

CHAPTER 2 - THE DESIRE FOR INTIMACY (cont.)

AN OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER TWO: The bride cannot understand why the Beloved considers her to be so special since she is a very common person. He continues to reveal lovely thoughts about her from His heart. He demonstrates to His bride that He has conquered all problems she would ever face. The Beloved Bridegroom now asks her to go with Him but she hesitates; she only wants to have Him all to herself in private fellowship. He pleads with her, but she will not go with Him. There is now a division between them. This severing of fellowship will cause her great spiritual pain.

PRAY WITH ME: *"Abba Father, thank You for giving me to Your Beloved Son (John 10:29). Thank You my Beloved for drawing me into the inner chamber of Your heart! What a wonder You are! What a joy to my heart! What a glorious revelation to my soul - this infinite "first love" love You have for me! My heart is filled to overflowing with these thoughts. I praise You! I worship You! I adore You! Take me! Mold me! Use me! Change me! Let Yourself alone be engraved in my spirit, soul and body! Transform me Holy Spirit so I am no longer seen, but rather the glorious image of my Heavenly Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ! Amen and Amen!"*

At first, the bride becomes overwhelmed with this high and intimate position she possesses with her Bridegroom King! Then, deep, hurtful thoughts pierce her mind, *"My brothers told me over and over again how worthless I am. I hated their constant taunts!"* All those horrible memories returned racing through her mind. She began to believe her brothers mocking words that kill the spirit. A darkness invaded her mind, *"He will tire of me. I have nothing to offer Him. There are so many more like me. I am common. This is too good to be true. It cannot last!"* Looking within, dejection and disappointment attacked her mind. She emotionally girded herself for the perceived coming rejection. Resigned to the fact of her worthlessness and with her eyes closed, a tear falls from her cheek to the ground. In a sad whisper she declares to the Beloved the low estimation of herself.

V.1 "I am the rose of Sharon (Heb. "the plain"), and the lily of the valleys."

The rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys are very common flowers. Thousands of these flowers bloomed in the valleys. Knowing who she is the bride says to her Beloved, *"I am like an ordinary flower, how is it that You love me as You do? I am common. There is nothing special about me at all. I am a foreigner unworthy of any consideration from You my King."*

As His proclaimed bride, you also look at yourself and exclaim to Him, *"Why, why do You love me? Look at me! I am a rose of Sharon and a lily of the valleys, a wild flower with no special cultivation. Why do You gaze at me as if I were a rare, costly jewel?"* Dear believer, do you see yourself in the same way as this bride? The same feelings are spoken by Paul as he bowed His heart in deep humility and proclaimed, ***"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."*** (Eph. 3:8). He repeats similar, heartfelt cries in I Cor. 15:9-10, ***"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet (worthy) to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am...!"***

So many individual believers see themselves as common nobodies with little worth. Because of this commonness they think that the Lord can't accomplish much in their lives. They see themselves as having little talent or gifts. All of His lovely roses and lilies have some gift; encouragement, mercy, helps, faith, and discernment to name a few. The enemy loves to focus us onto ourselves and miss the infinitely, costly value living in us - for it is not I but Christ who lives inside of me (Gal.2:20)!

PRAY WITH ME: *"You my Beloved died for me, a nothing at best. You lifted me up when I was dead (Eph. 2:1). You washed me white as snow in Your most precious blood when my filthy soul was filled with the stench of sin. You clothed me with a robe of righteousness and a garment of salvation. How beautiful You have made me. I deserve only to be prostrate at Your feet and yet You place Your nail scarred hands on each side of my face and look me in the eyes and say, 'You belong to Me my love, forever and ever.' You cause my heart to melt because of that look of infinite, all-consuming love for me! Praise Your holy Name my glorious Bridegroom."*

O dear surrendered lily, precious, precious rose of the plain, listen carefully and see yourself as your Bridegroom sees you. He takes you, this common, seemingly worthless wild flower and reveals what He truly sees in you by saying...

V.2 "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."

The "**thorn**" represents the curse brought on by Adam and Eve through sin (**Gen. 3:17-18; Matt. 13:7; Heb. 6:8**). This poor old earth has been cursed ever since. There is very little that is beautiful to the Lord. Sin has marred even creation itself. However, He bore the entire curse by wearing the crown of thorns. The earth itself will be changed one day to the perfect place it was intended to be. Praise God! He looks down and sees you dear surrendered believer that you are His lily in the midst of this cursed earth. You are the sweet, fragrant flower of His heart!

He says, "*Take a good long look around you. You used to be like one of these ugly thorns (I Cor. 6:9-11)! You are beautiful now and I made you that way. More and more of My beauty is coming forth from you, My little lily, My delicate rose! You are no longer one of the thorns. Thorns bring Me pain but you have been transformed - and O how I love to look at you! This world that I created has turned into a great sorrow to Me. Spiritual, soul and material pollution have swept over all of this planet that at one time I declared to be good (Gen. 1:31)! It deeply hurts and saddens Me, My beautiful lily. But then I see you amidst all of these thorns, possessing a spiritual loveliness that touches My heart so deeply. It is seen when you are praising Me, adoring Me, trusting Me, walking with Me filled with My Spirit. Don't ever think of yourself as a common lily or rose again. Look at yourself in contrast with the ugliness and darkness of the thorns! I love you so much, let Me wipe away that tear from your eye; those doubts from your spirit; the discouragement from your mind!*"

You, dear bride are to think highly of yourself! It says so in **Rom. 12:3** that a believer is, "**...not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.**" You are to think highly of yourself without letting it become a thing where you would attempt to get the glory that rightly belongs to Him alone. Who are we? We are an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus (**Rom.8:17**). We are the bride of Christ (**Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9**). We are a holy, royal priest (**I Pet. 2:5,9**). We have been given authority to rule (**Eph. 2:6; Rev. 5:10**)! Rejoice, you are somebody very, very special in His eyes!

PRAY WITH ME: "*Dear, dear Abba Father, I am overwhelmed by Your estimation of me. I fall in worship before You and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lover of my soul! I am so thankful to You for what I never dreamed possible. Because You have proclaimed it to my spirit from Your Word, then I am able to accept it! O what an amazing God You are. Thank You dear Lord that I will have an eternity to say thanks! In Your wonderful name Lord Jesus, amen!*"

Praise God, among all the thorns there are lilies. These are true believers who dearly love their Bridegroom - Redeemer. O what joy they bring to Him; set apart for Him; submissive to Him; surrendered to His will; singing His praises. They are part of the "**joy that was set before Him**" as He endured the cross (**Heb. 12:3**).

Thank God that He became the curse itself ("**thorns**") (**Gal. 3:13**). He didn't just take it, HE BECAME IT! He became everything which His Abba Father abhorred! All the world's wickedness and evil was compressed into every fiber of His spirit, soul and body! He cried out, "**...My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?**" (**Matt. 27:46**) The lake of fire is a place where God does not exist. Our Bridegroom, who bore the whole curse, suffered on the cross without the helping power and presence of His Father and the Holy Spirit. No one on this earth has ever been without the presence of Almighty God, Who Himself is Omnipresent; no one but Jesus, the Son of Man, your Bridegroom, the Beloved of His Father!

The Bride was sickened at the sight of the thorns. She knew that her Beloved had endured all His Father's stored up hate and wrath. He once again whispered to her, "*Remember My love, I became all of those thorns! That is what My Father saw in Me as I hung on the cross. You were one of those thorns My beautiful bride! I willingly became all of your thorns (wicked sin nature) because I saw how that ugly thorn would become transformed into My beautiful little lily and rose! I became your hideous image so that you could become My beautiful image (Rom. 8:29)! I took your crown of thorns (John 3:36; Mt. 27:29) so that I might crown you with My lovingkindness (Psa. 103:4). Is there any reason why you should ever doubt My love for you? It hurts Me to see you doubt My love. The hurt that pierces My heart is for you. I can't stand to see you suffering that kind of emotional pain of doubt! I truly love you My precious one. My perfect love for you will always cast out your fear (I John 4:18)!*"

How often we believers beat ourselves over the head because we think we are very little in the mind of the Lord. We see ourselves defeated; we focus on our "**lack**" of talents or gifts because we see so much in others. You have the greatest gift! It is everything that He desires from you. You have had the Holy Spirit pour out all of God's love into your heart (**Rom. 5:6**). In **I Cor. 14:1** He tells you to "**pursue it!**" Pursue using that gift for His heart and for others!

