

CHAPTER 8 - THE DEVOTED LIFE (continued)

AN OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER EIGHT: The bride in perfect union and communion with her Beloved, ministers to her younger, spiritually immature sister. As the bride and her Beloved come up out of the wilderness, she leans completely on Him for strength and guidance. One of the most sacred moments in the life of the bride comes when the Beloved asks her to set Him as a seal upon her heart and her arm. The Beloved entrusts her with His vineyard, her personal one, as He leaves to minister in other vineyards. There is no hurt but just a longing for Him to return to her very quickly. The Song ends with the Mountain of spices instead of the mountains of Bether (division). There is perfect harmony between the Beloved and His wonderful bride.

The Bride continues:

V.1 "O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised."

She loves Him with all of her heart and wants every one else to know. She is not ashamed, as so many Christians are about their Lord in the world. In her there is a Holy Spirit boldness of heart. Feel the fervency of her "first love", love (**Rev.2:1-5**) for the one nearest and dearest to her heart as she declares over and over in her soul, "I want to let the whole world know that Jesus is my Lord, the Love of my life, my everything!" She wants to show her Beloved public affection. Isn't that what "first love" is all about?

The culture of that era frowned upon demonstrations of public affection between husband and wife. The exception would be where blood relatives were involved such as, mother and daughter, sister and brother, etc. That is why she wanted to be His blood sister so she could publicly demonstrate her love for Him. We who are God's new creation are unique. We are not only His bride but also His family. He is not ashamed to call us "brethren" (**Heb. 2:11**) even though we do much to disappoint Him. Has not the Holy Spirit, by the blood of Christ, placed us in the family of God and caused us to be spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ?

The Beloved calls His bride "sister" 5x in this Song. The terms "sister" and "brother" are used in the spiritual family – the body of Christ. Examples of this are found in **Rom. 16:1** and **Philemon 1:1,16**. So we have the freedom to express our love for Him publicly because we are not only His bride but His family (**Eph. 3:14**). May His love be demonstrated in our love for our brothers and sisters!

"...when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee."

First love always makes a spectacle of itself. It talks about, thinks about, and publicly demonstrates its fervent passion for the object of its affections! What does it mean, "...when I should find thee without"? "Without" indicates publicly. Let the Word of God unlock the meaning. Read **Matt. 25:34-40**. When we minister to those in need (hungry, thirsty, a place to stay, naked, in prison, sick) we will find Jesus right there! That is how we lavish our love on Him publicly! He said, "...**Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**" (**Matt. 25:40**). O the pleasure of spiritual love He must experience as we love on the hurting, the lost, the rejected, the failures! Read **Gal. 6:10; John 13:35; Col. 4:5; I Thess. 4:12; I Tim. 3:7**.

Then there is that very, very special time when His lilies regularly meet to love on Him. Although God is omnipresent something happens when believers meet with the specific purpose of gathering to His Name. He causes His anointing, presence and glory to be experienced when He is loved in "one accord" fervency. Jesus makes this point very clear in **Matt. 18:20**, "**For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.**" Praise God for a place He has provided for us to express our love for Him publicly. A place where we are able to share those spiritual kisses the Holy Spirit placed upon our hearts (**I Cor.2:9,10**).

The local body of believers is the place where we can come to gather and express freely our love for what He is doing for us and in us. Isn't this what it means to be continually spirit filled? Listen, "**...but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.**" **Eph. 5:18-21**.

PRAY WITH ME: *"Dear, dear Lord Jesus, Beloved of my heart, I love You. I love You alone! I do love my spouse, I love my friends, I love my children, but love for You supersedes all other loves. I worship and adore You only! Cause me Holy Spirit to kiss the Lord of my heart publicly by a willing heart to obey His Word no matter what the cost. Bring into my pathway those who are in great need. Give me discernment to see their need. Lord I love to serve others and in so doing I am serving You! Father, keep my mind and heart on the alert. I want to "find" Jesus out there in the public arena and meet "His needs". By doing so I will be kissing Him publicly! Lord, once again I bow my heart, soul and body to You. I break them over Your nail scarred feet in total surrender to You! In Your awesome name, Amen!"*

Kiss Him with the submissive, serving will. The daily joy of the abundant life, the power of God controlling their heart; the peace, contentment and rest all of this brings will cause those around you to marvel and long to possess what possesses you.

V.2 "I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would (has taught) instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate."

After the consummation of the marriage there is a desire to go back home to the families and rejoice together over this wonderful union of committed love. It is a time of returning and saying thanks to the parents, especially the mother who has instructed the daughter in the proper ways of relationships.

Notice how the bride is initiating things she desires for her Beloved and it is with others, not as in **chapter two** where she only wanted to be alone with Him. The commitment in **7:10** is proving to be very real.

Spiritually, it is a time of demonstrating gratefulness to those who have been used to lead and guide the bride in her tender years as a believer. How beautiful it is to contact them (those who were your caring mother in the Lord) and let them know that their efforts were not in vain. The Lord used all of them to produce a beautifully mature "Mary of Bethany"! What an encouragement it will be to those who nurture new believers.

O how this bride wants to share Him with the one who had nurtured her. Spiritually, where have we been "nurtured" or "mothered" so to speak? Our spiritual "mother's house" is the church, the body of believers. The Lord, over a long period of time brought specific members of His family into our lives to supply us with what we needed to further our spiritual growth at that moment of time. Please read **Eph. 4:11-16!**

Yes, dear surrendered believer, go back to the church fellowship and share with young and old alike what it means to give your life over in total trust to love of Christ. Plant the seed in the hearts of the next generation. Encourage others who are where you are not to give up but to continue leaning on their Beloved, teaching others by example what all this means. Go back to your spiritual "mother's house", the church, and be a visible example of your Mary of Bethany heart.

"...I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate...."

There is a very different lesson the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us here than in the other two verses where "pomegranate" is mentioned in **4:3** and **6:7**. In those verses the Lord speaks of a "slice of pomegranate". He used it as a description of her. It was not actually in her possession. Here, it is her own personal pomegranate. In **4:3** and **6:7** she had some but not all of the characteristics of a pomegranate in her life which was worship of her Beloved. Now, she gives Him the juice of the fruit. To extract juice the pomegranate must be crushed. Jesus was bruised (crushed) for our iniquities and it pleased the Lord to bruise (crush) Him (**Isa.53:5,10**). What has been crushed in her life – it is her will. What greater act of worship could you give your Beloved than the crucified life (**Rom.6:6-14**)? What greater offering than to present your body as a living sacrifice to Him (**Rom.12:1**)? Praise God!

PRAY WITH ME: *"Dear blessed Lord, drink from my life all the day long and may it always be the taste of the spiced wine of surrender. Your joy is my joy! Your life is my life! Your will is my will! I love You with all of my heart! In Jesus name, Amen"*

V.3 "His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me."

His left hand is the Word of God to guide my thinking in every decision. However, if this is to happen I must first rest my thinking (head) in His left hand and accept (submitting my will) what God's Word says about a concern I have without question. Oh to have the "**mind of Christ**", which we already possess (**I Cor. 2:16**), to have dominion over my thoughts. His mind is His Word.

