

I would like to set the tone for this passage with Spurgeon's appreciation for this book of the Bible. He writes, *If I must prefer one book above another, I would prefer some books of the Bible for doctrine, some for experience, some for example, some for teaching; but let me prefer this book above all others for fellowship and communion. When the Christian is nearest to heaven, this is the book he takes with him.* CHS We should be aware that Jesus walks among the churches (Revelation 2:1ⁱ). He is physically seated at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly realm (Psalm 110:1ⁱⁱ), but he is just as much present here by His spirit. We are not just reading history, but rather we are speaking of heavenly realities. It might help you to think of Jesus sitting beside you in the pew or standing beside me at the pulpit. The words we are about to read from Solomon to his bride are the words of Jesus speaking to you this morning.

⁸ *Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Depart from the peak of Amana, from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards.* Song of Songs 4:8 Paul prayed that we ¹⁸ *may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,* ¹⁹ *and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.* Ephesians 3:18,19 I closed the sermon on January 12 with a poem about going deeper into the love of Christ. Our text today calls us to go with Christ higher than all the pleasures of this world. Spurgeon tells us that *Lebanon was a place for enjoyment. There, in the forest, King Solomon built his summer palace, the resort for those who wished for pleasure. It was covered, we are told, with odoriferous herbs, so that all the air was laden with a sweet perfume. On the top of Lebanon stood the glorious cedars, and these also yielded a fragrance. It was a place of delight and of retirement. A man who could not enjoy himself there would surely be miserable everywhere else, Lebanon was to the Jewish mind the very picture of a terrestrial Paradise.* CHS

The invitation in this verse is to come away from the pleasures of the world to find greater pleasure in being with our Savior. *Come with me from Lebanon.* This is very personal to each of us. Perhaps the dens of lions and the mountains of leopards are the fears that she has about surrendering herself fully to him. He is telling her to leave all attachments to this world and her fears behind. That is what we do when we surrender to Jesus' love. "What if He wants me to be a missionary? What if He wants me to give up sports? What if He wants me to marry someone besides my girlfriend?" We come with all kinds of fears of what He will demand. But we must **remember that whatever He asks of us is for our good and His glory.**

His double invitation is to come away and be with Him. She may have come from the north, in which case it was a call to leave her family. It is a call to adventure, to intimacy, to surrender, to joys and experiences that Jesus longs to share with us when we put Him first, even above family (Matthew 10:37ⁱⁱⁱ). It is a call to the prayer closet (Matthew 6:6^{iv}). It is call to the communion table. It is a call like the call to Abraham to leave this corrupt world behind and to go to a land that He will show us (Genesis 12:1^v). Let us not be like Lot's wife looking back and longing for what this world offers (Luke 17:32^{vi}; Genesis 19:26^{vii}) but let us with hearts bursting with love leave all behind and cling to our Savior. It is a call to discipleship, to take up our cross and follow Jesus

wherever He might go (Matthew 16:24^{viii}). One day, “Come away with me” will be His call to us to come to our heavenly home (2 Thessalonians 4:16^{ix}).

This is the first time he calls her his bride (*itti*). Several commentators note that the word comes from the root word “complete.” She is completed when she is with him and incomplete when apart, just as we are incomplete without our Savior, and complete in Him.

⁹ *You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.* Song of Songs 4:9 This verse overwhelms me. We know we are black like the black tents of Kedar (Song 1:5^x). Why should Jesus who is holy and pure smile upon us? He chose to love us in our fallen state, to take our sins upon Himself and clothe us with His righteousness. What He sees in us is His own beautiful righteousness with which He has clothed us. The jewel that adorns us is His own gift to us, and yet He is captivated by how it appears on us.

I long to look into the eyes of Jesus, for that is when His work in me will be complete. That is when we are complete, the bride. But He says His heart is captivated by one glance from our eyes. How can that be? Do we dare to believe it? We must keep returning to the cross where we see the extent He went in love to make us His own by paying our debt. Men, we are supposed to love our wives to that extent (Ephesians 5:25^{xi}). That is a challenge to abandon our selfish ways and let love prevail in every circumstance! Only our surrender to the Holy Spirit within us can enable us to do so.