O my dear Christian friend, let the words of your Beloved sink deep into your heart! You are everything He wants you to be at this moment if your heart is surrendered to Him! You are beautiful to Him! Don't let the enemy crush your spirit with discouragement! Get your eyes off others! Get your eyes off self! Look at His eyes! Your Beloved's eyes are transfixed in love on you. He is extremely pleased with the decision of your heart! Walk with your head high giving Him all the glory knowing you are the special bride of the King of kings!

The Lord not only wants you to enjoy the beauty of the new life He has bestowed upon you, but also wants the world (the cursed thorns) to see Him in you (**John 17:21,23**)! Think about it, dear lily, the thorns can choke out potential spiritual beauty (**Matt. 13:7**). But she had such a love for Him while amid the thorns that they could have no effect upon her. And when the supreme moment came for her heart to surrender, there was no thorn on earth that could blur the image of His beauty in her. Can it be said of you that you are a **"...lily among thorns..."**?

PRAY WITH ME: *"I love You; I love You; I love You my wonderful Bridegroom. I deserve only to be prostrate at Your feet, yet You gently lift me up and cause me to look into Your love-filled eyes. My heart melts. I am overwhelmed. You became my curse (**Gal. 3:13**) and freely gave me all the blessings of Abraham (**Gal. 3:14,26,28**). Instead of the curse of the law, Your blessings are all mine (**Deut. 28:1-14; Eph. 1:3**). I am complete in You my Love (**Col. 2:10**). Praise be to Your holy name! I worship You! I adore You! In Your powerful name Lord Jesus, amen."*

The Bride Replies:

V.3 "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

The bride's eyes are riveted on the One who has captivated her heart. She whispers to Him, *"My Beloved, I care not what I am but O how You stand out above all others. You are my purpose for living! You are the unique One, all of my needs are met in You. You are like an apple tree among all the other trees; You refresh me; You sustain me; You feed my heart with the wonder of Your **"first love"** love. In the past I searched for fulfillment in worldly philosophies, material things, friends, activities, family, and position, but alas, they all failed me and left me in a desperate condition. You came where I was and gently picked me up and gave me life from the tree of Calvary. Yes, my Beloved, the tree of Your suffering will always stand out from among all others. I love You with all of my heart!"*

She compares her Beloved to a tree in the forest that stands out above all others. There was a tree in the Garden of Eden that also stood out above all others, the tree of life in the middle of the Garden of Eden. Our foreparents did not take of that beautiful tree (**Gen. 2:9**). Glory to God, there was another tree that stood in the midst of a garden (**John 19:18,41**), the tree of Calvary. Praise God for crucifixion! What was a deadly poison to my Lord, became a sweet taste to me when I received the fruit from Calvary's tree!

PRAY WITH ME: *"I bow my heart to You, O God of Calvary's cross! I humble myself before You, dear Lord Jesus, for You constantly sustain my spirit with the fruit I receive from that tree. I am Your adoring, eternal bride! There has never been anyone like You and never will be!"*

"...I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

The bride so pleased His heart because she took time to sit under His shadow. She gave up other things to learn of Him and be changed by Him. As a believer she surrendered to **"His shadow"** and willingly placed herself under it. This is what two of John the Baptist's disciples did when they stood and watched Jesus. John the Baptist instructed them to **"Behold the Lamb"** and that is exactly what they did. Because of what John's followers observed they went to Jesus and **"sat down under His shadow"**. These two disciples were changed men after that (**John 1:35-43**).

What was there about His shadow which brought her great delight? She experienced His blessed abiding shelter protecting her (**Psa. 91:1**) and being hidden in His hand (**Isa. 49:2**). His help directed her and caused her to rejoice and sing (**Psa. 63:7**).

With joyous excitement she declares, *"Lord, in my heart and spirit I sit next to You and I feel so unafraid and peaceful. O my loving Husband what utter delight You bring to the deep recesses of my heart. Nothing has ever satisfied me before, until I surrendered to Your loving, protecting, reassuring arms. The fruit from Your tree meets my every need, every minute of my life: the fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control. It is sweet tasting! You have never given me fruit that has a bitter taste. I worship You dear Lord Jesus. Get all the glory from my heart! You alone are the delight of my heart! You make life worth living! I feel so secure enwrapped in Your shadow."*

The enemy would try to wear you down, as he did with her, by the oppressive heat of the noon day (**1:7**). She followed the Lord and met with others in His flock. She found His shadow. The closer she drew to Him, the less effective were the weapons of the wicked one (**Eph. 6:16**). It is the **"shield of faith"** that stops all the fiery missiles. A shield shadows you from the attack! Praise God for His shadow protecting against the fiery heat of the enemy's missiles!

Do you ever sit under His shadow? It happens as you read the Word in faith and love; pray, praise and walk in faith and love! When this bride sat under His shadow it totally engulfed her. She was possessed by His shadow! So are you, dear Christian, when you surrender to Him. O my friend, just sit under the shadow of the Word. Sitting implies a resting, quiet meditating upon Him and His instructive Words. His followers were admonished to wait until the power came (**Luke 24:49**). They waited in the upper room, praying together (**Acts 1:4,14**)! And after the wait, the power came (**Acts 2:1-4,41-43**)! Sit! Sit my dear bride! Sit still (**Psa. 37:7**) and then His power will be manifest in your spirit!

V.4 "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

Our Bridegroom loves to help us and do unexpected, special things for us. That's what someone who has that fresh "**first love**" love thrives on. In **v.3** His shadow is over us. He first protects and nurtures us "**under His shadow**" that is the intimate, private side of our relationship with Him. Now in public He wants all the creation of the universe to know His heart concerning the love of His life. What does He do? He prepares a glorious banquet! Do you realize just how important you are to the Lord? Have you ever read in the Word, that God held a banquet for the angelic beings? No! But for you, dear bride of His heart, a glorious banquet awaits (**Rev. 19:1-9**). He wants to display you to all!

A banquet implies that there are others present. O how He loves for us to be with other lilies who deeply love Him. What a glory it is to worship and praise Him together in the unity of the Spirit. When we worship Him with a heart like Mary of Bethany (**John 12:1-6**), the presence of God is felt and He is marvelously glorified by the living water of adoration pouring from our hearts.

The Hebrew word translated "**banquet**" is literally the word for "**wine**" and is translated "**wine**" over one hundred and thirty times. Wine is a symbol for joy (**Psa. 104:15**). Praise God. He fills us with joy as only His presence can do. "**...For the joy of the Lord is your strength.**" (**Neh. 8:10**) And just what is His joy? None other than the anointed presence of the Lord Himself.

Pause for a moment and reflect back with me to chapter **1:4** where the Bride compared all the legitimate joys of life belonging to her not worthy to be compared to His love. Earth's wine could not compare with His love. She chooses rather His love and in return her Beloved Bridegroom gave her His wine, the eternal wine of His love, a whole house full! "**Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart (Psa. 37:4).**" God is so good! The enemy will cause you to think you are giving up too much! However, your Bridegroom simply gives you **Eph.1:3 and 2Pet.1:3,4!**

"...his banner over me was love."

He proudly unfurls a heavenly banner over her which declares, "**this one is the true love of My heart.**" He is so proud of the miracle of Calvary and what she has become. Envision with me the very banquet itself. The doors open to the great banqueting hall, there is a hushed silence. Then the Archangels blow the heavenly trumpets announcing the arrival of His Majesty.