His right hand represents the strength of the Holy Spirit. In an embrace it is the right arm (**Psa. 44:3; Isa. 62:8**) that holds the weight of the other person. Spiritually the Holy Spirit (also known as the Spirit of Christ) is our strength (**Acts 1:8**). I must rest my spiritual body in the arms of His strength. His right arm will guide me or restrain me whatever the need may be. The Beloved does not need the strength of my good intentions. If I plan without consulting Him; if I proceed without His power - no matter how good it might be, it is the flesh trying to do good. The glory will go to the flesh and not to the Beloved.

I like the word "**should**" here. When I am faced with a decision, the Holy Spirit reminds me that the Bridegroom's hand should be guiding my thinking in the decision. If I am truly in love with my Beloved, then I need to make sure to run to His arms for that particular circumstance. He loves that kind of "**first love**", love from our hearts. Waiting in His arms is so important. Don't rush with a decision but be patient (**Psa. 25:3,5,21; 37:7**). He will give you absolute peace concerning it in His time! Stay in His Word, for through it you will experience **Psa. 119:105**, "**Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.**"

She yearns to have Him control and support her emotional thought life (**left hand under her head**) and her actions (**right hand embracing her**). She is saying to Him, "*embrace my thoughts and my ways; be my restraint and constraint. I love you with all of my heart and I don't want to make one move without your gentle but strong embrace around me! As I go out to minister I must have Your spiritual arms embracing.*" This request He will gladly fulfill! Isn't this what is meant in **II Cor. 5:14**, "**For the love of Christ constraineth us...**"? Dear reader is this the desire of your heart?

PRAY WITH ME: "*My Holy Bridegroom, Beloved of my heart, keep me ever so spiritually sensitive that I will always know when I have moved slightly to the right or left of Your will for me. Crush my will! Crucify it! Press out all the juice of my pomegranate so I may give You a drink of what real, true love is for You! I know You'll never leave me nor forsake me. I want nothing but You! What is important today is that Your heart is blessed and Your will is accomplished in my life. I desire nothing but You! Nothing but You!*"

Caring so deeply for the welfare of His wife He says...

V.4 "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he ("she") please."

Each time He has caused her to sleep He was preparing her for a new spiritual step. It is the same now. Between verses four and five much time passes. Together they are about to embark on a long journey into the fearful wilderness of this world (**V.5** implies that they have been gone for a time). He knows she will need rest for this very difficult journey fraught with dangers, yet filled with glory! So He takes her into His arms. Jesus says the same thing to you as He did to His disciples, "**Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.**" (**Mk. 6:31**).

How beautiful, she falls asleep without a worry or care about anything. She is so peaceful and secure when her soul is totally enwrapped in His presence. May we feel that kind of rest, for it is so needed today. So often we are busy, busy, busy but there is little time for Him. We don't even hear our Beloved ask Him to embrace us as in **V.3**. We burn out mentally and give up spiritually. This ought never to be! Falling into His embrace is simply a complete surrender to His strength. Listen to His voice saying to you personally, "*My love, come away for awhile and just sit with Me and rest. Let Me embrace you and hold your hand.*" He will make sure you have time to rest and there will be no guilt! You might just sit back and quote quietly to yourself the **23rd Psalm**, meditating upon it. Sit with Him outside and enjoy a tree, a mountain, flower, lake, a gentle breeze or a sunset that He has made. Tell Him how appreciative you are of it.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Phil. 4:8

"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." Psa. 63:5,6

Because of **V. 5** we know that some time has passed. How much time, we do not know. It is obvious that she awoke from her restful sleep and went with her Beloved, hand in hand, ministering and serving in His many vineyards. The daughters of Jerusalem longed for them to return. They were chosen to be intimate helpers to prepare the bride for the journey. O what joy it brought to them! Each day they looked with expectancy out over the horizon.

Questions arise in their hearts: Did she continue on with the Bridegroom? Was there a time in the journey where she decided to go on no further? Did she keep her commitment of total surrender? Is her love for Him still as deep as it was just before they left? Then one day early in the morning, as the sun rose in the east, two figures appear. Excitement fills her intimate friends' hearts as one of them asks:

V.5 "Who is this that comes up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?..."

All their loving concerns were answered when they recognized that the two coming up out of the wilderness were Jesus and His bride! Observed is a full and enduring "**first love**" love for Jesus. Is this how those close to you see your relationship with Jesus? Love leans! Here is the fulfillment of His heart's longing as expressed in **Rev. 2:1-5**. Remember, the Ephesus church had everything going for them as a church except they had fallen out of love with Jesus.

The Holy Spirit beckons for you to draw near to this couple as He whispers into your spirit, "*Dear redeemed one, come and gaze upon hallowed things. Drink deeply the glory you are about to see and hear. I will allow you to see what this bride experienced in the wilderness with her Beloved! Because of your surrender I will teach you the deep things of God (I Cor.2:10) for your own wilderness journey!*"

Dear reader, are you not spellbound by the sight of Jesus and His bride totally immersed in each other? And this is toward the end of their journey. Is not your heart beating faster as you long for this same relationship? Mine is! Does it not ache to grow in this beautiful leaning upon Him during your wilderness journey? Here is the answer to the abundant Christian life – LEAN! LEAN! LEAN! So many Christians will say, "I'm hanging in there!" NO! NO! NO! We are called upon to lean on Him! Lean on His promises. Lean on His love!

The Holy Spirit speaks to you again dear reader, "*This is exactly why I am leading you to watch them. I want you, my precious holy one, to know how to walk in your wilderness journey! Be patient! Lean on Me! You have already begun to walk in this manner without realizing it. The Bridegroom is so pleased that you, His blood bought child, are going to join Him in this intimate, hand in hand walk into eternity! Look, at the pathway on which they are walking. Isn't it glorious? But first, I must have you look at what you do not desire to see, so that your love may grow even stronger in Him. What you will witness will cause your love to lean on Jesus that much more.*"

The Holy Spirit turns your eyes away from the pathway itself to see what was enveloping both sides of the narrow path on which they are traveling. Your heart sinks. You are in shock and feel faint. You are seeing the wilderness as it actually is, in all of its sheer, naked evil. Never before in your wildest imagination had you conceived of anything so offensive, atrocious, foul, obscene, destructive and hateful.

Evil spirits of depression, lust, dullness, boredom, spiritual disinterest, distraction, gossip and unforgiveness claw and scratch at the minds of the poor souls who are not walking in total submission to the Beloved. There are believers wallowing in the mire of self, all the while thinking that they are pleasing God in their lackadaisical walk! Within their reach is the path of safety, surrender and full satisfaction, but sadly, they turn away. They but need to repent and pray the protective promises of God's Holy Word in faith, then glorious restoration on the true path of victory and the abundant life will be experienced!

