith that leans upon Him, we have His heart and His mighty arm forever.

3. But this love also works the other way—I mean that He overpowers us with His love.

- First, there is the love that drew us before there was anything attractive in us.
- Then, there is this love that we have been talking about in which He takes great delight in us—and this love is so powerful that it prevails forever.
 - Once His love is set on us, it can never be overcome—not by our sin, not even by death itself.
- It is in fact even stronger than death because it conquers death.

B. Second, this love is excellent because it is fiercely jealous.

- **Jealousy**, verse 6 says, is **as cruel as the grave**.

1. It is very possessive—like the grave, it says, “This one is mine, and you cannot have him.”

- Only with love, it says this as a friend that you delight in who wants to bless you whereas the grave says it as an enemy that wants to hold you down and destroy you.

2. With Christ, jealousy is a beautiful aspect of His love because, although it is fierce, it is not twisted or distorted by unjust suspicion or anything like that.

- There is this holy fierceness from Him toward anything that tries to come between us and Him.

- He has seen our faith and He has seen our love—He has seen our desire for Him and He won't let anything destroy that love and that desire for Him.
 - Does He not chasten us when we start to go astray—not to force us to love Him, but to bring us back to our senses?
 - That is what He does—He helps us to see how foolish we have been to resist Him or to depart from Him.
 - He restores our love.
3. On the day of judgment, we will see His jealous love fully displayed when He crushes those who tried to come between us and Him.
- He will also destroy the vestiges of sin in us—all that remains of our sinful flesh.
 - He will destroy the world. I mean, the system of this world that tries to draw us or drive us away from Him.
 - He will destroy Satan and who constantly tries to come between us and Him.
 - We will see how much He loves us by His zeal in dealing with these enemies.
 - Yes, even the last enemy, death, will be destroyed in that day.
 - His jealousy will remove everything that tries to stand or that does stand between us and Him.
 - Even now, He is already bringing us up from the wilderness with jealousy that protects us, defends us, transforms us to be His and His alone and His fully—that we might more and more love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- C. Third, this love is excellent because it burns with passion.
- The end of verse 6 says: **Its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame.**
1. These flames could refer to jealousy or to love, but it seems best to say that they refer to love which includes jealousy.
- We have just seen that jealousy fiercely abolishes all that tries to come between our Lord and us as His bride.
 - It is indeed a burning jealousy.
 - But that is not all that burns in our Saviour...
 - He also burns with desire for us.
2. Notice that the word *flame* is used three times
- Our Lord has a burning passion to be with us.
 - Perhaps you will remember that in the Song of Solomon, chapter 5, when He withdrew from us for a time to correct us for our coldness toward Him,
 - He could not stay away when He saw us yearning for Him.
 - In 6:5, He said, **Turn your eyes away from me, for they have overcome me.**
 - And in 6:12, He said that before He was even aware, His soul had made Him as the chariots of His noble people...
 - He could get to us and get us to Him. He could not stay away.

- He finds us irresistible when we look to Him with desire for Him.
 - He went on to say that we are His palm tree and our breasts are its clusters—He says He will climb us and take hold of our branches.
3. This burning that He has is the passion He has to be with us and the passion He has to bless us.
- He is taking us through the training that we need in this world, but all the while He is eager to bring us into His Father's house where we will ever be with Him.
 - He wants to give us our glorious garments and bring us to His beautiful gardens and to show us His glory and goodness in all its fullness.
 - He burns with desire and soon He will do it.
 - As the bride said in 7:10, **I am my beloved's and His desire is toward me.**

D. Fourth, this love is excellent because it cannot be quenched.

- Verse 7 begins with these words: **Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it.**
1. In the Bible, waters and floods represent trials.
- For example, in Ps 42:7 it says: **All Your waves and billows have gone over me.**
 - And in Ps 66 it speaks of how He brought us through fire and water.
 - Isaiah speaks of Assyria taking the land as them coming up like a flood.
 - But when true divine love is there, no trial can wash it away, no water can quench it.
2. Satan does not understand this love.
- a. He thought trials and afflictions would wash away Job's love.
 - He destroyed his family, his property, his friendships, his honour, and his body, but Job's love for God only increased through the whole ordeal.
 - b. He tried to wash away the love of Jesus through the affliction of the cross.
 - But the cross only served to prove all the more His love for the Father and for His people whom He came to redeem.
 - c. So also the apostle Paul.
 - He set the example for us.
 - He gloried in his affliction, because, like David, he saw how much good it did in his life...
 - He walked through his afflictions leaning on Jesus and spoke of his afflictions as times when he had fellowship with Jesus in suffering.
 - Yes, he counted himself privileged to suffer for the cause of Christ that Christ Himself had suffered for so much more.
 - His sufferings did not drive him away but made him love Christ even more.
3. In Romans 8, we have the beautiful assurance given to us from God that nothing can separate from His love.

- **Romans 8:33-39: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* ³⁶ As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” ³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**
 - It is remarkable how the Lord uses trials to deepen our walk with Him.
 - He also promises that our trials will bring us to greater rewards in eternity.
 - **2Co 4:17: For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,**
- E. Fifth, this love is excellent because it is superior to everything else that you have.
- Verse 7 concludes with these words: Song 8:7: **If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised.**
1. Rich men assume that they can buy anything.
 - But let a man come and offer you all the wealth of his household, his entire estate, for love and he will not succeed.
 - The bride of Christ will be horrified at the very thought that this man should think he could convince her to part with her beloved—for that???
 - Perish the very thought!
 2. You tell me—you who know Christ.
 - If someone offered to purchase Christ’s love, assuming that it could be sold, would you go for it?
 - What if it were ten million?
 - What if it were ten billion?
 - That ten billion would be like nothing for such an exchange. It would be utterly despised.
 3. Think of how valuable the love of Christ really is.
 - You would not sell it for anything!
 - It is the most precious thing of all—and it is yours for all eternity.

An Important Question: How do you get Him to love you like this?

- Some of you may not know the Lord.
 - So do you have to become lovely before He will love you? Do you have to become holy and without blemish?
- No!
 - All you have to do is lean on Him, asking Him to save you so you can be His.
 - As we have seen today, He finds that irresistible.
 - As soon as sinner turns to Him,
 - The love of Jesus is stirred up for that sinner.
 - And it is a love that is strong as death,

- a love that is fiercely jealous,
 - a love that burns with passion,
 - a love that can never be quenched,
 - and a love that is better than anything this world has to offer!
- You don't have to do any great thing to have it.
 - All you have to do is come to Jesus and trust in Him to save you.
 - He died on the cross to secure the pardon of all that the Father gave Him.
 - He is the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit who transforms us so that we trust in Jesus and cast ourselves on Him for our salvation.
 - If you will come and trust in Him, He will save you and you will become another member of the bride that He loves and cherishes forever.
 - He will set you as a seal His heart and upon His arm.
 - He will be fully committed to you both in heart and in strength forever.