The Beloved's countenance is filled with joy as He escorts His beautiful bride to the platform where there are two thrones. He politely pulls out one of them from the head table and bids her to sit. Once she is seated He unfurls a banner, holding it over her for all to see. It says, "**This is My love! My one and only love!**" The whole banqueting house of angels, archangels, cherubim, and seraphim break out in thunderous applause! The bride turns, looks at the banner, sees the nail scarred hands holding it. Filled with tears of thankfulness, her eyes meet His. With each gaze an eternity of love flows between them! O what spiritual wine! Who can fathom its taste? The bride will have an eternity to drink from the length, breadth, depth and height of it (**Eph.3:17-19**)! Glory to God!

PRAY WITH ME: "O my dear Husband, when I surrender all the circumstances of my life to You; when I allow You to have full say in my daily walk; when I say, 'not my will but Your will be accomplished in my life'; You take me into Your banqueting hall! You make me feel so special! Thank You, dear Bridegroom of my heart, for all the love-filled attention You give to me, Your blood-bought bride! Your very presence in my life is a banquet of pleasure and joy; of strength and stability. What a glorious banner You have unfurled over me - a banner of EVERLASTING, PERSONAL, HEARTFELT, REDEEMING, CARING LOVE! What a revelation to my heart: Your sacrificial love; Abba Father's love; and the love of the dear Holy Spirit! Cause me to always see that banner over me in every circumstance of my life. Each time I will know that all things do work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (**Rom. 8:28**). I'll know that nothing can separate me from Your love (**Rom. 8:35**) and You will constantly love me unto the end (**John 13:1**)! I will know that Your love has been poured out within my spirit (**Rom. 5:5**) and that You Yourself are the banner over me (**Ex.17:15; 1 John 4:8**)! Praise, praise, praise Your holy name my glorious Husband!"

V.5 "Stay me (sustain me) with flagons (cakes made with raisins), comfort me with apples: for I am sick (faint) of love (lovesick)."

Raisin cakes were given by David to the people after the joyful return of the Ark of the Lord. Apples would remind her of Him (2:3) for He is the living Ark. What a way to go off to sleep enjoying the aroma that represents the Love of her life!

The bride lays her head on His shoulder and confesses, *"My Beloved, I am overwhelmed; I am weak and faint with these amazing revelations of Your heart concerning Your love for me. Let me lie down in blissful silence, adoring You with inexpressible love. Then refresh me so I am able to bear more, for without Your enablement (Col. 1:11) I will remain in this weakened condition. You are sheer joy to my heart my Beloved Bridegroom!"*

Notice that she asks Him to sustain her. She doesn't attempt to strengthen herself. The bride yearns to be strengthened by His fruit! His fruit will always uphold and sustain you: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self control. The Hebrew word for **"stay"** means to uphold, give support or to lean upon. She leaves the sustaining and refreshing entirely to Him! Praise God for the empowering of the Holy Spirit who makes Jesus our strength. She is weak! He is strong! What she needs now are strong arms to support her. At that very instant He draws her to Himself into the peacefulness of His embrace.

As He draws the love of His heart ever so gently to Himself, He kisses her with the Word. It is His word that will sustain her! **"...upholding all things by the word of his power." (Heb. 1:3)**. She needs the food of the Word, **"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts." (Jer. 15:16)**.

Why was she so tired? After the banquet the daughters of Jerusalem visited with her. The conversation was all about His glorious banner of love. It seemed like an endless stream of joyous reflection. The bride listened with joy. She loved hearing others speak about the only Love of her heart and how He had changed their lives also. The bride exclaimed, *"You know, dear friends, this is the happiest day of my life and I'm sure yours also. I don't believe anything could ever come in and spoil what I and all of you have been given. Isn't it wonderful?"* It was such a glorious time of praise. All were aglow with joy. One of them noticed the time, *"Ladies, I don't believe it, do you realize that we have been talking for two hours?"* The bride replied, *"Are you sure, it seems as if it were just a few minutes?"* After that intense spiritual high the bride felt a tiredness come over her.

When you are tired, dear Christian, do you ever just sit in His presence, briefly read a Word from His lips such as **Psalms 23** then lay back and rest in those promises right there and then? He will refresh you! It is not a time for study but just a quiet snuggling up to His heart for a refreshing of the soul (emotions, mind, will). He will do it. He longs to be asked. It is a special way for Him to show you His gentle, renewing love. You must ask! She asked and He responds in **V. 6...**

V.6 "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me."

Listen again to her innermost thoughts: *"My Beloved, You alone are able to give strength in my weakness. All I need is Your nail-pierced hands enwrapping me for I am emotionally exhausted with Your joy and wonder! Thank You, my loving Husband, glorious King of my heart, for placing Your 'left hand' under my head to control my thoughts (Isa. 26:3). Praise You dear Lord for the peace that is keeping my heart and mind (Phil. 4:7)! You are transforming my life by the renewing of my mind (Rom. 12:2). You do it all and I give You all the glory and all of my love! How wonderful it is to have the strength of Your 'right hand' embracing me (Psa.18:35), always drawing me closer to Your heart by the Holy Spirit. I surrender to Your arms, Your leading, Your thoughts, Your plans, Your holy pathway! All fear and doubt are gone when You embrace my spirit and soul!"*

Meditate upon these thoughts from the Holy Word of God. Jesus represents the right hand of God in position and purpose. Jesus is now sitting at the right hand of power (**Mark 14:62; Heb. 1:3; 12:2**)! Do you, dear surrendered saint, know what is in Jesus' right hand? It is all yours (**Eph. 1:3**): Pleasures - **Psa. 16:11**; Salvation and deliverance - **Psa. 17:7**; long life - **Prov. 3:13-16**; support - **Psa. 18:35**. The right hand of God (Jesus) continually does valiantly (**Psa. 118:15,16**) and must be exalted (**Psa. 118:16**)! Pause right now and exalt Him. Pray in the Spirit and love Him. Now consider the wonderful left hand of our Bridegroom Jesus. In it are riches and honor (**Prov. 3:13-16**). He Himself is the treasure of wisdom and knowledge (**Col. 2:3**)! All you have to do is ask for what already belongs to you. The asking is an act of love and faith. It is allowing Him to have the inestimable joy of giving to you, His bride. Don't rob Him of that joy (**Acts 20:35**).

PRAY WITH ME: *"How secure I feel in Your arms dear Lord Jesus. My mind is at rest and my soul feels protected by Your strong embrace! Thank You for enwrapping me with Your Word, encompassing me with Your Spirit, enclosing me with Abba Father's heart! I feel so complete in You! In Your blessed name Lord Jesus, amen."*

Dear bride, do you sense His presence and arms around you by faith? Step out in faith and believe His Word and His promises, then you will feel those loving arms embracing you in all situations. The daughters are there to help and minister to the bride but the Bridegroom wants to make sure she is not disturbed and gets plenty of spiritual rest (**Heb. 4:10**). He says...

V.7 "I charge you, O ye daughters of Yerushalayim, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he ("she") please."

The Hebrew word "**he**" in this verse may be translated "**she**" or "**it**". The NAS uses "**she**" referring back to the bride. The NIV uses "**it**" referring to love itself.

The Bridegroom is teaching us that there must be a time of rest for His bride. We need time to be led by the Good Shepherd beside the still waters in order to have our souls renewed, refreshed and restored! Don't feel guilty about taking a rest. Remember, He wants it for us so that we can be spiritually more effective.

The Bridegroom Jesus tells those who serve her in the court to allow His bride to sleep peacefully. How gentle He is with her. He knows that there is still much for her to experience. Pause and praise Him that He knows the exact amount of progress we need at any given time. There is never, never, a valid reason to become uneasy about the supposed "unknown" future when He is in control of our lives. He has all our future planned (**Jer. 29:11; Psa. 139:15,16**). Enjoy His presence and leading in this moment! Don't be anxious or speculate about the future (**James 4:13-16; Prov. 27:1**). Rest in Him, He has it all taken care of! Praise His holy name!