A cold and convicting pain of sadness sweeps over your soul as you are seeing much of what your spiritual walk has been. It has been neither hot nor cold, but a halfhearted faithfulness, all the while thinking that nothing was really wrong. You cry out, "*O dear God, how I have sinned against You! Precious Holy Spirit deliver me from lukewarmness! Oh how I have hurt my Beloved! Cause me to walk like this couple! Let me feel the total spiritual satisfaction flowing between them! Lord, I am so sorry! Thank You for allowing me to see all of this before it was too late and have spent my life totally on the wasteful, meaningless and temporal.*"

At this very moment the gentle, Holy Comforter fills you totally with Himself and tells you to, "*Turn your eyes away from this scene of emptiness, this wilderness of stony waste (Jer.17:6), this desolate and parched land (Jer.12:10; 50:12) where the enemy readies himself to ambush the lovely bride of Jesus (Lam.4:19)! You're forgiven by the blood of your Bridegroom! Be filled with Me! Be filled with glory! Be filled with heartfelt surrender. It is done!*"

Your heart breathes a quieting sigh of relief. You know it has happened! A phenomenal peace floods your soul! As you gaze upon this couple coming up out of the wilderness, you see yourself in them. Joy floods your soul looking at this narrow path, full of light and glory. The misery of the wilderness scene disappears from your mind. The Holy Spirit takes your hand once again and draws you right next to them. You now are able to observe every detail of their walk.

In a gentle voice the Spirit says, "*Look how completely she leans upon her Beloved. Draw closer to listen to the peaceful words whispered between them. Learn from them.*" You notice that the bride's arm is interlocked with His arm, held ever so tightly against her side. As she looks up at Him she says, "*My love, I was so weak in myself, but now I feel Your strength flowing through me. O my Husband, I love You so much! Your arms feel so good to me my Love, there is so much strength in them (Isa.41:11)!*"

Jesus looks at her with eyes filled with joy and says, "*Just to hear you say that brings such satisfaction to My heart. I'm so glad My Father gave you to Me (John 10:29)!*" Their steps are so unhurried, so steady, so restful in a purposeful pace, leading them up to the many dwelling places (**John 14:2,3**) where they will live together forever! When the bride becomes a little weary on this journey, her Beloved just gives her a hug and reminds her that it won't be long 'till they will be home! That spiritual hug imparts a renewed strength and refreshing vigor for her to continue on.

She leans her head upon His strong shoulders and shares, "*I used to get so confused, not really knowing the right pathway which would please You, my Beloved! It was awful. Sometimes I felt I was doing OK as Your child and then I would find myself way off the true path. It was terrible. I was so empty. I wanted to do what was right for You but seemed to always miss the mark. But now I am filled with You! Even though the enemy of my mind attacks, I simply turn the eyes of my heart and look at You, speaking a Word of promise and immediate peace comes. O how secure I feel leaning upon You my dear Bridegroom!*" Jesus glances at her eyes and His heart is ravished. He quickly turns away as a tear of joy falls onto His cheek (**Song of Solomon 4:9; 6:5**).

As Jesus points to a pleasant green pasture, He says, "*Let's stop here for awhile and sit together. I want to share a few things with you. I have always been the 'Way.'* I am so thankful you responded to My Spirit as He drew you into deeper truths concerning My heart toward you. I am leading you to our home, My love, My sister, My spouse. O how happy you and I will be for eternity! Be encouraged, there are just a few more miles to go and a few more stops on the way to pick up other lilies to go with us. I'm so thankful that you will never refuse to go with Me again." He pauses and puts both of His hands on her cheeks. Looking into her eyes with admiration, He says, "*It was worth every single stroke of the whip, every nail driven into My body for what I see in Your eyes right now My dear wife!*" She could see tears of joy well up in His eyes. For a long while they sat together in the green grass under the shade of the apple tree. Then, taking her by the hand they continued to go up out of the wilderness. They walked from village to village and through the countryside ministering, caring and loving others. All the while she snuggled up leaning upon His everlasting arms.

The bride speaks very little. Her eyes stay riveted on His loving gaze. There is much being said with her eyes making words unnecessary. He was guiding her with His eye (**Psa. 33:18; 34:15**)! She feels so encouraged and confident about the direction in which He is leading. She places her left arm around His side knowing that this is the only place she ever wants to be. He is so blessed by these loving acts. His glory bursts out all over the pathway!

Watching them intently you speak within your heart to the Holy Spirit, "*Even though this wilderness is so horrible, it is as if it did not exist to them. What an 'up' experience this is for both of them. My eyes have been so focused on the wilderness itself, I have missed the joy of Jesus (John 15:11)! Jesus is so sure footed upon this pathway and knows exactly where it is leading. That is what I want for my life dear Holy Spirit.*"

For this bride, it was a walk of grace upon grace; His grace alone (**John 1:16**). The more she leans upon her Beloved, the more she realizes that all of this is so undeserved! She proclaims with joy, "*I have 'found grace in the wilderness.'*" (**Jer. 31:2**).

As you watch them, you point out to the Holy Spirit, "*At times it was difficult for me to distinguish just how many were walking, one or two.*" The Holy Spirit responds, "*Yes, she has become so much like her Beloved. She is entering into the oneness her Beloved had prayed to the Father for her (John 17:22,23). It actually makes her look like Him. Isn't it wonderful? This can be the same for you, as you in loving surrender lean upon your Beloved in this wilderness. Don't ever forget this scene. The bride is so taken up with the Love of her life that she is not aware of the transformation.*"

The unhurried pace gave her time to whisper to His heart, "***Your mouth is most sweet...my Beloved!***" He responded by saying, "***How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine!***" He held her close to His side as they continued to walk. She felt so safe. He knew her heart was fully His! She leaned upon Him to hear that still small voice. She leaned upon Him for she had no strength of her own. She leaned upon Him because He alone was the Way up out of the wilderness! As her heart is filled with overflowing love, she holds His hand even tighter, overwhelmed with unspeakable joy singing quietly to her Beloved:

"What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms!

What a blessedness, what a peace is mine, leaning on the everlasting arms!

Oh, how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way, leaning on the everlasting arms;

What have I to dread, what have I to fear, leaning on the everlasting arms?

I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, leaning on the everlasting arms!

Leaning on Jesus, leaning on Jesus, safe and secure from all alarms;

Leaning on Jesus, leaning on Jesus, leaning on the everlasting arms!"

Elisha Hoffman

As they walk up out of this wilderness the Beloved reminds her of a blessed secret shared with her earlier. Knowing these things will keep her ever leaning upon Him who has become her wisdom, purpose, protection and strength. "Don't forget that..."

V.5 "...I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee."

O the infinite purposes of an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God! Praise His holy name! Was there ever any doubt in the mind of God that His plans to have a bride for His Son would go unfulfilled? O the glories of the purposes of God, to know that I was on His heart before I was born and then raised up under the protection of the apple tree which is none other than Jesus Himself, (see 2:3) listen:

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth." (II Thess. 2:13).

Paul testified to this glorious truth in Gal. 1:15-16, "***But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."***

Listen to Isaiah concerning this wonderful truth when He states, "***And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant."*** Isa. 49:5

Jeremiah confirms the thought of God dealing with us even before we were born when He makes this astounding pronouncement, "***Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou came forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."*** Jer. 1:5

The Psalmist knew about this when he wrote by the Holy Spirit, "***Upon thee I have leaned from my birth; thou art he who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of thee."*** Psa. 71:6

And again, "***Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."*** Psa. 139:15

Our glorious God does not leave things to happenstance! It's true concerning His prophecies! Were they not written as absolute certainties? Praise the name of Jesus for the following words of comfort and purpose for your life and mine, "***Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."*** (Isa. 46:10-11).