Jesus refers to us as “brothers” in the book of Hebrews. ¹¹ *For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,* Hebrews 2:11 In this verse he calls His bride His sister. According to Glickman it is an affectionate way that men referred to their wives. Referring to her as his sister is a way to include the love and unbreakable commitment of family. And because Jesus is the King, that makes us princes and princesses. That relationship according to the book of Hebrews is that we all have the same sanctifying source, God our Father, who makes us His spiritual family. The completion of our sanctification is the beauty He sees in us even now. That is what He sees in our eyes, and the gifts that adorn us which captivate His heart. At the same time, we each have a unique personality. He loves us all as one bride, and He loves each of our sanctified personalities.

¹⁰ *How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!* ¹¹ *Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.* Song of Songs 4:10,11 Spurgeon interprets each of these descriptions: *Now note how sweetly the Lord Jesus sings to his spouse, First, he praises her love: “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine!” Next, he praises her graces: “The smell of thy ointments is much better than all spices.” Then he praises her words: “Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb.” Then he praises her thoughts, the things that do not come out of her mouth but lie under her tongue: “Honey and milk are under thy tongue.” Then he finishes by praising her works: “The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.”*

He has told her many times she is beautiful, but here he says her love is beautiful. He continues to reassure her by telling her the specific things he admires. He is using some of the expressions she used to describe him. We could say he feels about her like she feels toward him. Just as she esteems his love above all else, he values her love. And

his description of her oils is like her description of his anointing oil (1:3^{xii}). But he adds his delight in her lips and tongue, referring to his enjoyment of her kisses but also of her words of love toward him. He tells her that he even loves the smell of her clothes and likens it to the cedars of Lebanon.

Spurgeon comments on the similarity of their description of one another. *“Now can you believe it? Just what you think of Christ’s love, Christ thinks of yours. You value his love, and you are right in so doing; but I am afraid that still you undervalue it. He even values your love, if I may so speak, he sets a far higher estimate upon it than you do; he thinks very much of little, he estimates it not by its strength, but by its sincerity.”*^{xiii}

¹² *A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed.*

¹³ *Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard,*

¹⁴ *nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all choice spices—* ¹⁵ *a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon.*

Song of Songs 4:12-15 In verses 12-15 the king praises her keeping herself for him alone. The Bible calls sex outside of marriage sexual immorality (Acts 15:20^{xiv}). Both Testaments forbid sex outside of marriage (Exodus 32:16^{xv}; 1 Corinthians 6:18^{xvi}). It is symbolically giving oneself to another when we are meant for God. It represents being unfaithful to God, which is often referred to in the Old Testament as idolatry. However, within marriage it represents our surrendering ourselves completely to God alone.

After praising their monogamous relationship comes the foreplay in words of love, expressions of her beauty - preparation for intimacy in the marriage bed. In this we also see the parallel of the physical with fruits and spices which we know are analogous to fruits of the Spirit. Where water flows there is an abundance of life. She was faithful to keep her fountain of living water for her spouse alone. This parallels the spiritual in that we should keep our spirit, our innermost being for Jesus alone. He must be our most intimate spiritual lover. How do we know that we have such a relationship? Ask yourself if anything else moves your heart like the name of Jesus? When you think on the price He paid to make you His own, does it bring tears to your eyes? When you fail to act as you know you should, do you long to do better for Jesus’ glory? Do hunger to know Him better in His Word? Those are signs of a transformed heart. The unredeemed have different desires. If that does not describe your heart, hear Him call to you, “Come with me, my sister, my bride. Surrender yourself to my love.” He will make the black tents of Kedar like the curtains of Solomon (1:5^{xvii}).

¹⁶ *Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.* Song of Songs 4:16 She is saying, “Take me; I am yours!” Have we let His words of love capture our hearts so that we surrender to His will? The bride gives Him her body in love. We yield the members of our bodies to His sanctified service (Romans 6:13^{xviii}, 12:1^{xix}).