The "**roes**" are gazelles and "**hinds**" are deer. Gazelles are known for their swiftness (**I Chron. 12:8**). **Prov. 5:19** speaks of a "**loving hind**". When our Lord speaks we are to obey His commands and requests with a loving swiftness.

The bride is now resting. The Lord has revealed wondrous things about His love for her. He is preparing her for a deeper work of surrender. With all that her heart has now experienced, surely she will respond with loving swiftness to anything He may request of her!

Dear surrendered saint, how often has the Lord allowed you to experience a deep anointing of His presence? After that, He asked you to go with Him in a work He had prepared for you to do (to visit someone, to sing, to give help, teach, become involved with a specific ministry: nursing home, children's, youth, prison, outreach, one on one discipleship, etc.). Did you respond? Keep these thoughts in mind as we come to the next section.

Time now passes between verses **7** and **8**. As she awakens she sees her Beloved coming to her in a marvelous manner. He has been out ministering, blessing, caring, saving and delivering. He cannot wait to see her and invite His bride to go out with Him. What joy it would be for her to be part of His ministry and fellowship with Him in it.

THE DEPTH OF HIS POWER AND DESIRE - 2:8-15

V.8 "The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills."

Understanding this vision is of paramount importance if she is to step out in faith with her Beloved. In just a few moments He will ask her to move out of her comfort zone and go with Him. Great spiritual and emotional pain looms over the horizon if she does not stop and allow this vision to forever be riveted upon her will!

PRAY WITH ME: *"Dear Holy Spirit, reveal this important truth to my heart. You are the Spirit of truth and Jesus told me that You would disclose all truth to me (**John 16:13**). Without Your work in my spirit this will just become biblical knowledge without power. When my Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, speaks to me about my life or habits I want to respond with loving swiftness! Thank You Father for granting my request. Yours is a throne of grace where I can always find help in time of need. I desire Your revelation knowledge right now. In the name of my Beloved and Your Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!"*

There is such a longing in His heart for you to know just what the leaping and skipping mean. Your Bridegroom comes near and explains, *"My love, My bride, look at Me, look into My eyes. Listen to My voice! No matter what the enemy will bring against you; no matter how intense the problems and difficulties may be, look My darling bride, I have already conquered them! Every hill and every mountain - I have leaped over them all. My resurrection power is greater than all of them and I have put that power inside of you (the Spirit of God). I have given you all of My precious promises (**II Cor. 1:20**;*

II Cor. 7:1; II Pet. 1:3,4! *I have given you My Word! I love you with all of My heart and I'll be there with you when you face the mountains of fear, doubt, depression, failure and loss which will try to rob you of peace, joy and contentment. Just speak to the mountain in faith believing and it will be removed in My timing (Mark 11:23,24)! When you speak to that mountain, stand on My promises and see the miracle of I Corinthians 10:13 fulfilled in you. You will know that I am alive in your heart as never before!"*

With great intensity in His voice He continues, *"I will be with you on the hills of irritation, mental tiredness, physical weakness, and family difficulties! I will be your Healer in sickness (Psa. 103:3; Isa. 53:5; Matt. 8:14-18). I have broken the power of sin, poverty, disease and lack (Gal. 3:13,14,26,29). I have given you My blessings (Eph. 1:3). I have given you faith (Rom. 12:3), strength (Psa. 27:1), wisdom (I Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:3; James 1:5), everything (Phil. 4:19). My Father and My Spirit, through My word and My power, will bring you out victorious each time. I will always cause you to triumph in Me (II Cor. 2:14)! Just be patient and wait. My Bridegroom's love will sustain you through the storms."*

In this vision she saw Her Beloved leap upon Mt. Calvary! As He came down, both feet sank in the mire of her sin and the sins of the whole world! What greater mountain is there than the eternal mountain of humanity's sin? Praise God it was but a leap.

He was not on that awful mountain for weeks, months or even years. He was there a few horrible hours. In other words it was a leap. He went down and then rose up triumphantly ascending into heaven seated on the throne of God. Is there any mountain in your life He has not already conquered? Rejoice, dear reader, and lean upon Him by faith as He brings you over your mountains! Bride, get your eyes fixed on the victory. He has triumphed over the little hills as well as the big mountains in your life. These little hills at first seem to be very little trouble. When the *"little"* hills appear (irritation, disappointment, hurt, etc.) put your hand in His and skip over them. If you are not careful you will get weighed down Oh so very slowly. Don't allow the *"little"* hills to develop into big mountains. Recognize them and then speak to the hills by faith with a promise from His Word then simply wait.

V.9 "My beloved is like a roe (gazelle) or a young hart (deer or stag)..."

Praise God, dear reader, your Beloved comes to you swiftly (gazelle); He comes to you with great desire and longing for you (deer - **Psa. 42:1**). He cannot help Himself for He is deeply in love with you. He has never lost His **"first love"** love for you. It remains intense. How do you respond to this intense, longing love of your Beloved? Is there a responsive **"first love"** love for His heart to enjoy from you?

She makes all of these wonderful comments about Him. Isn't it amazing how much we can spiritually see and know about our Beloved Lord Jesus? The Bride knows He is like a **"gazelle"** and **"young deer"**. She knows the intensity of His love for her. Knowing these very special thoughts is one thing but acting on them is a whole different matter. Will she respond to Him?

"...behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice."

He stands just outside the place where they always had sweet fellowship together, anxiously awaiting her response. Instead of opening to her Beloved she just stands there. She hesitates. How strange. There is a partition (**lattice**) between them. She does not realize that a little hill has just appeared which could become a mountain of separation later.

The Beloved speaks:

V.10 "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair (beautiful) one, and come away."

With words such as **"my love"** and **"my beautiful one"**, why does she hesitate? She is being taught the importance of trusting her Beloved and His ways. He does not tell her where they would be going, that is not important. She needs to understand that all will be well no matter where they travel. Why? He has already leaped over the mountains of problems and skipped over the hills of difficulties. He knows the beginning from the ending. May we have the faith of Abraham (**Heb. 10:8**) and go at His prompting. He will always be guiding your steps because they will be planned by Him (**Psa. 143:8**). Does He not say that what He plans He will do (**Isa. 46:11**)? The Bride is filled with love for Him, but now her faith (**Rom.12:3**) will be tested. She has been passively surrendered in her spirit. But there must come an active submissiveness in her soul to Him (her will, mind, emotions). He wants to lead her on this planned path from **"...faith to faith..."** (**Rom.1:17**) and **"...glory to glory..."** (**II Cor. 3:18**), so that she may enter into all that belongs to her and the joys awaiting in chapters 6,7 and 8.

The Beloved is asking her to step out in faith! O how this would please Him! Faith says, *"I love You so much that I trust You no matter where You are taking me!"* The Beloved is not asking her to go it alone. She will be with Him! He will never leave her side (**Heb. 13:5**)! But alas, she hesitates because she prefers to have fellowship with the Lover of her heart on her own terms. She is thinking, *"Why don't we just stay home, its more convenient and comfortable? I'll pray to You, listen to You, meditate upon Your word. We can watch Christian television together. I'll even let You choose what Christian teaching tape or music tape to listen to. We don't need to go out and be with other lilies. Let's keep it just the same with no changes. Why spoil something that is so good? It will be just You and me together only, my Love."*

Where is He going to take her? Her Beloved wants to meet her family. She needs to forgive her brothers for all that they did to her (**1:6**). She had retaliated with harsh words of bitterness and she needs to ask them to forgive her. The Beloved also longed to take His beautiful bride to fellowship with other surrendered lilies (**6:3**)! What joy she will experience! What fellowship! What an amazing presence of His that will be felt! There are attacks and great spiritual battles coming, especially because of her love and surrender to Jesus. She needs the other lilies! She needs other members of the body of Christ (**Eph.4:15,16**). This will only come through unity with other surrendered believers. Satan will do anything to keep us divided in heart and from other members of the body of Christ. He doesn't mind us being faithful to church so long as we are at odds with something, someone or some group in the body of Christ. THERE IS TREMENDOUS POWER IN UNITY and the enemy knows it!