Praise His holy Name, the bride was loved by Him before the world was ever created! Again, what a thought, you were on God's heart before you were born! Listen to the words in **V.5** once again.

"...I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee."

God our Father planned a bride for His Son before the worlds were created. Doesn't that comfort you dear Christian? He cared so much that He brought you up, nurtured you and lavished His protective love for you under the apple tree!

She had exclaimed in **2:3**, "**As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons...**" Praise God we have always been under His watchful care and protection. So important are you that he has a host of angels ministering to His bride (**Heb. 1:13,14**). Dear surrendered reader, listen to your Beloved whisper into your ear, "**I have loved thee with an everlasting love**" (**Jer. 31:3**). "**...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.**" (**Heb. 13:5**).

She meditates in her heart, "*O may this never, never change! There is no other place I desire to be except listening, talking and walking with my Love! What peace! What strength! What assurance!*"

He already knew what she was thinking and immediately responded to her longing. He spoke with passion to His surrendered bride and asked her to do something very, very important. Here is the defining moment for her Christian walk in this wilderness journey. Her Beloved pauses once again, looking down at the pathway. There is an eternal seriousness written over His countenance. Then, He raised His head, looking longingly into her eyes, with a quiet finality in His voice says...

V.6 "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel (severe, unyielding) as the grave: the coals (Heb."flames") thereof are coals (flames) of fire, which hath a most vehement flame ("of the Lord")."

The word "**seal**" is the same Hebrew word for "*signet*" or "*signet ring*". The king (or his representative) would affix the royal seal to a document representing His authority, will, ownership, protection or direction. It was to be permanent! **Esth. 8:8** is a wonderful example of this: "**Write ye...in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.**"

The seal from King Jesus today is the Holy Spirit (**II Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30**)! The Holy Spirit is the seal placed within us and assures us that what God promises in His Word He will perform! That "*sealing of the Holy Spirit*" took place the moment she received her Beloved as her personal Lord and Savior. However, in this verse, He is asking her to set Him as a seal upon her heart and arm because she knew she was already sealed according to His Word!

He smiled, "*I placed the seal of My Spirit upon your spirit, but now my darling bride, your heart must have My seal upon it for that is where you make your decisions. Then it must be put on your arm that carries them out. With each decision you must place My seal upon it, then nothing will ever come between us as we walk together up out of this wilderness. It will demonstrate more than anything else the love and surrendered heart you have for Me. My beautiful bride, this is something I will never force upon you. I want you to willingly place Me on your heart and arm. It will be a permanent, eternal seal!*" She knew this was the most holy and sacred moment of her life. His desire was her desire. Nothing else mattered!

A powerful presence of the Holy Spirit filled her whole being. Speaking in her spirit the Holy Spirit said, "*Dear surrendered bride, this is the ultimate gift of joy you can give to your Beloved.*" The enemy fought this decision with all the demons of fear and doubt he could bring against her. But it was to no avail because she kept hearing what the Holy Spirit had just revealed to her! Her eyes stayed steadfast upon Jesus. With longing, pleading words she said, "*Please, my Love, I must have this seal. I must give You this joy. I must satisfy Your heart, for nothing else matters to me!*"

Her Beloved's eyes sparkled with delight. Intently gazing at His hands He slowly opened the palms exposing the scars and said, "*My faithful bride these are the seal for you, the scars of My crucifixion. They are the guarantee that I will never leave you nor forsake you. They are the assurance that My love for you is eternal. They are My pledge that your sins will never rise again to condemn you and the safety that no one can snatch you out of them (John 10:28)! My Spirit's indescribable power will be released in you! Then you will know My love which surpasses knowledge (Eph. 3:19). You will*

be filled with all the fullness of God (**Eph. 3:19**) and be transformed from glory to glory in Me (**II Cor.3:18**). My seal will cause you to always triumph in all the battles of life which you will face (**II Cor.2:14**)."

She touched His outstretched hands and lifted them up to look more closely at the scars. Overwhelmed at what she saw, tears fell uncontrollably upon them. Catching her breath, in a forced whisper she exclaimed, "My name, I see my name, it's there, there in Your hand! Right in the middle of Your scar!" She stood there speechless. Then, He lifted up her face to look deep into her eyes and said softly, "**Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of my hands...**" (**Isa. 49:15-16**)!

She took His right hand and gently, with a holy reverence, placed the scar over her heart and declared, "O my Love, I promise to You that every decision I must make will be made by You. Every thing that would vie for my love and attention will first be filtered through Your scar!" All of a sudden an indelible mark of His scar appeared over the door of her heart. An inexpressible, heavenly glow of joy filled Him. She then took His left hand and placed it over her arm. Looking into His eyes with a holy fire of devotion the words poured forth, "Every action, every activity in my life will have Your approval. It will only be for Your glory." She closed her eyes and felt wholly immersed in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Contentment and peace filled her soul. Jesus, bursting with love, said, "Thank you, thank you, thank you - you have made My joy complete!" (**Col.2:10**). In this powerful presence she fell limp in His arms - His left hand was under her head to give rest to her mind and His right arm embraced her to impart strength.

Power and glory filled her to overflowing! Deeper than ever she understood what her Beloved meant concerning being baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire (**Luke 3:16**). Her attitude and actions, her desires and decisions would be entirely under the Spirit's control. She would gladly walk in the pathway of crucifixion (**Rom. 6:6-14; II Cor. 4:7-18**) - dead to self and independent ambition, but alive in His resurrected life. Everything in her life would have His seal of approval on it. She would say with each decision, "Your will be done in my heart as it is in heaven - never my will!" (**Mark 14:36; Matt. 6:10**).

This is true dying to self; the crucified life, every desire, decision and circumstance filtered through the cross. You ask the question each time, "My Beloved, would You be pleased with this?" "Would You be pleased to watch this with me?" "Would it please You if we listened to this together?" Place His hand in front of everything! The crucified life is total confidence that He knows best. The crucified life brings into the heart a wonderful godly fear giving heavenly wisdom and holy direction. His voice, presence, power and love will be experienced as never before. You will fear to hurt the One you love! That's spiritually healthy fear (**Psa. 147:11; Prov. 1:7; 3:7;10:27; 14:26; Eph. 5:21**)! While she continued to rest in His embrace He shared how infinite and eternal His love is for her...

"...for love is strong as death, jealousy as cruel (unyielding) as the grave..."

Jesus explains, "You see, My loving beautiful wife, death is unyielding and so is My love for you! I will never cease to love you with a 'first love' love! My jealousy is for your good! It is as strong as the grave for it is unyielding! My passion for your welfare is as flames of fire from on high! O dear bride of My heart, never forget that I have a holy, protecting jealousy (**Exo. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Josh. 24:19**) which will always fight for you against the enemy."

A holy blaze rushed through her entire being (**Heb. 12:29**). It was a commitment to pure motives and a desire for greater holiness ablaze in her spirit and soul. She leaned close to Him with tears of joy running down her cheeks! Thrilled beyond her wildest dreams, she looked at Him, "**YOU are consumed with me!**" "**You ARE consumed with me!**" "**You are CONSUMED with me!**" "**You are consumed WITH ME!**" She burst out in song...

