

The Song of Songs

Part 7 – 'Who is This?' – The Transforming Power of Love

I. Transformed in Love

8:5 Who is this coming up from the wilderness
Leaning on her Beloved?

6:10 Who is this that appears like the dawn,
fair as the moon, bright as the sun,
awesome as an army with banners?

1. The end of the Song has the bride unrecognizable from the beginning. Twice the daughters of Jerusalem see her and remark 'Who is this?'
2. Love works in us two seemingly opposite traits – meekness and strength. The redeemed will be remarkable both for our glory, and our humility and lowliness. Only love has the ability to work both in us.
3. The story of redemption on both the corporate and individual level is more than the story of salvation. It is the story of transformation and restoration unto glory. God loves to make us whole.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

II. The Consuming Nature of Love

8:6 For love is strong as death,
jealousy as cruel as the grave.
Its flames are flames of fire,
The very flame of God.

1. In the absence of walls, the nature of love is to consume everything. This is the kind of love God calls us to.
Mark 12:29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment
2. Love by its nature is jealous. God is looking for voluntary love and voluntary love is found in our choosing God over something else.
1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

3. In God's love there is a tremendous power to overcome everything that hinders Him loving us. The one obstacle He will not overpower is our own heart. He requires our voluntary decision day after day to follow out of love.
2:8 The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He comes, Leaping on the mountains, Skipping on the hills. 9 My Beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, He stands behind our wall, Gazing through the windows, Peering through the lattice. 10 My Beloved answered and said to me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, And come away with Me.
4. When we mess up and say no (2:17), we miss some invitations (3:1-5), but He loves us no less (4:1-7). It's that revelation that empowers us to say yes, not because we will earn more of His love, but because He will receive more of ours (4:16).
4:16 Awake, O north wind, And come, O south! Blow upon my garden, That its spices may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden And eat its pleasant fruits.
5. Love leads us into weakness. Love cannot be purchased. There is no way we can earn God's affection and love requires that we lay down our efforts to try and simply embrace loving God in weakness (**Philippians 3**).
8:7 If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised.
6. There in our weakness we find His strength.
2 Corinthians 12:9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."
7. We live for God not in order to earn His love, but as the only reasonable response to such love.
2 Corinthians 5:14 For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

III. Confidence in Love

1. Relationship requires trust. God wants us to come up leaning on His love. In a perfect relationship, each person is fully engaged in looking out for the other's interests and unconcerned with their own because they know the other person is looking out for them.
2. Confidence in God's perfect love is what allows us to answer the call to put to death 'self' and live for His interests. We have to trust that He is looking out for ours.
Luke 9:23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.
3. Jesus assures us of that the Father will indeed fill His part in the Sermon on the Mount, and He calls us to seek the kingdom first.
Matthew 6:31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

4. In context, He is talking not only about our material needs, but about our reputation and our righteousness.
Matthew 6:1 “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven... 3 But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly... 6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly... 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.
5. The call is 'do not worry' – do not self-evaluate, but simply live before the eyes of God day after day and trust that He sees and rewards, and you are laying up treasure in heaven.
6. The first commandment calls us to love with everything. To truly love wholeheartedly requires confidence in God's leadership. If we doubt His love, we will withhold ours, not in rebellion, but in fear.
7. Over time as we give ourselves to the revelation of God's perfect love it drives out that fear and lets us live before Him in confidence in love.
1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 We love Him because He first loved us.
8. The mystery of Christ is that we have access with confidence in the midst of our weakness. This is God's glory in us, and it is what lets God work further glory in us.
Ephesians 3:8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him
9. Our confidence in love comes through the cross. It's very clearly pictured in the Song of Songs and it's the consistent testimony of the New Testament writers.
4:6 Until the day breaks,
and the shadows flee away,
I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh
and to the hill of frankincense.
Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?
1 John 3:16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us.

10. The Spirit in us reminds us in a present tense way of that love as we cultivate and give attention to His voice.

1 John 4:13 We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ

IV. The Locked Gaze of Love

1. One of the most urgent needs for confidence in love is the ability to keep a locked gaze on Him. Beholding is our path to transformation.

Matthew 6:22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2. Our unfortunate human tendency is for our thoughts to center around our own weakness and failures, especially when we've stumbled or we're feeling insufficient. These are the times we most need to lift our eyes. Christ came to free us from condemnation – specifically unto freedom to behold.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

3. When we have the confidence to go to God with the expectation that He desires to reveal Himself, even when we don't deserve it, the power of beholding and becoming is ours.

Luke 10:38 Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." 41 And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

4. Christian living is not about clearing our lives of compromise, but about filling our lives with God. The trap of the accuser is to get us so focused on our own failures that we're unable to look at God, which is the only thing with the power to free us from our weaknesses.

Colossians 2:20 ...why... do you subject yourselves to regulations— 21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"... 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom... but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

V. The Romance of the Gospel

1. Too often, we are all too familiar with the human predicament to see the romance of the gospel. To us the cross was a necessary provision for a fallen and hopeless race. To God it was part of an ongoing demonstration of His love and mercy to the praise of His glory.
Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence
2. God is able to bring us to wholeness, not due to any faithfulness on our part, but due to the surpassing greatness of His love.
Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height — 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
3. His ability to do so will bring Him glory through the church for all eternity.
Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
4. When we miss the romance of the gospel, we instead fall into a gospel of obligation that completely lacks the power to transformation. It is in becoming persuaded as Paul was that God is for us, that we find grace to overcome.
Romans 8:37 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.

VI. A Lovesick Army

1. When we embrace the weakness of being loved regardless of what we do or don't have to give, it allows God to work in our hearts and reveal to us those things He has planted in us.
6:12 Before I was even aware,
My soul had made me
As the chariots of my noble people.
[lit – I knew not my soul]
2. We have to come to the place where loving God is enough. Then God, because He loves us, draws out those desires that He has planted in us to bless our hearts and His, to further the kingdom and to lay up treasure in heaven for us all simultaneously in His wisdom.

3. God has prepared in advance the things that He would have us walk in.
Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
4. Part of Jesus' glory is that His army will be an army of volunteers, moved into action at His side out of love for His beauty.
Psalm 110:3 Your people shall be volunteers
 In the day of Your power;
 In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
 You have the dew of Your youth.
5. Our enemy's power lies in accusation. Ours lies in love.
Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.
6. The call to the church is to burn. To get consumed with and by the love of God. We will not find the gold without the fire. The glory is coming, but first we must get consumed by love and come up leaning.
7. We don't have to concern ourselves either with what will be consumed or with what will emerge from the ashes. We just have to trust that anything He consumes is not worth holding on to, and whatever emerges He is more than worthy to receive and He will use for our eternal good.
8. He who began a good work in us will complete it – leading us into ever greater measures of love producing ever greater fruits of righteousness unto His glory.
Philippians 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you... 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ... 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.
9. In all your getting, get love – pursue it with zeal.
1 Corinthians 12:31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.
1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.
10. We pursue love by:
 1. Meditating on His love through the Word – the cross, eternity, the Gospels, Song of Songs
 2. Cultivating a conversation with the Spirit – His presence in us is our great reminder
 3. Coming up leaning – living a lifestyle of weakness before the eyes of a loving Father.