The Bridegroom wants to take her to be in unity with other believers. How do I know that this is where He desires to take her? Look at **6:2**. She finds Him feeding among the lilies. If she would only go with Him, then all of the pain and suffering of chapters three and five would be avoided! O how unnecessary! If only we would simply step out in full love for Him and walk in faith with Him. Did she not ask Him in **1:7** *"...where thou feedest...?"*

How often we ask the Lord to fulfill a need and then we do not recognize the way He is answering the request due to our lack of faith to step out into some area into which He is leading! Listen in your heart as the Bridegroom speaks to you O so gently, O so longingly, O so patiently!

The Lord works through His body. He gives each member gifts in order to minister to one another. The Holy Spirit declares to us, *"...know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves."* (read **I Thess.5:12-18**).

There was power over the enemy in the Book of Acts. Why? Because they were unified! Then Satan began to attack the church to divide and conquer to render them powerless over him and his evil army. God hates disunity! *"These six things does the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination unto him...he that soweth discord (division, strife) among brethren."* (**Prov. 6:16,19**). If the bride does not go with Him, then she is causing an unintentional but dangerous division in the body.

Concerning how important unity is to the Lord's heart read **Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 8:6; 15:25; Eph.4:3; Phil. 2:2**! The Lord teaches us that we are His body. The body must function together properly or it will be weak failing in the tests and battles to come. Please take time to read **I Cor. 12:4-31** to get the big picture of the body of Christ. Then read **I Cor.13:1-7** to see the individual bride's responsibility to the body of Christ. Read **Eph. 4:14-16; Col. 3:14-17**!

Knowing her thoughts the Beloved responds, *"You must fellowship with other lilies so you can experience the joy of sharing and giving with each other (Gal. 6:10)! I have given you spiritual gifts to help them grow. Likewise you will grow because of their gifts shared with you! My joy is to live and minister through each member of my body fulfilling Eph. 4:15,16. My beautiful one, this is how you will grow into spiritual maturity and experience Me in ways you never dreamed of before. My love, only in this way will you experience the breadth, length, depth and height of My love (Eph.3:14-21). Here, take My hand and come."*

"...Rise up..."

Here is the first test of practical surrender. How sad that there is no response. Again, He draws her heart...

V.11 "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;"

To activate her faith the Lord now reminds her of the transformation that has taken place in her since that first cry of her heart in chapter 1. It was almost always winter in her Christian walk before total surrender. There is no more winter or rain to be feared. They are past. The devil has been defeated (**Heb. 2:14; I John 3:8**)! There is no place for gray clouds of gloom anymore. Continual resurrection victory can be hers (**II Cor. 2:14**).

The Beloved speaks to her, "O My darling, do you not realize that the past frustrations in struggling and failing to quit bad habits in your own strength are over? Gone is the chill of your unsatisfied soul thinking you never do enough for Me. The cold, cold wind of religious burnout is over! The winter storms flooding your soul with doubt and fear are past! The enemy will attack but be encouraged, I have overcome him and the world (**I John 3:8; John 16:33**)! I will be fighting your battles. As you lift up the sword and speak it (**Eph. 6:17,18**), it will be My strength and My voice! Come My special one, rest and be content with the other lilies whom I love so deeply. You think the love you have experienced now is great, it is only a trickle compared to the flood you will experience together with other lilies. You will fight the battles together. You will be given glorious revelations of My heart together. Rise up My beautiful bride and come with Me!" Surely there will be an immediate response to these new revelations, but alas, there is none! O how patient is the Bridegroom. He continues to woo her heart by directing her attention to a scene of refreshment, renewal and new life:

V.12 "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle (turtledove) is heard in our land."

Flowers are signs of the resurrected life! Jesus prayed in a garden (**John 18:1**); He died in a garden; was buried in a garden; and rose in a garden (**John 19:41**). Mary Magdalene mistook the resurrected Jesus for a gardener. In reality, He is a spiritual gardener of our heart (in **chapter 4** you will see the beauty of His garden in detail). He wants to have produced in us, from His Abba Father and the Holy Spirit, spiritual flowers that will display to the world various facets of His character! Will His resurrected flowers appear in her manner of living? In yours? The answer will be a resounding "yes" if you rise up and come away with Him! You will, little by little, "appear" more like Him in your manner of living (**Gal.5:22,23**).

Listen to your Beloved, "O my love, put your hand in Mine. Allow My heart to make the beauty I have placed within you more visible. I want others to see you by My side. O first love of My heart, '**The flowers appear...**' and it is time for beauty. Don't you realize, My precious bride, that you are one of those flowers, one of those very, very special lilies? O come walk with Me so that My fragrance may permeate your life. Others will be touched as they see how beautiful your submission to Me has made you! You will be continually filled with the Holy Spirit's voice (**turtledove or dove**), '**...singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord**' (**Eph.5:18,19**). The voice of the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Dove, will be heard from you throughout the land. Come with Me, come my darling bride! I'm not asking you to go alone. You will be with me all the way. Trust Me My bride!"

He waits expectantly! She bows her head in silence. He then whispers in a sad tone, "Why do you hesitate? Do you not trust Me? Is My full love for you not enough? Pleading and urging her (**Rom. 12:1-2**) He says, "Just take one step and I will do the rest. Experience my good and perfect will for your life! I will do the leading and you will do the leaning! Come with Me my love!"

"...the time of the singing of birds is come..."

As the birds sing out their joyful songs near where they are, Jesus speaks through the lattice work, "My Father cares about all the birds and watches over them. No wonder they sing. They know they are protected and bring joy to His heart (**Luke 12:6**). O My beautiful bride, My Abba Father and the Holy Spirit love you the same way as I do. Don't hesitate, most intimate companion of My heart, if you wait upon Me as we travel together, when tiredness sweeps over your body and soul, I will make sure your strength is renewed like the eagles! (**Isa.40:31**) Come, take My hand, and become more like Me."

He pauses for a moment waiting for any kind of positive response. There is only silence as she keeps her head bowed looking down at the green grass. The Beloved continues to pull at her heart strings, "Both the sparrow and the swallow have found a place near My Father's altar (**Psa. 84:3**). You, My dove, have found a place right inside His heart and My heart. How can you hesitate? Think of this My love, My Father did not spare Me, His only Son, but delivered Me up to be crucified for you. Since He went that far, don't you know that your Abba Father will provide everything for Our journey together until you meet Him in glory (**Rom. 8:32**)?" Here, take My hand and walk in the resurrected life with Me!"

PRAY WITH ME: "O my loving Lord, may my heart always hear the voice of Your Dove. May the eyes of my heart be fixed upon You alone. I now respond to Your loving invitation to walk with You arm in arm into a deeper move of Your Spirit; into deeper revelations of Your wonder filled person. O may I be in such a spiritual condition that I am able to receive what You so much want for me to have! I love You Lord Jesus! Dear Bridegroom, I love Your voice! I love Your Word! O Lord, may I not be like this bride who does not initially respond to Your pleadings! Wonderful Lord, I do see the flowers; I do hear the birds; I do hear the voice of Your Spirit! Thank You for taking me by the hand! I am truly ready! In Your Holy name Lord Jesus, Amen!"

The Bridegroom continues to tug at her heart:

V.13 "The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair (beautiful) one, and come away."

What is the significance of the fig tree's fruit and fragrance? The fig tree is unusual in that it seems to have no flower, yet **within** each fruit there are hundreds of tiny flowers. As a believer, when we surrender all to Him, spiritual fruit is produced in us for others to be blessed by. Within that spiritual fruit are inwardly hidden, very lovely flowers of holiness known only by us and totally enjoyed by our King. There are the precious first fruits for Him alone and then the other blessed fruit of His fullness for us and others to enjoy. Praise God for the abundance within.