*"Jesus, I am resting, resting in the joy of what Thou art,
I am finding out the greatness of thy loving heart.
Here I gaze and gaze upon Thee, as thy beauty fills my soul,
For by Thy transforming power, Thou hast made me whole." Jean Sophia Pigott*

The Lord bid His lovely bride to once again look at His nail-scarred hand. He said, "I want you to never forget what I went through to have you as My wife! And now My precious bride, let's continue the journey up this path in the wilderness." He beckoned her to look just beyond the side of this narrow path. The mist, which had been hiding its contents, began to lift. Pain shot through her soul! Her eyes, once again, looked upon everything that was detestable to Him. With vehement scorn, all sorts of demons shrieked, screaming unspeakable filth at Him and His bride.

She looked to the right and saw her old self, lurking at the edge of the pathway of light trying desperately to grab her and take control. It was repulsive - dark in color with a stench of spiritual corrupting death and decay. She glanced to the left and horror filled her soul. It was grotesque, repelling and vile. All that was evil cast disgusting obscenities at her and Him whom her soul loved. These evil spirits had the shroud of their counterfeit garments of light ripped away. There were those in the putrid mire who had a form of godliness but denied the power thereof (**II Tim. 3:5**). Exposed was the screeching, howling darkness of despair! Victims of demonic deception, writhing in excruciating pain, attempted to escape but to no avail, it was too late!

Tears of anguish fell from her eyes, for the polluted waters of decaying spiritual filth seemed to rise higher and higher to the edge of the pathway of the Light. Her Bridegroom said, *"All of this which is repugnant to you, My love, is what I became when I was nailed to the cross. I willingly had My Father place it in My holy, pure and righteous soul."* Jesus gently turned her head so that He could brush the tears away and said, **"...Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27), "...be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)**. That one touch put her heart at ease and peace flooded her soul. He whispered, *"Your faith in Me, which I gave to you (Rom. 12:3), has given you the victory and overcome the world (I John 5:4,5)!"* She said, holding His hand very tightly, *"Thank You my Love for giving to me the victory (I Cor. 15:57) and always causing me to triumph (II Cor. 2:14)!"* That ugly scene seemed far distant now, as He whispered assuredly to her...

V.7 "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it..."

Again her soul burst forth in song,

*"O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe, that in Thine ocean depths its flow
may richer fuller be."* George Matheson

Filled with the Holy Spirit she continued making melody in her heart,

*"Who can cheer the heart like Jesus, by His presence all divine?
True and tender, pure and precious, O how blest to call Him mine!
Every need His hand supplying, every good in Him I see;
On His strength divine relying, He is all in all to me.
All that thrills my soul is Jesus, He is more than life to me;
And the fairest of ten thousand in my blessed Lord I see." Thoro Harris*

The Beloved reminded her that His supplying, protecting love was free to her. He reminded her that the cost to purchase it was the cross of shame. He said concerning them, *"There are those who search and search in the wrong places for this kind of love attempting to purchase it! You can't buy it!"* He paused, then declared in the strongest terms, **"...if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned (despised)'. All you need, My darling bride, is an empty vessel and My Spirit will fill it continually with My infinite love which cannot be bought. It's free only to those who freely surrender to My heart! You know full well, My spouse, that My whole character and being is Love. My only joy is sharing it!"** They walked a little further on this path of righteousness coming up out of the wilderness.

The Lord's eyes sparkled with excitement as He put His arm around her, *"Guess what? I have prepared a surprise for you My love. I don't think you can see it just yet but we are real, real close."* And then, all of a sudden there appeared this magnificent **"table in the wilderness" (Psa. 78:19)**. It was round and filled with radiating splendor! Two awesome figures were seated there, but she did not recognize them. The light emanating from each was too bright for her eyes to handle just yet. Shading her eyes with His hand the Beloved said, *"It's alright my love. Your eyes will get used to this amazing glory in just a moment and you will see clearly!"*

When the Lord took away His hand she could see without any difficulty. Her heart burst with joy! She looked up at Jesus, holding tightly to His arm and said, *"You love me so much and as always, You think of everything! You have prepared 'a table before me in the presence of my enemies.' (Psa. 23:5)! O my wonderful Husband, You keep on surprising me with so much! I know I say this constantly but I can't help it, I love You with all of my heart."* He lovingly pointed out, *"This table is exactly what will be needed for you in this terrible wilderness journey."*

Jesus escorted her to the table, and with great grace, pulled out this throne-like chair and bid her to sit down. One of the glorious figures got up and gently anointed her head with the oil of gladness and said, *"It is an honor to have you sit with Us."* In her spirit He revealed Himself to her. It was the blessed Holy Spirit! Her heart ("*cup*" **Psa. 23:5**) began to overflow with heavenly joy. A glorious light burst forth from her spirit. She had never experienced anything like this nor had she ever seen light so dazzling. It was the glory of God all over her. The Lord Jesus took her by the hand and said, *"My precious bride, come and sit next to Someone who has loved Me forever."* She knew by looking at her Beloved's eyes that there was an eternal, infinite very special kind of love in His heart for this One sitting across from her. (**John 5:20; 17:22-24**).

The Beloved said, *"This is My Father who has given you to Me!"* (**John 10:29; 17:2**). Her heart was bursting with love! Tears of gratitude welled up in her eyes. The moment she sat down the Father kissed her on the forehead. He said, *"I have waited a long time for this moment."* The Father looked into her eyes as His love covered her soul. In a soft, hushed voice she kept repeating two words, "**My Abba**", "**My Abba**", "**My Abba**" (**Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6; Mark 14:36**)!

As she gazed at this wonderful table and all that was freely provided for her there she knew that no matter how great the waters of adversity, His love for her could never be quenched. Every kind of spiritual weapon was there for all the evil which would be brought against her (**Eph. 6:10-18**)! No matter how great the rivers of evil would rise to drown her, His protective love and grace would always be greater still. It could never be purchased with all the riches of the world. His love and all the provisions that went with it were more valuable than His created universe and it was hers without cost! The cost to her God was enormous: the Father emptying out His heart for us by the giving up of His Son; the Son emptying out Himself on the cross in total spiritual, soul and physical death; the Holy Spirit's infinite grieving over what the Son had become!

The Father looked proudly at her and proclaims, *"I can see that you love Us with all of your heart. But it doesn't stop there, you also love others with the same fervent love."* She bowed her head and said, *"Yes, and that fervent love is greatly concerned for..."* The Holy Spirit quietly broke in and said, *"...for your sister, she belongs to Us and it is now time for her to learn about the true surrendered life."* It was in **7:11** that she initiated the request to go wherever He desired to lead. But now she is specific! The bride has a discerning spirit and sees that her little sister needs nurturing to develop into a strong consistent Christian. So she voiced her deep concerns, wanting direction in what to do about this little sister she loves so much. She spoke again to Abba Father...

V.8 "We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?"

The words "**we have**" indicate that her little sister already belonged to Jesus, first by creation and secondly through Jesus' redeeming blood. Having "*no breasts*" points out that spiritual growth and maturity have not taken place in her young Christian walk. Faith and love have not been developed in her heart (**I Thess. 5:8**) nor exercised in her soul that is so needed to please God in the walk of surrender (**Eph. 5:2**).