I would like to emphasize the necessity to accept how God sees us when we are His. As we read this, we tend to think of it in an impersonal way. This cannot be Jesus talking about me, maybe some super-saint but not me. Let us look at a few verses in the New Testament that reveal to us that it is indeed about you personally as well as believers corporately. We all know John 3:16, but do we put our name in that passage? For God so loved me, that He sent His beloved Son that I might have eternal life. Romans 5:8^{xx} tells us that God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Ephesians 2:4^{xxi} teaches that *God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us*, What kind of love? 1 John 3:1 tells us. *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.* 1 John 4:9,10 reads, *"In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the World, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins."* John 15:9^{xxii} tells us Jesus loves us like the Father loves Him! Try to get your heart and mind around that! Then He tells us that there is no greater love than someone lay down his life for his friends, and then He did it (John 15:13^{xxiii}).

This great love is so broad and all-encompassing that God describes it as the love of a Father for His children and that of brothers in a family, and as we are studying now, of groom for His bride. It is too big to fit into one category. We experience more of the fatherly love now, and that is because we are so immature. But heaven begins with the wedding feast of the Lamb. This love is so much a part of who God is that John describes Him as love (1 John 4:8^{xxiv}). Since He is with us and in us, He expects the chief characteristic of our lives to be love (John 15:17^{xxv}). His new command is to love one another. We could not live a life of love until Love Himself empowered us with His loving presence (Ephesians 5:1^{xxvi}). If God so loved us, then we ought to love one another (1 John 4:11^{xxvii}). The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of love.

I know the old nature's response because I hear it often. He says, "But you know how selfish you are and the thoughts that come to your mind. God cannot love YOU like that." If I listen to that lie, I am doubting that the work of Jesus on the cross for my sins was sufficient. I am calling God a liar instead of Satan (John 8:44^{xxviii}). I am basically saying that works count and I have not done enough good works for God to love me. I am saying God's grace is not big enough for me. When you put it that way, it gives you the conviction to tell the old nature to shut up and climb back into his putrid coffin. God says I am a new creation in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17^{xxix})! Dare I doubt Him? And if I am a new creation then this love we are reading about is a picture of God's spiritual assessment of ME - and of my brothers and sisters in Christ. That is why I am to love them. I hope that is clear enough to help you change the way you see yourself and all believers. Yes, we all need to grow in sanctification, but gracious God loves you to this extent NOW!

Notice that in this verse she refers to my garden but then refers to her body as his garden. This is why the Apostle Paul declared that our spouse has authority over our body (1 Corinthians 7:4^{xxx}). We belong to one another in marriage.

Dr. Ironside adds: *"It indicates her yearning desire to be all that he would have her to be."* The north wind, he continues, is *"that cold, bitter, biting, wintry blast. Naturally she would shrink from that as we all would, and yet the cold of winter is as necessary as the warmth of summer if there is going to be perfection in fruitbearing. It takes the cold to bring out the flavor of apples. And it is so with our lives. We need the north winds of adversity and trial as well as the zephyrs of the south so agreeable to our natures. The very things we shrink from are the experiences that will work in us to produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness. If everything were easy and soft and beautiful in our lives, they would be insipid; there would be so little in them for God that could delight His heart; and so there must be the north wind as well as the south."*^{xxxii}

5:1 I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk. Others: Eat, friends,

drink, and be drunk with love! Song of Songs 5:1 This is the exact center of the Song extolling their intimacy in married life together. He is poetically praising their intimacy! Notice the use of the word "my" nine times! Can we accept the wonder that this describes how Jesus feels about the sharing of our hearts in prayer, and that He calls us His own? We know when He speaks to our hearts, and we have had sweet communion with Him, we are abundantly blessed. We also need to realize that He enjoys that fellowship even more than we do! If it is that wonderful here on this earthly plane, can you imagine what it will be like when we are face to face with Him!

