

Song of Songs

Chapter 8

Longing for Her Beloved

Oh that you were like a brother to me who nursed at my mother's breasts! If I found you outside, I would kiss you, and none would despise me. 2 I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother—she who used to teach me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranate. 3 His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me! 4 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases. 5 Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved? Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labor with you; there she who bore you was in labor. 6 Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. 7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.

Song 8:1-4 may be seen as a resolution of the Shulammitte's searches for Solomon in 3:1-5 and 5:2-8 (and in other passages, such as 1:7-8). Several themes from those search passages find their denouncement here. In that way our periscope brings to a close the six cycles of the couple's relationship that comprise 1:2-8:4. That closure in our periscope then sets the stage for the conclusion of the Song as a whole. (CC)

8:1 *like a brother*. The Shulammitte desires unbridled public freedom to openly express her love for Solomon, as she would publicly express love for a brother. (TLSB)

outside, I would kiss you. In ancient Israel, it was not customary to express marital intimacy publicly. (TLSB)

none would despise me. The beloved could openly show affection without any public disgrace. (CSB)

She wishes she had known him from childhood on. Besides, if he were her brother she could kiss him publicly. It is still true in parts of the Middle East that brothers and sisters are permitted to display more open affection than married couples. Proverbs 17:17 describes another aspect of a loving brother, his steadfastness in trouble: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (PBC)

Christ's presence in His church makes her secure from injury, and honorable in the eyes of the world. (CB)

That the church would "kiss" her Bridegroom means that she would confess His name, praise and honor Him (Ps.2:12). The church's prayer that "none would despise me" means that the word of the cross would no longer be a scandal to the Jews and foolishness to the Greek (1 Cor 1:23; since it is on account of the church's confession of the Gospel that the world despises her). That prayer is fulfilled when both people (Jews and Gentiles) in concord confess Christ. (CC)

8:2 *teach me*. The Shulammitte's mother doubtlessly trained her from youth in the way she should live (Pr 22:6). Mature women are to continue to instruct and set examples for younger women (Ti 2:3-4). (TLSB)

The subject of the verb, however, could also be her husband: "You would teach me." This seems to make more sense, for she is addressing him throughout these verses. She wants her husband to be her teacher. (PBC)

I would give you. She would offer her lover the delights of her love. (CSB)

spiced wine to drink – For millennia it has been customary for a wedding celebrations to include wine, as attested by Jesus' first sign, turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11). But even after a couple has been married for many years (as in Song 5:2-8:14), reunion and re-consummation may be celebrated with wine, and that is what the Shulammitte envisions here. The fruit of the vine is more than a product of the Creator's beneficence. Wine surpasses what is merely necessary to sustain life. It is a luxurious sign of God's blessing, an indication that the fallen creation can be and is being rejuvenated by His grace. It is a harbinger of better things in the age to come. (CC)

pomegranate. The Hebrew for this word refers to intoxicating juices. (CSB)

This refreshing fruit was prized for its delicious taste. An old Persian proverb exclaims, "Eat eagerly only pomegranates, for their grains are from paradise." The beloved wants nothing but the best for her husband! (PBC)

Throughout the Song, the "pomegranate" often is associated with, or is a metaphor for, the beloved Shulammitte. Her mouth (or temple) is "like a slice of pomegranate" (4:3; 6:7). In 4:12-5:1 she in her entirety is a garden, and Solomon says to her, "Your sprouts are a paradise of pomegranates" (4:13). In 6:11 she inspects the pomegranates to see if they are blooming, and 7:12 she invites Solomon to do that with her. After 6:11, she is suddenly reunited with Solomon (6:12). In 7:12, she promises that after they tour the vineyards and survey the pomegranates, "There I will give my you to you." (CC)