The bride poured out her heart, *"I long for my little sister to enter into this glorious rest and contentment. I desperately want her to enter into this blessed, intimate relationship. I know I can help her because of the afflictions I have gone through. I can share these experiences with her and she will know what to expect."* In other words, lead her into having a **7:10** experience. The bride would be able to help her sister through the rough spots, since she had been there before (**II Cor. 1:3,4**)!

Great are the dangers to the one who walks as an immature Christian. So many decisions must be made and many will "**speak for her**". All these voices: dating, hobbies, entertainment, church, money, security, friends, material goods will all speak for her; each will make a claim on her saying, *"I am the most important consideration for your life, all others are secondary. Pay attention to me first and foremost."* So many voices vie for her absolute attention and affection.

The bride said to Abba Father, *"may my sister never listen to the '...voice of a stranger...' (John 10:4,5). She needs to be nurtured to love my Husband's eternal Word and develop discernment in her."* The Father said, *"There is One other voice that will speak for her. I love her so much that I will fill her with My Spirit as I did for you. He will speak for her! I will draw her to Myself. My Spirit will pour out Himself in her soul a baptism of fire and love. You, My very special child, will be used so that My love will flow through you to your little sister until she is mature."* Then the Spirit within her heart said...

V.9 "If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace (encampment, battlement) of silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar."

If an ancient city had only a wall surrounding it, then it was quite vulnerable to the attack of an enemy and in a short time would be forced to surrender. Why? Because without battlements (towers from which the enemy could be sighted and fought) built on the top of the walls, no action could be taken against the enemy. It was the battlements on the top of the walls that allowed the soldiers of the city to fight against the enemy and keep them from climbing over the walls at will. They will know exactly from which direction the enemy was attacking.

Here was a spiritually young believer not fully developed. The question is, what will be her place of function in the body of Christ - a wall or a door? All true, blood bought believers have been given gifts and talents to be developed and then used by the Holy Spirit in His body (**Eph. 4:15-16**). It is for the surrendered believers to be used by the Holy Spirit in taking the younger Christians under their protective wings to disciple them. They will help nurture and encourage them to grow in the Lord, leading them slowly in the exercising of their gifts. Thank God for those who are willing to take the time to protect and care for the little ones!

The bride is placing the need for discernment into the hands of her Husband. Once the discernment is given, then she will work with her Bridegroom in the developing of her sister to full maturity in Christ (**Titus 2:4**)! Whatever gift(s) and talent(s) surface will need to be carefully nurtured and exercised. A spiritually young person is not to be thrust into a ministry too rapidly (**I Tim. 3:6; I Pet. 5:5**). Pride, in all of its subtle and not so subtle forms will surface. The focus is on them and their gifts instead of the Lord. Yet, in many churches their leaders will say, *"Get that new believer teaching a primary class in our Sunday School. They can do it. It's all there in the teacher's manual on how to do it!"* However, the young believer needs to grow spiritually by watching those who are deeply in love with the Lord.

How sad that churches thrust young baby believers into positions of spiritual responsibility and yet they have not learned to grow in love, surrender, prayer, praise and faithfulness. They have not been tested. The enemy will make sure that the young believer will have a very difficult trial come along to devastate him/her. The new believer quits the responsibility and others are hurt in the process. Satan loves it!

Note carefully that it has taken eight chapters in the life of this bride for her to come to the point where she is ready to be used in the nurturing of her little sister. She has the heart for it because of **7:10** and **8:6**! Only when she comes to the realization that only Jesus is everything to her (**7:10**) and then, convinced of His never ending love, places His seal upon her heart and arm (**8:6**) is she ready for the work of mentoring her little sister.

Pride was mentioned a moment ago. We see the diminishing of pride in her own life. It took time and through surrender pride was patiently dealt with by the Holy Spirit. How do we know? In **2:16** she stated, **"My Beloved is MINE."** In **6:3** she stated it again, **"My Beloved is MINE."** There had been growth by **6:3** and the statement is of less importance. However, not until **7:10** is the **"MINE"** eliminated. What vestiges of pride remained is minimal.

"...we will build upon her a palace (battlement)..."

Notice carefully that the building of a *"battlement"* is not the responsibility of the young sister to build but the Bridegroom's and the Bride's (**"we will build...we will inclose"**). Who are the **"we"**? It is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit ministering through the bride! Here it is dear Christian from the Word of God, **"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."** (**I Cor. 3:5,6**). God receives all the glory in whatever is accomplished when you are mentoring a young believer. The bride is now a yielded spiritual instrument in the hand of the Beloved to bless the little sister. A spiritual wall indicates separation; separation from the world's philosophies and mindless activities (**John 15:19; II Cor.6:17**), and separated unto the Lord for His use and pleasure (**Rom. 14:7-9; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13**).

He will work through His surrendered bride to build the *"battlement"* within her younger sister. This will happen when the bride begins to pray specific promises from the Word doing spiritual warfare over her sister. The bride will spend time just being a friend to her little sister, so that she can see what a mature Christian really is. This little sister must see the image of Christ in her older sister. How many times does the Lord have to say it to us. *"Let them see My image in your life."* Listen, listen, listen to His Word, **"That which was from the beginning (Jesus), which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life...That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you...."** (**I John 1:1,3**). Did you catch the order here? First they heard, then, it was proven out by what they saw! Let people see the power of what you spiritually proclaim. *O God, let me be a transparent believer. Let my "little sisters" know You through me!* The bride will be living out the life of Christ in her walk hoping that Her sister will become an imitator (**I Cor. 11:1**).

The new believer will begin to see: a love for God, a love for one another, a love for the lost, acts of kindness, an attitude of humility, a faithfulness in prayer, praise and worship, a strong spiritually sustaining purpose of intimacy in the 'older sister' (surrendered bride). The new believer will experience the gift of a loving, listening ear from the 'older sister'! Spiritual fruit will be picked from the tree of the surrendered believer (**Gal. 5:22,23**).

"..of silver..."

Verse nine states that the "*battlement*" is to be made of "*silver*". Silver in scripture represents redemption. This thought comes from **Exo. 30:11-16**. The people brought the prescribed amount of silver money that would be used for the sockets. These sockets of enormous amounts of silver supported the boards that made up the Tabernacle. This "*silver*" money given to support the weight of these boards was called "*atonement*" or "*redemption*" money.

The "*little sister*" must be taught clearly about her spiritual foundation and never forget it. Christ is her foundation (**I Cor.3:11**) and she is not only on it but in it ("*in Christ*" **Rom. 12:5**)! That foundation is her stability and everything else: her life, her purpose; her daily decisions, actions and attitudes. The bride is to never forget she has been redeemed ("*silver*") without cost to her. The cost to the Lord was immense (**I Pet. 1:18,19; Psa.103:4; Eph. 1:7**). O how this needs to be constantly reinforced in new believers. The more that is understood about the enormity of their sin nature and the depths to which Christ went on the cross to buy back their soul, the more likely they will remain (abide) loyal to Him and grow to spiritual maturity because of their deep love and appreciation for Him!

