

## SONG OF SOLOMON 1

## LOVE BETTER THAN WINE

Let us enter this part of the Holy Scriptures with more than ordinary reverence, from a consciousness of how very sublime and mysterious this Book truly is! Before we venture to step into the study of its pages, let us bend the knee of prayer, beseeching the Lord Jesus to unveil Himself to us as we read!

This Song is an allegory. The mere words will be meaningless and even confusing to those who merely skim the surface and look no further; but with the Holy Spirit's enlightenment, its words give us life (2 Cor. 3:6; John 6:63). The Song of Solomon is a parable; it makes Divine things more difficult to those who do not love them, but it makes them more plain and pleasant to those who do (Matt. 13:14, 16). The love of Jesus for His Church is the subject of the whole Song, and this is set forth under the metaphorical picture of a man and his relationship with his bride. From the first moment of the Lord's forming His Church into a separate people from the heathen nations, He was pleased to graciously assume the endearing character of their Husband. This tender relationship of love is the great outline observed through the entirety of Solomon's Song.

The speakers in this first chapter change several times – back and forth between Jesus (the Shepherd-Bridegroom-King) and His Church (the Shepherdess-Bride). The chapter opens with the voice of the Bride. The desire which absorbs her heart above every other waking thought is for the manifestation of the love of her Lord Jesus, through the influences of the Holy Spirit (verse 2). And the reason why she so ardently desires this love is because its effect is more reviving and exhilarating than any carnal pleasures that the world has to offer, such as wine. The thought of the excellence of the character of Christ, and of the influences of the Holy Spirit shedding abroad His love in the heart, cause the Bride to desire to come as near to Him as possible – without any delay (verse 4). Our own insufficiency and weakness are often felt very sensibly; but at such times, let us pray for the attracting power of His grace, and for the strength of His Spirit. And this desire is never expressed in vain! With kingly majesty and condescension, Christ brings us into confidential communion with Himself, apart from the world. These manifestations of His love – which are made only to the upright and pure, and which are sincerely appreciated by them – are always refreshing and delightful.

This love is a perfect regulator of the powers of the soul. Since it carries with it true wisdom, it gives us a correct knowledge of ourselves – namely, that

**Outline of the chapter:**

- ❖ *The Bride speaks to the Bridegroom and Jerusalem's daughters – verses 1-7*
- ❖ *The Bridegroom answers His Bride's complaints and requests – verses 8-11*
- ❖ *The Bride expresses her great delight in communing with Christ – verses 12-14*
- ❖ *The Bridegroom commends the beauty of His Bride, and she returns the commendation – verses 15-17*

we are as black as the rough, weather-beaten tents of the shepherds of Kedar (verse 5) because of our inborn depravity. The humility which is inseparable from Christ's love makes us modest and retiring, and prompts us to shrink from courting admiration (verse 6). The Bride acknowledges to the "daughters of Jerusalem" – possibly representing those who are outside of the Church; or perhaps those who are still "babes in Christ," who have not yet been instructed perfectly in the things of God – that she is conscious of her own sinful unworthiness, and that she really has little reason to expect those kisses of love which she so greatly desired; for she has been stripped of her original beauty, and made black by sin. But while keeping the heart thus humble, this love so captivates the Bride's heart with the Lord Jesus, that she is anxious to not only enjoy His society in the blessedness of private communion (verse 4); but she also desires to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Rev. 14:4). The love of Christ prompts us to inquire and seek – without waiting for commands – where we may labor with our gracious Shepherd-King, and enjoy His society.

And such inquiries, the Shepherd-King answers! He now speaks for the first time in this Song to His Bride, who is thus humble in her own esteem (verse 8). He assures her that although she is conscious of her unworthiness, and persecuted by others; yet she is held by Him in the highest admiration, as the "fairest among women," for she is clothed in His own perfect righteousness! And He tells her that He may always be found by following the footsteps of those who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises; and also by activity in His service. The work that He has given her to do is to labor as a spiritual Shepherdess, to feed and train up the young lambs of the flock. And this is to be done in harmony with the ministers of His Gospel – "beside the shepherds' tents."



By following Jesus in the way of duty, and under the impulse of His love, the Bride is received by Him with Kingly majesty at His table (verse 12), which is loaded with delicacies for the soul. This close fellowship with Him, combined with His affectionate tenderness and great goodness, kindles her affections into a fervid glow! It draws from her the fragrance of aromatic graces – spiritual spike-nard – which the Holy Spirit pours into the alabaster box of her pure heart. Being thus seated at the table of her beloved Husband and King, what is the nature of the language interchanged between them? He speaks to her in terms of the strongest and tenderest affection, assuring her that no matter what may be thought of her by the world, she is beautiful in His eyes (verse 15). And the heart of His Bride is glad to reciprocate His feelings! (verses 16-17)

*Lord Jesus, You are the loving Bridegroom of our souls, and the dearest object of all our affections! Thank You for the spiritual impressions which Your presence makes upon our souls, which are more delightful than sweet perfumes. Amen.*