The world and the nominal Christian cannot in any measure understand or appreciate these hidden spiritual flowers. The world looks at the surrendered, separated believer and on the surface sees no real special value. They think the Gospel of the Beloved, so cherished by the bride of Christ, is utter foolishness, exclusive and narrow minded (**I Cor. 1:23-30**). They cannot see for they are spiritually blind (**I Corinthians 2:14; II Cor. 4:3,4**).

You are the fruit of Calvary. Within your spirit resides God's holy power to produce all manner of beautiful flowers that will give forth Holy Spirit fragrances in your life. The Father (husbandman) through the precious Holy Spirit will first have **"fruit"**, **"more fruit"** and then **"much fruit"** produced in you (the significance of the fig tree's two crops) (**John 15:1-14**). It is the fruit of the Spirit (**Gal. 5:22-23**)! Make an ironclad decision to yield your will to the Lord, yield your eyes to His Word, yield your mind to a private quiet time where you can just meditate on Him (a **Phil. 4:8** experience), yield your hands and feet to do service for a saint or sinner, yield your spirit to fellowship with those who love Him. Fruit will be on the way!

The resurrection life of Jesus permeates her spirit. Listen to His gentle words once again pulling at her heart. He takes her by the hand and speaks so gently, *"My dove, look at you. Look how you have already changed since I gave a kiss of approval to you (1:2)."*

"There are so few that have a thirst for Me as you My beautiful bride. You surrendered to Me because you desired intimate fellowship and wanted to know more about My heart. Others that belong to Me are more interested in the things I have given them to do than in Me. But you, you are the delight of My life. You are like the green figs and tender grapes - ready to grow into all the fullness of ripened fruit. Already the beauty of My holiness is evident in you (flowers). And the fragrance of My Spirit emanates from you. Now, take the next step with Me. Come with Me, I will introduce you to other surrendered lilies. Together with them the combined spiritual fragrance will bring unspeakable joy to Me and to Abba Father (II Cor. 2:1-16; Phil. 4:18)."

Active faith is the ultimate act of love for Him. Without faith it is impossible to please Him (**Heb. 11:6**). He is saying, take the first step of faith and then I will take over from there! Praise God! Your willingness is the step of love-faith that so pleases Him. It is love intertwined with faith that creates the most exquisite spiritual fruit and fragrance possible.

He waits, the moment feels like an eternity. There is no response. Tears in her eyes, yes. Love still radiating from her heart for Him, yes. But taking that step of faith and going with Him is absent. All of a sudden a slight chill in the air is felt and a small dark cloud appears on the horizon of her soul.

Dear reader, the Holy Spirit wants so much to be given the right to further change you into the image of the Beloved (**Rom. 8:29**)! How is this change to be effected in you? By walking with the Beloved! Step out in faith and obey the prompting of the Spirit of the Bridegroom from His Holy Word. The power of God will flow through you and wonderful changes will progressively take place in your habits and attitude. It begins when you hear His voice say, **"Arise my love and come away with me!"** Let two words be forever engraved in your spirit and you will not hesitate to go - Jesus said it would be, **"WITH ME!" "WITH ME!" "WITH ME!"** You will come through everything if you realize He means what He declares! Yet a small hill of sin is rising in her heart. So subtle is all of this, so imperceptible that it will soon turn into a horrible, foreboding mountain (**2:17**)!

"...the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell..."

The Beloved of her heart speaks yet again, *"My love, look around and see the abundant supply purchased for you by My blood. Behold the vines and all the grapes. Fruit is already being produced in your life because of this initial surrender. You must allow me to bring others into your life so that they may pick the tender, sweet fruit from your branch. They will grow in love. Will you come with Me and have more glorious, spiritual fruit produced in you? My beautiful one why do you hesitate? What else do I need to do to woo your heart to Me so as to have you walk by My side in intimate, fruit-bearing fellowship?"*

She had spoken earlier of her fervent love for Him. Yet there is no response to His simple request, how sad! What had happened? She wanted the Lord on her own terms. She wanted Him all to herself. She didn't want to leave the security of the walls. This is likened to so many believers who have never dedicated their lives to Him.

They gladly give the Lord praise and worship every time the church door is opened. But when He calls them to move out from those four walls and exercise their proclaimed praise, love and faith in the daily battles of life - they hesitate. Unfortunately they don't really mean what they are singing and declaring. Remember, it is one thing to call Him "Lord" in church (Martha) but it is quite another thing to clearly live out the Lordship of Jesus in the trials and tribulations of life (Mary). The Beloved Bridegroom never asks them to go out alone, He will always be with them (**Heb. 13:5**)! They fail to exercise the only thing that pleases their Bridegroom - faith (**Heb. 11:6**) which is the true response of love!

PRAY WITH ME: *"Lord, how many times do You have to say it to my heart before I will actually act upon Your promises? Fill me with Your Spirit! Fill me with Your wisdom! Fill me with Your humility! Fill me with Your love! I am stepping out right now. Take over dear Lord Jesus. I want to walk step by step with You my King! In the authority of Jesus' name, amen!"*

Will you dear reader say "yes" to the Beloved Lord of your soul? Will you respond to Him and say, *"Whatever You want for my life I accept it gladly? You have shown me the fig tree and Your tender grapes, I am ready. Thank You dear Bridegroom for letting me see the results of the resurrected life in other lilies. Take me, lead me and show me Your wondrous plan as we walk hand in hand!"*

It is so incomprehensible that Jesus' bride does not run quickly into His loving, secure arms! But alas, that is the sad testimony of nominal believers who give little time to Him! I look in amazement at her, yet I see me in her. For so long I knew Jesus as my Savior ignoring the prompting of His right of Lordship in my life. I look back at the first twenty-three years as a believer and wonder, *"How could I have hesitated so many times?"* I was so taken up with the ministry of the Lord and missed the Lord of the ministry. Now, since the moment of absolute surrender to my Beloved's arms I can say that the last nineteen years have been spiritually indescribable. He raised me up higher than I could have ever imagined.

Since that first step of full surrender to Him, **I Cor. 2:9-10** is progressively being fulfilled in me. ***"...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."*** From year to year it is like going ***"...from glory to glory..."*** (**II Cor. 3:18**). I took the first step and then the Holy Spirit took over (**Isa. 46:11; Phil. 2:13**). At the time it all began I had no idea what was taking place. He was breaking me. Before surrender it had always been my plans for Him. I decided how I was going to serve Him. The breaking was painful, but my will had to be broken. I was a Martha. Jesus wanted me to be a Mary of Bethany.

He allowed everything in my life to be taken away. He exposed my heart's sin, in all of its debilitating subtleties and shameful nakedness. But oh what grace, oh what compassion, oh what mercy is found in His heart! He picked me up and set my feet on a glorious path of which at the time I was completely unaware of what glories were in store for this most undeserving bride of His. Four years later came the experience of this Song. I sat down early one morning before dawn to have devotions in the Song of Songs. And for one year the Holy Spirit overwhelmed me with devotional revelations in each verse. The result, an unintended book filled with Jesus' love for His bride.

Now back to the ominous scene before us, Jesus pleads again with His bride...

V.14 "O my dove, thou art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs (steep place) , let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

A brief amount of time has passed. The Beloved returns having given her time to think about His request. Close by He finds her in a meadow, where they would walk and share spiritually intimate thoughts with each other. But her heart has changed. She does not invite Him to fellowship. There was a chill in the atmosphere.

Jesus bares His heart to her once again! O the intensity! O the emotional longing! Listen to His voice pleading with her, *"Remember My love, My bride, you are a dove and as a dove I remember that you had eyes only for Me. O my dove you desperately need Me! I alone am your protection! How can you hesitate one moment? My loving, nail-scarred hands are stretched out to you. With Me you will experience unspeakable joy, but you must first take My hand and, step by step, I will lead you to walk in the wonderful plan My Father has laid out for your life. You look so beautiful there in the cleft of the rock! I am your Rock and I was cleft for you at Calvary! Remember how you would sing?"*

*'Rock of ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.
Let the water and the blood from Thy riven side which flowed.
Be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power.'* Augustus M. Toplady

"It brought Me much joy as you sang it as a love song to Me. I don't hear your sweet voice anymore. O how I listen so intently but there is just silence. O My bride, My love I miss hearing your voice of love. Do you realize, My bride, that I am that Rock (Exo. 33:22; Isa. 43:1)? Why are you hiding yourself from Me in the secret place of the stairs? That lovely image of Me which is in you, I cannot see! What's wrong My lovely bride? I do not hear your sweet voice that praised, worshiped, and adored Me so often each day. My heart aches to see you wearing those exquisite garments which I gave to you not long ago (Isa. 61:10). O My bride, My only love, where are you? What have you allowed to come between us? O My bride I miss you so deeply."