How sad that young Christians are thrust into the battle of life without knowing how to use the spiritual weapons available to them (**II Cor. 10:3-5**). We tell them about **Eph. 6:10-17** but seldom demonstrate how. No wonder there is so much defeat and defection from the fellowship of believers. It is easy to evangelize, but nurturing new believers requires much time and Holy Spirit wisdom. We who are "*big sisters*" (surrendered Bride) must realize that our every move is being observed. That is how the "*little sisters*" are taught. They are seeing Christ, our Beloved Bridegroom, living in and through us. All the little sisters who are brought into our lives must see the victorious Christian life lived out as much as hearing about it! They must see the "*battlements*" at work. Let them see a life being lived out on the promises of God in the Word – a walk of humility, patience, caring and accountability.

How often do young spiritual children see victory in adult believers lives? How many churches allow for a time of testimony from believers who are seeing God work in their lives through specific answers to prayer? It is one thing to testify about being saved, it is quite another to give personal examples of spiritual victories and how they were accomplished through the Holy Spirit's power by faith in God's promises!

"a wall...a battlement"

At this point it is not known what the "*little sister*" will become – a wall or a door. If she be a wall then a spiritual "*battlement*" will be built upon it. She will be a watchman – looking out for the enemy coming against the body of Christ – an intercessor with a gift of discernment in recognizing the enemy's subtle attacks against believers. She will be that expert warrior on the battlement using the weapons of spiritual warfare (**II Cor. 10:3-5**): the whole armor of God (**Eph. 5:10-19**); proclaiming the blood of the Lamb (**Rev. 12:11**); and the power of the Holy Spirit (**Mark 13:11; Acts 4:21; Rom. 15:19**).

If her sister's function in the body of Christ will be a wall then her foundation must be solid spiritually. She must be very, very careful what she builds upon that foundation: prayer, praise, fellowship, doing good, intimacy with Jesus through His Word. That is why it is so important for young believers to be truly discipled, not just told what to do but shown how to do it. Then the "*little sister*" will become a spiritually strong watchman - protective wall for others.

But some are given a special place to lead in that battlement-watchman ministry. There are real dangers in a leadership role if the foundation is not strong (**Psa. 11:3; II Tim. 2:19**). Jesus is our example of how to fight in the daily battle, He knew how to take orders from His Father and obey them. He was totally in love with the Father. He is our example. If she remains humble and submissive, the Beloved will cause her to continually triumph (**I Pet. 5:6-8; II Cor. 2:14**). Oh to be a strong wall in Christ for His body. O to be a place where the spiritually immature may run to and be protected behind and in our wall.

Dear love of His heart, how many "*little sisters*" are out there watching your life? Do they see a victorious Christian? Do they see the fruit of the Spirit in your life? When you do stumble and hurt someone else do they see you

confessing it and asking the offended person to forgive you? Do they see you praying for those who have hurt you instead of hearing you complain about them? Do they see you excited about being a Christian? Does your life demonstrate how simple it is to use and speak the word of God to defeat the enemy? Do you use the authority given to you by the Lord? Listen, "**And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.**" (Eph. 2:6). Why are we seated with Christ? It is the throne of His authority. We have His authority (Word - promises) to exercise against the enemy!

As the bride sat at the table of the Lord, Abba Father remarked,

"...and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar."

It was so wonderful listening to her Abba Father, her Beloved Bridegroom and the dear Holy Comforter talk about what will be needed to be done for her "**little sister**"! A loving, caring God had all of her little sister's needs supplied already! The plan was set. O how secure and confident this made the bride feel. All she had to do was make herself available to her "**little sister**" and her heavenly Bridegroom would take care of the rest through her, His adoring, submissive, serving bride!

Will her "**little sister**" develop into being a door? Will her life be a door to which others may go through and find Christ, the Beloved? The door of her heart would become an entrance to the true Door of eternity and a door where hurting Christians may find access to encouragement, healing and strength (Gal. 6:2, 10)! Let's teach the "**little sisters**" how, by example (I Cor. 11:1). Will her heart be an open door where the Lord will have complete access to every area of her life?

The "**cedar**" is an evergreen tree (see 1:17 for comments). It is an illustration of the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ about whom the Word of God states, "**...Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.**" (Heb. 13:8). The cedar grows over one hundred feet tall. It is strong and stately! Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords ruling them with the power of His word (Rev. 19:11-16). He must become the "**little sister's**" strength.

The cedar was rot-resistant and knot free. Jesus lived His life without sin (Heb. 4:25; I Pet. 2:22; I John 3:5). He must become her holiness, purity and righteousness. What good is a door without a wall? Both are absolutely necessary. Notice that she will be enclosed with "**boards**". Other spirit-filled believers must become part of her life demonstrating by their walk what being a "**board**" is all about (I Cor. 11:1). Boards speak of stability when they are connected to each other! The boards in the Tabernacle are a good example of this principle. They were held together by four outward bars and one unseen bar (Exo. 26:26-29; 36:33). The boards cannot keep themselves standing straight and in line with the others, even though they are all standing in sockets of silver.

They must have the four bars on the outside and the unseen bar running through all of them which represents the Holy Spirit. The four seen bars represent what was important in the early church found in Acts 2:42: bible study, prayer, fellowship and the breaking of bread! In the Tabernacle all the boards together are "**looking**" inward. They are centered around all that represents Christ in the Tabernacle. O to have the local body of believers centered around Jesus in what they say and do so the "**little ones**" will see the beauty of Christ in our actions and sense the presence of Christ in our worship of Him.

Dear bride of the Living Lord, become a board in some new believer's life. Be an encourager, a prayer warrior! May this be your heart's desire, "**Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way.**" (I Sam. 12:23). The bride continues to speak...

V.10 "I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favor (Heb. 'peace')."

What a testimony by the bride! The purpose of a wall is to separate and to protect. Here is a key to the contented, spiritual life - separation. When did she begin to have real peace in her life? It started to take place the moment she acted on her desire to be separated unto her Beloved. That's when the Holy Spirit began to reveal the infinitely deep things of the Bridegroom to her (I Cor. 2:9,10). When did this happen? In chapter one she had asked the Beloved, "**Let him kiss me...Draw me...Tell me...**". It was there Jesus really opened up His heart to her and oh so much has happened since that moment! The wall began to be built right there and then. It would take time but her Beloved was full of tender mercies and heavenly patience to see His plan and work accomplished in her (Jer. 29:11; Isa. 46:11; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:6).

Are you dear, an object of His affection, a "**wall**" for Jesus yet? All you need is a sincere heart for it and the Holy Spirit will do the rest. This is made so clear in **II Cor. 6:17** which states, "**Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing...**". Just be willing to "**come out**", make the first step, turn off the TV and pick up a spiritual book to read instead of wasting so much of your time on the temporal. Quit frequenting that place which has you in bondage. Take the first step that is all.

The Holy Spirit declares in the next part of that verse He has the responsibility to continue to keep you "**separated**". ("**be separate**" is passive voice in the Greek - it means it will be done to you). The Lord is in the "**building business**". Let Him build you up as a strong wall (**Col. 2:7; I Pet. 2:5**). You are a spiritual palace (temple of the Holy Spirit). As you surrender each day you will have peace within your walls and prosperity in your spiritual palace. "**May peace be within your walls, And prosperity within your palaces.**" (**Psa.122:7**).