8:4 Like that of the lovers in the Song, the relationship between Christ and His people is many-sided. He is our brother (Mark 3:35; Romans 8:29) who sticks with us at all times. He is our teacher instructing us through the Bible in the way of salvation. He is our friends (John 15:14,15). And, as we've noted throughout this commentary, He is our heavenly bridegroom. (PBC)

This third main part of the Song ends on a happy note. After their separation the lovers are together again and closer than ever. (PBC)

This, too, is a picture of Christ and the church. Especially in OT prophecy the people of God are frequently shown as an unfaithful and indifferent bride. "Does a maid forget her jewelry, a bride her wedding garments?" asks the Lord through the Prophet Jeremiah. "Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number" (Jeremiah 2:32). (PBC)

Ezekiel 16 contains especially strong images of the people's unfaithfulness. God relates how He had loved Jerusalem and had made her His bride. But the people proved unfaithful. By forsaking the true God for the idols of Egypt, Philistia, Assyria and Babylonia, God's chosen nation became a "brazen prostitute" (16:30). "You adulterous wife! You prefer strangers to your own husband!" (16:32) Because of her sins God would punish her. (PBC)

But like the tribulations of the lovers in the Song, God's dealings with His people do not end on the tragic note of separation. God goes on to say, "Yet will I remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you" (Ezekiel 16:20). So enduring is the bridegroom's faithfulness that he promises to "make atonement for you for you have done" (16:63). Care, hurt, anger, faithfulness – such words describe God's love for His people. Even through our unfaithfulness He remains true. (PBC)

This is the kind of bridegroom we have. He never wavers in His devotion for us. "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). He has laid down His life for us (Ephesians 5:25). (PBC)

that you not stir up – Thus she is in the proper relationship of trust and reliance upon him and his love. That is also the proper posture of the bride of Christ: leaning in trust and faith upon the "one greater than Solomon" (Matthew 12:42) as He leads her through the wilderness of this world toward her eternal Promised Land. (CC)

Israel (intermittently and sporadically) trusted and believed in Yahweh's love as she was led by Him from the wilderness to the Promised Land. Yet Israel often failed to rely upon the One who loved her and even grumbled and rebelled against Him (Exodus through Deuteronomy are full of examples). The Shulammitte, however, as depicted in the Song, never rebels or fails to trust her husband and lover. Even so may the church – and each individual Christian – travel through the wilderness of this life always leaning on her Lover and following his heavenward calling (cf. Phil 3:14; Rev. 4:1; 11:12). (CC)

The final division of the Song opens as did the wedding scene (3:6): "Who is this coming up from the desert...?" There the Shulammitte had asked the question concerning Solomon's wedding procession. Here the friends apply it to the Shulammitte. Previously the question had introduced the consummation of the love relationship. Not it introduces a more settled relationship. (PBC)

8:5 *Who ... wilderness.* That she is leaving "the desert" signifies that she is leaving behind her days of depression and sorrow. The excitement of courtship and the wedding are past. So is the grief of separation which opened the Song's previous section. We now see a more mature and contented woman walking with and leaning on her lover. Beside them walk their friends. (PBC)

Not only does this verse introduce the final portion of the Song, it also introduces the most difficult. Commentators agree that "it is simply impossible to render an interpretation satisfactory in every respect. But the mood of this section is unmistakable. It is restful and reflective. As the remaining verse speak of young love, it becomes clear what is taking place. The lovers are reminiscing. First, the Shulammitte recalls the awaking of their love. (PBC)

God's people have no strength of their own, but their strength is in Christ. "While they by faith lean upon Him, they are confirmed against all doubts, fears, dangers, difficulties, and temptations, and by union with Him made partakers of all grace and comfort. (CB)

One day one of our pre-school granddaughters asked me, "Grandpa, what is it like being old?" I was a bit stunned by the question and did not answer it at that time. The more I have reflected on that query the more I have come to the conclusion that growing old allows you to reflect with gratitude on the many blessings that God has showered on you during your life time. It can be a delightful contemplative activity.