"...in the secret places of the stairs..."

"O My lovely bride, I know how you love this secret place. It is still special to My heart also. This is the place where we had fellowship, away from the rush and pressures of life. I loved the intimate talks we had here. What joy just to sit with you and say nothing. I could feel your spiritual heart beat in full love for Me. But now I want to take you to a higher plane, where you will be with others who love Me just as deeply as you do. You will be filled to overflowing as never before. Trust Me My love; take My hand and let's go together. There are other lilies who know all about you and long to have you share with them. They can't wait to hear the special revelations about Me which only you know. I have also revealed to each of them precious thoughts about Myself. You will be so blessed as you begin to share with each other! Come on, don't toy with My feelings anymore. Take My hand, let's walk together where they are anxiously awaiting to meet you!"

"...let me see thy countenance (form), let me hear thy voice..."

What an amazing scene we have here. The Bridegroom does not coerce and demand submission from her! He who has the Cherubim and Seraphim continually worshiping Him; He who commands innumerable hosts of angels who obey His slightest order, deals with His bride in loving, pleading tones! He says, **"...let me see..."** and **"...let me hear..."**! It is much the same as the Holy Spirit **"beseeches"** (begs) us to give our bodies totally to the Lord (Rom. 12:1). Does the God who saved me have to ask me over and over again **"...let me see..."** and **"...let me hear..."**?

Notice the order here. When He said, **"...let me see..."**, He was indicating that she must take the first step. He then said, **"...let me hear..."**, He was expecting her to speak. Actions speak louder than words! If she moves out of the secret place and shows herself to Him, it would indicate a loving, submissive heart in response to His request. Nothing is more prized than a loving step of faith to Him. But alas, her form does not appear!

His heart aches. Her voice is silent, O so silent! Can it be that the bride could treat her wonderful Bridegroom in such a rude and hurtful way? Are you guilty of this dear reader? How sad that our self-will silences the voice of our heart and soul which belong to Him by the terrible cost of redemption!

Let's digress for a minute dear believer. If you are a husband, then you are the high priest of your family. Don't miss how your heavenly Husband the Lord Jesus Christ handles His bride! The Holy Spirit declares in **Eph. 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church (bride), and gave himself for it."** Our Heavenly Husband is still serving, caring and making intercession for her today (**Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:26,27,34**).

Listen to the tone of His voice. He doesn't brow beat her. He presents Himself as the problem solver (**v.8**); the positive encourager (**vs.11-14**); the One who yearns for her fellowship (**vs.10,13**); the One who has eyes only for her (**v.14**). He does not demand that she go! He does not remind her of all that she previously had said concerning Him, how that He was her bundle of myrrh, the special tree among all other trees, her delight! Here is patient, enduring, longsuffering love. He will wait! Watch Him as she is eventually restored! Will you allow the Holy Spirit to cause you to be like your Bridegroom?

O dear bride, what rock do you hide behind? Do you hide yourself in knowing Bible doctrines and into doing, doing, doing, feeling spiritually self-satisfied that you do everything correctly according to the Book, yet fail to hear His voice, **"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love...Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent..."** (Rev. 2:2-5). The burning question - are you filled with His Spirit (**Eph. 5:18**)? Consider the characteristics of a Holy Spirit filled believer in **vs.19-21**, do they describe you?

Again I ask, what rock are you hiding behind? Maybe the problem is found in Jesus' words when He speaks in a warning voice...

V.15 "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes."

Little foxes are known for their crafty, devious natures, hence the expression, "sly as a fox"! They love grapes and by nipping away at the tender shoots they can destroy whole vineyards. O the ugliness that little foxes bring into our lives. How it hurts the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. He gave us everything necessary to keep our life lovely, pure and holy before Him (**I Cor. 7:1 and II Pet. 1:3,4**)! Then our sinful nature rises up and wants its way. This opens the door for a demonic little fox to come into our life and distract our vision of Him.

Is there a little fox in your life robbing you of the awareness of His consuming "**first love**" love for you and robbing Him of your once, all-consuming, "**first love**" love for Him? Is there an unconfessed sin in your walk: a habit, anger, bitterness, divorce, envy, fear, gossip, jealousy, lies, lust, impatience, worry, depression, discouragement, doubt, swearing or unforgiveness, etc.? Right now confess it and repent of it so that the vine and grapes will not be destroyed. O do not let the tender grape and its wonderful fragrance be spoiled (**v.13**)! How ready He is to forgive and restore you (**I John 1:1-10**).

The difficulty lies in that the foxes are "**little**"! Little foxes are cute and deceptively innocent but very, very dangerous!! Those secular books you waste so much time over; the hours watching "*just slightly bad*" programs on TV, the decision to stay home when you really could go to be with other lilies; what harm could come from a "**little**" questionable program, pleasure or amusement?

We get used to them. After awhile we think we have to have them. They have become a habit, yet they are slowly destroying us spiritually. How could they be so destructive? So often we do not even recognize that sin has crept in and severed precious fellowship with our Beloved Jesus! Slowly, ever so slowly the "**little**" sin eats away at our soul like a slow-growing cancer. Read **II Tim. 2:16,17** where Paul warns Timothy about what seems to be unimportant, such as "**profane and vain babblings**" which could eventually lead to a desperately fatal spiritual disease!

Then one day your whole world caves in! You desperately seek the answers as to why and how it all happened. Despair and coldness set in. It all began with that "**little**" fox, that "**little**" leaven, that seemingly harmless "**little**" sin. "**...Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.**" (**I Cor. 5:6**). You look at spiritual leaven and ask yourself, "*what harm can a little sin be?*" DEAR READER, BEWARE, TAKE HEED, get rid of the foxes before your usefulness for the Lord will be destroyed!

Most of us will never miss a day at work, especially if we make an hourly wage. We are committed! Money is needed to sustain our lives: food, utilities, clothes, gasoline for the car, etc. Do we ever feel that committed to what sustains us spiritually and emotionally, the Lord and His Word (**John 6:63; Psa. 119:105**)?

Notice that Jesus says, "**...our vines have tender grapes**". It is "**our**" vine. He does not leave us by ourselves. His life was planted as a seed in death at Calvary (**John 12:23,24**) to rise up and produce fruit, His Father watches out for the vine (**John 15:1**)! His Spirit is the power behind the life in the branches! Praise God, all we have to do is allow Him to prune and cultivate us. We are workers together with Jesus. Don't rip yourself away from this beautiful, fruitful, all encompassing love relationship by some subtle "**little fox**" which has crept into your life unawares. You are not responsible to get rid of the "**little foxes**" alone. Your Bridegroom is with you all the way. His wonderful Holy Spirit is ready to do battle for you. Your responsibility is to let go and give permission to Him to exercise His power against these "**little foxes**" as you use the spiritual armor of God! It is not your battle (**I Sam. 17:47; II Chron. 20:15-17**)!

You might say, "*Are we not to take the whole armor of God and fight?*" Yes, but look carefully at **Eph. 6:10-18**. In verse ten you are saying, I have no strength to fight the battle. That verse is in the passive voice so the strength must be given to you. Verses **11** through **17** command us to take up the whole armor of God. How is all that accomplished? The answer is in **V.19**. All of the armor is activated when we simply pray in faith, truth, peace, the Word, the mind of Christ, righteousness! We pray and He does the fighting! Praying is setting our mind on the things above (**Col. 3:2-4**). We just say "**no**" to the sinful nature attracted to the fox and the Holy Spirit steps in and does the rest. Different foxes will return, the enemy is relentless. Each time stand on (**Isa.54:17; 2Cor.1:20**) speaking it out against the attack victory will be yours.