The others sing an encouragement for them to enjoy the love they share. Hebrews 13:4 (NIV) *⁴ Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.* The pleasure of sexually intimacy within the boundary of marriage is called pure. It is a gift from God. But if we are unfaithful, it is adultery. This is how Jesus feels about His relationship with us. That intimacy of the prayer closet where we pour out our innermost heart and listen to His should be with Him and Him alone. While all types of things tempt us to be unfaithful and fix our hearts on some created thing, to yield to the temptation is spiritual adultery.

"The Bride of Christ"

O Church of God, thou spotless bride, On Jesus' breast secure; No stains of sin in thee abide Thy garments all are pure. Of unity and holiness Thy gentle voice doth sing; Of purity and lowliness Thy songs in triumph ring.

Thou lovely virgin, thou art fair, Thy mother's only child; Thy heav'nly music let me hear, Thy voice is sweet and mild. Thy cheeks adorned with jewels bright, Thy neck with chains of gold; Unfurl thy banners in thy might, Thy graces rich unfold.

She stood attired in spotless dress The early morning through, And then into the wilderness On eagle's wings she flew. And nourished there from heav'nly clime, She lived for many years; Now, in this blessed evening time Her glory reappears.

She leans upon an Arm of Love, No sin her garments taints; They're made of linen wov'n above—The righteousness of saints. The marriage of the Lamb is come, His bride all ready stands; The Bridegroom soon will take her home To dwell in heav'nly lands.^{xxxii}

I will end this message with brief quote from Spurgeon. *Oh, if you saw him standing here tonight, looking into your eyes, and saying to you personally, "You love me, I know that you love me, your love is to me better far than wine", would you not fall at his feet and say, "Lord, is my love so sweet to you? Then shame upon me that I should give you so little of it."* CHS

Questions:

- 1 What is the invitation in verse 8? 2 Are the fears we face legitimate? Why or why not?
- 3 What are we called from and what is the call to? 4 How did you respond to verse 9?
5. What two terms did he call her and what do they imply? 6 How did he describe her? What does that tell us? 7 In what spiritual sense is our garden locked up?

8 How does she respond to his words? How should we? 9 What is Ironside's description of the two winds? 10 Review the final Spurgeon quote. Comments?

ⁱ **Revelation 2:1 (ESV)**

¹ "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

ⁱⁱ **Psalms 110:1 (ESV)**

¹ The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

ⁱⁱⁱ **Matthew 10:37 (ESV)**

³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

^{iv} **Matthew 6:6 (ESV)**

⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

^v **Genesis 12:1 (ESV)**

¹ Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

^{vi} **Luke 17:32 (ESV)**

³² Remember Lot's wife.

^{vii} **Genesis 19:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

^{viii} **Matthew 16:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

^{ix} **1 Thessalonians 4:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

^x **Song of Songs 1:5 (ESV)**

⁵ I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.

^{xi} **Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

^{xii} **Song of Songs 1:3 (ESV)**

³ your anointing oils are fragrant; your name is oil poured out; therefore virgins love you.

^{xiii} David Guzik, *Song of Solomon*, David Guzik's Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), So 4:9–11.

^{xiv} **Acts 15:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood.

^{xv} **Exodus 22:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ "If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price for her and make her his wife.

^{xvi} **1 Corinthians 6:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

^{xvii} **Song of Songs 1:5 (ESV)**

⁵ I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.

^{xviii} **Romans 6:13 (ESV)**

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

^{xix} **Romans 12:1 (ESV)**

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

^{xx} **Romans 5:8 (ESV)**

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

^{xxi} **Ephesians 2:4 (ESV)**

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

^{xxii} **John 15:9 (ESV)**

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

^{xxiii} **John 15:13 (ESV)**

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

^{xxiv} **1 John 4:8 (ESV)**

⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

^{xxv} **John 15:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

^{xxvi} **Ephesians 5:1 (ESV)**

¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

^{xxvii} **1 John 4:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

^{xxviii} **John 8:44 (ESV)**

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

^{xxix} **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

^{xxx} **1 Corinthians 7:4 (ESV)**

⁴ For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

^{xxxi} Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

^{xxxii} (Brooks and Byers, "The Bride of Christ," public domain quoted in Christ-Centered Exposition - Exalting Jesus in Song of Songs.)