Under the apple tree. In the ancient world, sexual union and birth were often associated with fruit trees. (CSB)

Some see the apple tree as a reference to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2 & 3). There God's forgiving love was aroused when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and fell into sin. There God made the first promise of the Savior who would die for sinful mankind. If, indeed, this is a reference to the events of the Eden, it answers the age-old question of what kind of fruit they ate. (PBC)

This means in conjunction with him, dependent on his love and support (just as she was supported by him while she leaned on him, coming up out of the wilderness. (CC)

His gift of himself as food is what sustains her in her weakness caused by love. Likewise, the church is lovesick for Christ and vulnerable to the world's hostility. Yet during her earthly pilgrimage the Bridegroom sustains His bride with His gift of Himself: His body and blood, given and shed for her, in the Lord's Supper. The fruit of His redemptive work is the food that nourishes her in her weakness, until He brings her to the paradise to come. Rev. 22:1-5 depicts the eschaton as a renewed Eden, replete with fruit trees (fulfilling Ezekiel 47:1-12). Unlike the first Eden, in the paradise to come God's redeemed may eat the fruit from any and every tree with God's blessing. (CC)

labor with you; there she who bore you. Consummation of their marital love occurs at the place where the bridegroom was conceived, namely, beneath the apple tree. (TLSB)

The mother, wine, the apple tree, and fruit all are associated with life and intoxicating love. Natural life – the mother giving birth – is a point of comparison for the spiritual rebirth and new life granted by God's grace (John 3:3-8). (CC)

The consummation of love under God's blessing in Christ may be the time when a person feels most alive and closed to the raptured bliss of heaven. It may also be the time when a new life is created – a new life to be claimed by Christ in baptism, one who will bring glory to God through a life of faith and love. (CC)

8:6–7 *love is ... grave. It burns ... flame. Many waters ... away.* These three wisdom statements (see Introduction to Proverbs: Wisdom Literature) characterize marital love as the strongest, most unyielding and invincible force in human experience. With these statements the Song reaches its literary climax and discloses its purpose. (CSB)

The exposition of these verses makes a particular effort to explain them in relation to the NT, which is the definitive revelation of divine love in Jesus Christ. This is the passage where the Song's theology of love burns the brightest and points directly to its fulfillment in the death and resurrection of Christ, and His bestowal of the salvific benefits of His atonement upon His church through His Word and Sacrament. (CC)

8:6 *seal.* Seals were precious to their owners, as personal as their names. (CSB)

Cylindrical seal or signet ring, often marked with one's name or monogram, was pressed into wax or clay as a legal mark of authentication. May have been an amulet, dangling above the heart. If the Shulammitte were Solomon's "seal," then she bore his name. (TLSB)

The seal, bearing its owner's name, was used to make impressions in clay or other soft substances. It represents the owner's signature. Moreover, the seal symbolized confidence and support. For the lover to wear her seal would be akin to our exchange of rings – a symbol of mutual commitment and love. (PBC)

In the OT and the ancient Near East, a cylinder seal worn on a cord around the neck (hence resting on the heart) and a stamp seal affixed to the arm (including a signet ring worn on the hand) were used to mark and legally “sign personal property belonging to the owner. Such a seal commonly was inscribed with the owner’s name and a distinctive design or insignia. Hence the Shulammitte’s petition has two related implications. (CC)

First, if the Shulammitte were Solomon’s seal, she would bear his persona name and imprint. That implication is supported by her name in the Song “Shulammitte,” which is closely related to the king’s own personal name “Solomon.” She may be named after his name. That implication is also supported by the Shulammitte’s affirmation in 8:10 that she found “peace,” since shalom (“peace”) is closely related to both her name and Solomon’s name. She found “Solomon” or rather, he found her and claimed her as his own. Thus the Shulammitte’s name is inseparably bound up with Solomon’s name. (CC)