Holy Spirit fruit is so needed in our life. He produces it and our responsibility is to bear it. The Lord will bring people into your life who desperately have need of His fruit, fruit you are bearing - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Don't let a little fox rob you of fruit others need!

THE DECISION FOR SELF - 2:16 - 3:5

She now responds with words that will disappoint her Lord...

V.16 "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies."

The bride finally speaks to Him, but O the sharp sword of pain that pierces through His tender heart with these words. She has not listened at all to Him. She sees no danger. Her lips speak forth very self-centered words, **"My beloved is mine...."** He's mine and I'll decide where and when we meet and have fellowship. She's well aware of how important the lilies are to Him in light of her statement, **"He feedeth among the lilies."** Notice carefully she did not obey the Lord's request. **"Let me see thy countenance...."** He wanted her to first look into His loving eyes before saying a word. The Bride is not interested in what pleases Him, only what pleases her. She fails the first test of practical surrender. There is no question about her deep love for Him but at this point it is not strong enough to move her feet in faith.

"He feedeth among the lilies."

He feeds the lilies. This is where she will be fed also. He also is fed in His spirit. Remember, lilies are surrendered believers (2:1-3)! O how He loves to fellowship with them. She knows that this is where Jesus loves to dwell and be nourished in His heart with the praises of His people. He loves to lean close to His bride and hear her speak words of adoration, appreciation and deep love for Him! It is the joy and reward of the cross for Him! When lilies gather together to love and praise Him, His heart and their hearts are satisfied with a joy unspeakable (Heb.12:2)! If only she would go with her Beloved and experience full, true Spirit-filled fellowship with other lilies!

Has she forgotten the joy of fellowship with the other lilies when together they experienced His wonderful love and secrets of His heart (1:4)? What she does not understand is that as she goes with Him and the other lilies a greater intimacy will be experienced as never before! She is so distracted with the fox that the blessing of chapter 1:4 is blocked from allowing the Holy Spirit to bring it up to her remembrance.

O dear bride of His heart, RUN! RUN! RUN! INTO HIS ARMS. DON'T WAIT! RUSH! YOU HAVE NO IDEA OF THE PAIN THAT IS AWAITING YOU IF YOU DON'T RUN INTO HIS SPIRITUAL EMBRACE.

PRAY WITH ME: *"Dear Father, I confess to You the sin of spiritual selfishness. I have wanted to walk the Christian life on my own terms. I am sorry for being so deaf to Your voice gently calling me to step out and trust You in circumstances You allowed into my life. I robbed You of spiritually feeding me and my love satisfying Your heart. I run to Your side to follow You in action and attitude. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit! Fill me with Your wisdom! Fill me with Your love! I humble myself under Your mighty hand knowing You will exalt me in due time (1 Pet.5:6). Dear, dear Lord Jesus, may I never hesitate to fellowship with others who love You so deeply! May I give to You the all consuming love of my heart and soul! My satisfaction is You Lord (Lam. 3:24)! Holy Spirit I surrender my will to You. Change me into the image that pleases my God, my Lord, my Savior, my Beloved! In Jesus' name, amen."*

I hear the refrain of that old hymn and Lord I sing it in my heart to You:

"Where He leads me I will follow. Where He leads me I will follow. Where He leads me I will follow, and go with Him, with Him all the way." E. W. Blandy

The Bride continues:

V.17 "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

All of a sudden there are disturbing shadows creeping slowly onto the horizon of her life. They keep her feet from moving. Shadows now move into the place where only light had resided and guided. The little foxes of self are on the throne - **"MY beloved is MINE...."**! As her eyes are transfixed upon the "cute" foxes of self, shadows are dimming her view of Him! She sees Him but ever so faintly. A strange, unwanted chill spills over her soul as the shadows gather.

If not dealt with immediately, these **"shadows"** will become stark darkness! She wants Him to run to her. But safety is running to and obeying Him. The word **"Bether"** means "separation" or "division"! Her Beloved begins to walk away glancing back to see if she will come. Instead of obeying and keeping her eyes upon Him (**"let me see thy countenance"**) the eyes of her heart are distracted looking at the "cute" little foxes. Unknown to her before, a strange fear sweeps over her soul. The light of her Beloved is fading as the shadows slowly turn into an ominous darkness!

The bride now has a divided heart: wanting Her Lord to stay with her, yet at the same time watching the little foxes. She blames the Lord for the difficulty! How could He leave her at a time like this? Doesn't He care at all? She thinks, *"All He has to do is turn to me and all will be well."* How blind she is. Does she not realize that the decision not to go with Him (the Light of the world) brought on the shadows? She refused to let Him who has victorious power deal with the little foxes.

Has she so quickly forgotten that her Beloved has already dealt with the mountains (2:8)? He has skipped on the hills and leaped upon the mountains. The mountains of division (*meaning of "Bethel"*) have already been defeated by Him. This is the crucial moment when she should run to Him and by His power defeat these little foxes. In a commanding voice she says to Him...

"turn...and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel." (Hebrew separation or division).

Isn't it amazing that she is asking the Lord to turn? It is as if she is saying, ***"I know what is best for us. You, my Beloved need to turn and change Your mind. These shadows are but a small thing."*** That is not what He wants to hear! In the distance, for one last time, Jesus lifts up His nail pierced hands and beckons to her in a loud voice, *"Come with Me My love."* She refuses to even acknowledge Him in any way. She's upset that He did not pay attention to her and do what she had asked. Pride keeps her from responding.

She wants to have His fellowship while entertaining the ***"little foxes"*** in her life. How often believers want to have the fullness of Jesus' Spirit in their lives plus compromising sin! Don't kid yourself, you can't have your Bridegroom's blessing and protection if you continue to entertain those ***"little foxes"*** that seem to be so innocent but will deeply dull your spiritual life. All believers will sin, but spiritual growth is sinning less and less and that happens when we surrender our will to our Bridegroom each day. We will grow in our intimacy with Him and sin will become less frequent. The closer you walk with your Bridegroom the more and more you will hate it when you do sin. You will rush to **1John1:9** and lean on Him even more and more. You will keep your eyes on Him (**Heb.12:1-3**).

This decision to not go with Him unreservedly will cost her dearly. There will be much emotional pain before she is restored to Him. Remember what she had stated to the virgins after the banquet? She just knew nothing could ever come in and spoil all of that perfect joy. It has happened!

A final question: Why didn't the Beloved make her go? He had every right to do so! The Lord could have argued that she had declared her surrender to Him and now she can't even obey a special request of His, thus shaming her into going. If He had coerced her the ***"little fox"*** of selfishness would still remain, hidden for awhile but then rise again in another circumstance. Even though she began to walk in the surrendered life, she had things buried deep within her heart that needed to be dealt with. The Lord will allow her to languish in the hurt and let her see all the ugliness and damage caused by a ***"little"*** bit of her will mixed into the surrendered life. It's going to be very painful but when it is all over she will be another step further in His goal for her life! She is seemingly all alone. True, He will never leave us. But we will not be allowed to sense the Lord's presence until what needs to be dealt with is accomplished.

PRAY WITH ME: *"Dear God, cause Your Holy Spirit conviction to come on me so strongly that I will rush to repent of the **"little foxes"** before they ravage the garden of **"our"** heart! Take over, my Bridegroom! I bow at Your feet and relinquish the rights to any pleasurable **"little foxes"**! Correct and discipline me so that I may walk with You higher and higher on the path that You have planned for my life! In Your holy name, Lord Jesus, amen!"*

COME APART AND REST FOR A WHILE. GO TO THE PRAISE LIST AT THE END OF THIS BOOK AND SELECT A FEW WORDS OR PHRASES WITH WHICH TO PRAISE YOUR DEAR BRIDEGROOM.