A second further implication of the Shulammitte’s petition in this verse is that if she were a seal that he would wear, he would guard her closely and protect her permanently. The king’s seal was treasured implement, with which he would impress his name on those things that he would legally claim as his own possessions permanently. In modern times archaeologists have discovered large numbers of seal several millennia old with the owner’s name still intact and legible. Likewise, many pottery vessels have been discovered with the imprint of the owner’s seal, bearing his name, still visible. (CC)

What the Shulammitte asks for in this verse is similar to what she affirms in 7:10: there she declares that she delights in his covenantal headship and dominion over her, as God intended for the first man and woman in Eden. She rejoices that she is his! The same kind of relationship pertains to the church: she is Christ’s body, and she rejoices that Christ is her Lord and head. She delights that by grace is His possession, imprinted with His personal name. (CC)

Jesus Himself is the one whom God the Father has “sealed” (John 6:27), that is, God the Father has attested that Jesus is His Son, anointed by the Spirit at His Baptism, authorized to preach and teach in the Father’s name and to represent Him personally on earth. All in Christ too are sealed. In particular, God seals His people through the Word and Sacraments, particularly in Holy Baptism, when the triune name of God is placed on the baptized, the Holy Spirit is poured out on him, and he is claimed as God’s own property – redeemed from the dominion and possession of the devil and made a member of the body of Christ. All in Christ are God’s elect and bear His name – His signature or seal by means of the Holy Spirit, poured out in Baptism (e.g., Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38-39). (CC)

The Apostle Paul gives another explanation of this meaning of “seal” that pertains to both the OT (circumcision) and the NT (Baptism) and that affirms precise way we seek to interpret Song 8:6 in light of NT passages about Baptism. Discussing who does – and who does not – belong to Christ, Paul implies that to have the “seal” is to be marked with the “name” of the Lord Jesus Christ and to belong to God; only such a person names Jesus as Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3). (CC)

2 Timothy 2:19, “Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”

The Apostle John uses “seal” in the same way: it marks those who belong to God through faith in Christ. (CC)

Revelation 7:2, “Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea.”

The angel then “seals” the foreheads (i.e., he would have stamped God’s name on the foreheads) of all those who are “servants of our God” (Rev. 7:3), and John then counts the 144,000 (this is representative of all believers who are saved and not a literal number) who have been sealed (Rev. 7:4-8; see also 9:4). (CC)

2 Timothy and Revelation 7:2-8 can be understood in a general way as a spiritual kind of “seal” that involves justification by grace alone and through faith alone. Additional NT passages suggest more specifically that this sealing takes place in Holy Baptism. In Baptism God seals His people with the name of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, marking God’s salvific ownership of the baptized.

Ephesians 1:13-14, “¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”

2 Corinthians 1:22, “set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”

Ephesians 4:5-6, “⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Ephesians 4:30, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

arm. Probably a poetic synonym for “hand.” (CSB)

love is strong as death – Death is the universal tyrant, and love is the conqueror of death on behalf of all mortal humanity. This verse is consistent with God’s promises elsewhere that death itself will be defeated, and eternal life will be granted through God’s love. (CC)

Love Hbr ‘*ahabah*. The love that is personified in the Song makes one think of God’s love. (TLSB)

death. Hbr *maweth* was also personified at this time by pagan deities such as the Ugaritic god Mot. It may also refer to the place of the dead, Sheol. In strength, love matches death. (TLSB)

The strength and consistency of this love is quite different from the love often exhibited between a man and a woman. God’s love is unyielding. Nothing can “separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39). The beloved clearly refers to divine love as she continues. The last phrase is better translated, “like the very flame of the Lord.” Throughout the poem Solomon has been hinting at a loved which transcends human love. Now he names the source of that love. It is the Lord (Hebrew Yah), who is always “abounding in love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6). (PBC)

God’s burning love for us is unquenchable. He has loved us to the point of sending His Son Jesus to die for us. He loves us so much that He gives us forgiveness and eternal life in heaven. In His

He showers us with blessings beyond measure and uses everything for our eternal good. (PBC)

Such giving love cannot be bought or sold. This is true of love between a husband and wife, and all the more so of the love between God and His people. God's love comes to us as free gift! (PBC)

Nothing is so strong as the love of Christ for His people. It overcomes all hinderances, and brings them safe home to heaven through floods of temptation within and distress and persecution without. Rom. 8:35-39 (CB)

fierce as the grave. As the grave will not give up the dead, so love will not surrender the loved one. (CSB)

flashes of fire. The Hebrew expression conveys the idea of a most intense flame, hinting that it has been kindled by the Lord. (CSB)

This likely refers to the Lord's Passion (cf Heb 12:29). The fire of the Lord involves judgment, but also the purifying and cleansing work that Christ performs in His ministry (Mt 3:10-17; Lk 3:16-22), even through trials (1Pt 1:6-7). (TLSB)

The imagery here is explained first of all by OT passages in which God appears in gracious love in forms that involve fire. God appeared as a "torch of fire" to ratify His covenant promises to Abraham (Gen. 15:17-18); in a burning bush to call Moses to free Israel (Ex. 3:2); as "a pillar of fire" by night to lead Israel (Ex. 13:21; 14:24; Num 14:14; Neh 9:12); "in fire" to give His covenant through Moses (Ex 19:18; cf. Ex 24:17; Deut 5:25). And He sent "fire" to consume the sacrifices at the dedication of the temple by Solomon, whereupon the temple was filled with God's glory (2 Chr 7:1-3; cf. 1 Chr. 21:26). (CC)

These (and many other) passages with fire involve both Law and Gospel. God Himself is "a consuming fire" (Ex. 24:17; Heb 12:29). His Law demands atonement for sin. His love comes at a price, and in the OT He stipulates that the price frequently is a sacrifice by fire. Many OT promises of God's gracious love and forgiveness are attended by stipulations for sacrifice. God burns up – destroys – sacrifices offer for sin. Chief among the sacrifices was the holocaust or wholly burnt offering (Lev. 1; 6:8-13). Twice daily, at evening and morning, a holocaust was offered for the sin of God's people (Ex 29:38-46; Num 28:1-8). (CC)

Furthermore, God's fire may flash out and consume sinners who violate His covenant stipulations and participate in worship contrary to the divine services He has ordained. Thus God displays His jealousy – His ardor that His people worship Him alone in purity and holiness. (Deut 4:24) (CC)

In still other passages, fire consumes sin and at the same time purifies and sanctifies God's beloved people (cf. Is 6:5-7; 10:16-17). The Lord, the messenger/angel of the covenant, shall come suddenly to His temple (Mal 3:1) and purify His people (Mal 3:2) (CC)

Certainly that fire involves judgment: "He will burn the chaff in unquenchable fire" (Mt 3:12; Lk 3:17; cf. Mt 13:40-42) Thus Christ's sacrificial atonement might be called His "baptism by fire." The eschatological wrath of the God who is a consuming fire will burn again Jesus Christ as He bears the world's sin. That fiery wrath will consume Him in His sacrifice. (CC)

Luke 12:50, "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!"

The final Christological NT fulfillment of the imagery of this verse is in the descriptions of the glorified Lord Christ in the last book of the canon, Revelation. (Rev. 1:12-18; see also Rev 2:18; 19:12). (CC)

A pastoral application of the fire imagery in this verse pertains to worship. The Divine Service traditionally includes the Christ candle as well as lesser lights adorning the altar and chancel. Occasional services may feature additional fire, such as Christmas Eve candles held by parishioners. Most churches continue to prefer living and consuming flames of fire to artificial luminaries (e.g., electric lights). This holy and gracious fire in worship is a witness to the “Love” that is “the flame of Yah.” (CC)

8:7 *Many waters.* Words that suggest not only the ocean depths (see Ps 107:23) but also the primeval waters that the people of the ancient Near East regarded as a permanent threat to the world. The waters were also associated with the realm of the dead. (CSB)

Ultimately, it is God’s love that withstands the onslaught of life’s raging floods. God rescued Israel on the shores of the Red Sea, when He used water to crush the army of Egypt. (TLSB)

The eternal quality of divine love is made manifest by God preserving His people despite – and even redeeming them through – the most perilous floods, dangers, and evil forces at work in this fallen world. Many Scripture passages depict water as the deadly enemy of God’s people, but also as a means of God’s salvation. (CC)

The dual role of abundant waters as a means of both death and salvation is first exemplified in Scripture by the universal deluge. The bulk of humanity perished in the flood, but God saved Noah and his family through the waters in a way that typified Holy Baptism, the Sacrament that now saves us by the power of Christ’s resurrection (1 Peter 3:18-21). (CC)

The second major OT event of death and salvation (Law and Gospel) through many waters was the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14-15). The pursuing Egyptians drowned in the waters but Yahweh saved the Israelites as they were “baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor 10:2). The next generation of Israelites were the heirs who actually received the Promised Land after traversing the Jordan on dry ground in a miniature reenactment of the Red Sea crossing (Joshua 3-4). (CC)

Baptism is a kind of miniature flood of God’s judgment against sin, in which the old sinful nature is rightly condemned to drown, just as did the generation of Noah that perished in the flood and the Egyptians who persecuted Israel. (CC)

If a man...desised. A fourth wisdom statement (see note on vv. 6–7), declaring love’s unsurpassed worth. (CSB)

A man does not actually purchase “the Love” by remitting his wealth. Rather, he forsakes wealth – neglects it, gives it up or away – and instead orders his life around the highest priority of receiving and retaining divine love. The value he ascribes to “the Love” may cost him all of his wealth, but he considers that loss to be of no account in comparison to Love’s profit. (CC)

The NT contains many other close parallels to this verse that involve the relinquishing of wealth or worldly gain for the sake of God’s gracious love in Jesus Christ, which surpasses any earthly treasure. These include Jesus’ parable of the pearl of great price. The man sold all he had to buy

the field with the pearl, and no doubt many of his acquaintances would have despised him for acting so foolishly (Mt. 13:45-46; cf. Mt 16:26; 19:21). The widow who gave her mite to the temple gave away all she had to live on, and many may have regarded her with disdain, but not Jesus (Mk. 12:44). Christ counseled His followers in:

Luke 13:33-34, “³Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

8:1–7 Are we lukewarm when it comes to God’s desire to save us? God loves us with a passion (Ex 20:5–6). • O Lord, You are a consuming fire. Seal us in the promise of Your Gospel, which You poured out on us generously in Christ Jesus through Holy Baptism, so that the perils of this life, the threats of the Law, the trials and tribulations that You send us for the testing of our faith might not destroy us, but always draw us near to You. Amen. (TLSB)

Final Advice

Others

8 We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for? 9 If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver, but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.

8:8–14 In the closing lines of the Song, the words of the brothers (vv. 8–9), the beloved’s reference to her own vineyard (v. 12) and her final reference to Solomon (vv. 11–12) suggest a return to the beginning of the Song (see 1:2–7). The lines may recall the beloved’s development into the age for love and marriage and the blossoming of her relationship with her lover. (CSB)

8:8 In the ancient Near East, brothers often were guardians of their sisters, especially in matters pertaining to marriage (see Ge 24:50–60; 34:13–27). (CSB)

has no breasts. Still very young, before breasts had formed. (TLSB)

the day when she is spoken for. Marriage was often contracted at an early age. (CSB)

What shall we do ... spoken for? Question is directed to her elder brothers, who have a responsibility to safeguard the chastity of their little sister. *the day ... spoken for.* When she is betrothed to another. (TLSB)

The friends who speak here are very likely the beloved’s brothers. Her brothers are recalling when she was a young woman. Perhaps it was this concern for her that led to their seemingly harsh treatment of the beloved, when they were angry with her and made her tend the vineyards (1:6). They wanted to keep her busy and out of trouble. (PBC)

8:9 This imaginative verse probably expresses the brothers’ determination to defend their young sister (the beloved) until her proper time for love and marriage has come. Or it may mean that the brothers are concerned to see that she is properly adorned for marriage before she is spoken for. (CSB)

Families ought to curb their children’s rebellion and commend them in godly living. We are to consider ourselves the keeper of our sister or brother in the faith, that the coming day of Christ’s return may be a day of gladness for His people. (TLSB)

a wall. Figurative for virginity. The girl's brothers are to continue to protect, extol, and even adorn her with all that her virtue deserves. (TLSB)

battlement of silver – Towers represent defense. Silver towers symbolize beauty along with virtue and firmness. (PBC)

a door. Figurative for promiscuity. A promiscuous girl's brothers are to do what they can to rescue her, calling her to repentance and putting a stop to her wicked ways. (TLSB)

boards of cedar – These also stand for beauty and defense. If she, like a door, is open to advances, the brothers will be strict and keep her in. (PBC)

Cedar (and the iconography of the tabernacle and temple) hearkens back to Eden's paradise. Cedar also anticipates the atonement gained on the tree of the cross, and the paradise to come, which is opened to mankind because of the cross. Revelation 22 depicts the eschatological paradise as a garden with the tree of life, its fruit freely available for all the redeemed to eat at will, and its leaves will be for healing of the nations. Hence cedar is part of the theme of the garden paradise that extends throughout the Song and stretches from Eden to Revelation 22. (CC)

We find similar imagery in the prophets. In Jeremiah 1:18,19 God says He has fortified the Prophet Jeremiah: "I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land ... They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you." (PBC)

The way to purity and strength is through the Word of God. We are surrounded by temptations and attacks upon our Christian faith. We are engaged in a spiritual struggle "against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). We need to read, study, think about and put into practice the truths of Scripture. In our day of spiritual indifference and moral breakdown we dare not be caught with our defenses down. (PBC)

She

10 I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace. 11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver. 12 My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and the keepers of the fruit two hundred.

8:10 *I was a wall* – In the ancient Near East the city wall was the primary defense for the city's inhabitants, and the towers on that wall were the most secure bastion. The Shulammitte has kept herself untouched by any except her husband. That is the basis for a major part of the Song's didactic message. (CC)

I ... like towers. In contrast to the time when she was watched over by her brothers, the beloved rejoices in her maturity (see Eze 16:7–8). (CSB)

The beloved replies that rather than being an open door she is a wall and tower. She has kept her love for her husband alone. (PBC)

one who finds peace – Here we have a play on words which is lost in the translation. She brings shalom, that is, peace or contentment. The word is related to the names Solomon and Shulammitte (see 6:13). Solomon has brought her peace. Now she in turn is a bringer of peace. (PBC)

The temporal, marital peace the Shulammitte finds may derive from her virtuous living. (TLSB)

This is the way it is with Christ and His church. He brings us peace with God. We are to bear that peace to all the world. The gospel is something that we need to receive before we can pass it on to others. (PBC)

his. The lover's. (CSB)

8:11–12 *thousand shekels ... two hundred*. Whether these figures are to be taken literally (see Isa 7:23) is uncertain. (CSB)

What Solomon has belongs to his bride; what the Shulammitte has is freely given her husband. They are one flesh in marriage, sharing all things, even wealth, in common. (TLSB)

8:11 *Baal Hamon*. Location unknown. The Hebrew (CSB)

Place-name of uncertain location. May mean “possessor of abundance” and was intended to reinforce the description of the vineyard.

hamon sometimes means “wealth” or “abundance”; hence Baal (i.e., “lord”) Hamon could mean “lord of abundance,” bringing to mind Solomon's great wealth. (CSB)

vineyard to keepers – The Prophet Isaiah builds on this picture of the lover's vineyard. “I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside” (Isaiah 5:1). Isaiah proceeds to describe how the loved one cultivated and cared for the vineyard. “Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only a bad fruit” (5:2). This vineyard, says Isaiah, belongs to the Lord and is “the house of Israel and the men of Judah” (5:7) (PBC)

Building still further on the Son's picture, Jesus Himself told two parables about vineyards. One tells of workers in the vineyard and how the landowner (representing God) chose to pay all the workers the same wage (Matthew 20:1-16). The other parable relates how some wicked tenants refused to pay the landowner (God) and even put His Son (Jesus) to death (Matthew 21:33-45). (PBC)

All these parables clearly draw their language from the Song of Songs. They also clearly represent God and His people. The Lord expects His people to work for Him, and He looks for results from that work – “justice” and “righteousness” (Isaiah 5:7). We can never pay our Savior back for the eternal salvation He gives us. But we can serve Him with our lives and our love. (PBC)

8:12 *my vineyard, my very own*. Her body. (CSB)

Whether or not this is the same vineyard as the Song's opening chapter, we aren't told. Nor does it really matter. The point she makes has little to do with the vineyard itself. Rather she is expressing her love for her husband. (PBC)

mine to give. As Solomon is master of his vineyard, so the beloved is mistress of her attractions to dispense them as she will. She offers Solomon the owner's portion of her vineyard. (CSB)

This economic arrangement of love typifies the entirety of their marriage relationship: The Shulammitte gives not only her income, but herself in her entirety in love, to the one who first loved her and claimed her as his won. Even so, each Christian as a member of Christ's bride, and the church as a corporate whole, is wholly owned and possessed by her Bridegroom. She claims nothing as her own, but selflessly gives her salvation, to purchase her, wash spotless, and render her a pure virgin, whom He will claim as His wife for eternity (Eph 5:26-27; Revelation 21-22). (CC)

may have the thousand. Caretakers would bring in money from selling the vineyard's produce, and a portion of that was returned to the owner (Mt 21:33-34). (TLSB)

This is the owner's share of the vineyard. She gives that all to her lover and keeps back only the bare essentials for the care of the vineyard. (PBC)

This beautiful expression of selfless love is a model for every marriage and moves us to think not of ourselves first, but of our partner's needs. (PBC)

This is also a beautiful model for Christians in general. Everything we have really belongs to God. Let's not hold back from the good Lord who has so richly blessed us. "Whatever you do," urges the Apostle Paul, "do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). (PBC)

While we render to God the fruits of His vineyard in their season, He will abundantly refresh our own souls by His grace, and make them "like a watered garden," full of the precious fruits of righteousness. (CB)

He

13 O you who dwell in the gardens, with companions listening for your voice; let me hear it.

8:13 *in the gardens.* In 7:11-12 the beloved invites her lover to accompany her to the countryside and the vineyards. Here the imagery places her appropriately in a garden. (CSB)

companions. Male; perhaps the companions of the lover (see 1:7). (CSB)

The Shulammitte and Solomon, perhaps years after their wedding day, have an abundance of gardens wherein the Shulammitte and her companions gather. (TLSB)

She

14 Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.

8:14 *be like a gazelle or ... stag.* Display your virile strength and agility for my delight. (CSB)

Swift and strong. (TLSB)

8:8-14 We are not to conform ourselves to the pattern of this world, but remain holy, set apart as a wall (v 10). The Lord wants to preserve His dear ones till the end. • Come, Jesus, fill the hearts

of Your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Stir up our hearts that at Your second coming we may worship You in purity and in truth. Amen.