Would I want to do anything that would displease my Beloved? Holiness (sanctification - separation to the Lord **Rom. 12:1; 6:13,19**; and separation from the things of the world – (**Rom. 12:2; I John 2:15-17**) is vital in order to have a vibrant and victorious spiritual walk in Christ. Meditate on the following verses (**Psa. 29:2; 93:5; Eph. 1:3,4; I Thess. 3:12-13; Heb. 12:10,14; I Pet. 1:13-16; II Pet. 3:11**). Holiness is not something that is worked up, but through a deep love for the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit causes it to flow through us as refreshing living waters. Love will not do anything that would offend the one loved! "**Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words....**" (**John 14:23**).

"...like towers..."

As His spiritual bride, your breasts of faith and love (**I Thess. 5:8**) will become fully developed as if they were "**towers**". Yes, "**towers**" where all those around you will see what is most important in your life. "**Towers**" are to be seen. And what is the Christian life all about? It is faith and love. Remember, the battlements on the wall were like towers in order to discern exactly where the enemy would attack and from which point he could be fought. The Lord Himself is the tower of all towers for battle, "**For Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.**" (**Psa.61:3**)! The enemy is defeated every time through your absolute "**tower**" of love for Him, His word, His people, and being firm in the "**tower**" of your faith by standing on His promises in each attack.

"...then was I in his eyes as one that found favor (Heb. 'peace')."

Praise God for the wonderful, all seeing eyes of the Lord that reflect His heart of peace, love and grace. Oh the joy of having His peaceful favor. What a comfort to know His loving, Bridegroom eyes are watching your every move. When faith and love are exercised then He guides you with His eyes (**Psa. 32:8**) and His eyes become your spiritual eyes each moment of the day. You see with spiritual discernment! You see as He sees! His Word becomes alive in your spirit (**Heb. 4:12**). O what peace to know He is watching you with His infinite, caring heart. In the following verses find rest and peace dear lovingly watched one: **Psa. 4:8; 34:15; 36:1; Prov. 5:21; 15:3**.

V.11 "Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver."

This love song begins (1:1) and ends with Solomon's name that means "**peaceable**". This lover of Jesus begins and ends her day with the Name she dearly loves and desires to glorify. The vineyards of the Lord and the fruit produced in them should always have the characteristic of peace. **Heb. 12:11** speaks of the "**peaceable fruit of righteousness**." The surrendered believer, when faced with a difficulty or attack, begins the process with His peace and ends with His peace. When the Lord dropped the spiritual bomb on the disciples that He was leaving and they wouldn't be allowed to go with Him (**John 13:33,36**),

He began to show them what was needed for facing the heart-wrenching circumstances to come (betrayal and crucifixion). How did Jesus do that? He did it by giving them His peace (**John 14:27**). When He appeared to them in resurrection, Jesus met with them and the first words out of His mouth were "**peace be with you!**" (**John 20:19,21**). He taught them to begin with His peace and end with His peace. Praise God for His peace (**Phil. 4:6,7**)! Jesus is our "**Solomon**". **Eph. 2:14** proclaims that, "**He (Jesus) is our peace.**"

The heavenly Father refers to the eternal Sonship of Jesus in **Heb. 1:5** and is a direct quote from **II Sam. 7:14** which speaks of Solomon, David's son! Jesus is the King of Peace. When His Kingdom truly rules in your heart there will

be peace (**Rom. 14:17**). We are to allow His peace to rule our hearts (**Col. 3:15**).

All true peace comes from Him (**II Thess. 3:16**). Peace actually comes from His wisdom. Remember, Solomon represents wisdom (**I Kin. 4:29-34; Matt. 12:42**). Jesus is wisdom itself (**Col. 2:3**). There are circumstances that would seem to overwhelm you, but by faith, standing on wisdom of His Word, you experience **James 3:17**, "**But the wisdom that is from above is first pure (brings holiness; a separated walk), then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.**"

"Baalhamon"

"Baalhamon" means *"lord or ruler of a multitude."* Thus, from the beginning and throughout your day His peace will surround the activities and challenges Abba Father has planned for you. That is why it is so important to keep the promises of God between you and your activities all the day long. Let it become a filter through which you make all of your decisions! Let Him be the Lord or Ruler over the multitude of things you will have to face! Remember, the very sly **"little foxes"** will be lurking in the shadows with all of their wicked intents to begin to destroy the fruit of God in you!

Remember, Jesus died that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living (**Rom. 14:9**). If He is not Lord of you, the individual, or Lord of the *"multitude"* - the body of believers in the local fellowship, then He is not Lord at all and the Holy Spirit's power to teach, reveal, protect, answer prayer, guide, save, heal and deliver will be greatly hindered. O the shame of division in the congregation and leadership. Strife simmers beneath the surface of the local body of believers because He is not Lord. Their will is more important than His will. They simply will not humble themselves and fulfill **Eph. 5:21**.

"...he let out the vineyard unto keepers..."

The one who possess a deeply committed bride's heart will have great **"keeper"** or **"caretaker"** concerns for all the **"little sisters"** in His vineyard (the particular members in the body of Christ, His bride). This was illustrated in this bride's life from the very beginning in **1:7-8** and reconfirmed in **7:10-12** and **8:8-10**! Do you have this vineyard concern?

Isn't it wonderful that our Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, loves us individually and not just as a corporate body? This is demonstrated in how He makes us **"keepers"** individually. Each one has a very special and private place in His great heart. Our **"Abba Father"** gives to us a sphere of responsibility (our own vineyard) to minister to the needs of others. For moms and dads your first and great ministry is to your family. From there, the Holy Spirit might lead you into other ministries: teaching, cleaning, nursing home, rescue mission, evangelism, discipleship or simply supplying encouragement to others, etc. The Lord knows that we will be happiest in serving just as our Bridegroom did while here on earth and is still doing so in Heaven (**Mark 10:45; Phil. 2:5,8; Heb. 7:25**).

Remember, silver represents redemption (**comments 8:9**). God expects to receive something from you, His redeemed one, which will bring Him ultimate joy. Jesus redeemed us so the Holy Spirit could produce in us redeemed actions, attitudes, worship and service. As a surrendered redeemed one, you have the privilege in bringing Him the **"thousand pieces of silver"** so to speak.

How? There will be the **"thousand"** little pieces of silver resulting from the redeemed fruit of your life. When? It is happening every day in small increments. These pieces of redeemed silver (actions) from your vineyard are being sent into glory every day. Later, when you stand before your Bridegroom at the Judgment Seat of Christ (**Rom. 14:9-12; II Cor. 5:10**) He will show you all of them. He will experience ultimate joy there as He rewards you for giving to Him the redeemed silver accrued during your lifetime. Keep this verse in mind, **"...It is more blessed to give than to receive."** (**Acts 20:35**).

It is joyful to receive but it is more joyful to give. At the Judgment Seat, Jesus our Lord wants to give you rewards. It will bring ultimate joy to Him. Don't rob Him of the joy of giving rewards to you. Just be faithful in whatever you do. He has made it so easy for us to receive rewards. It says so in **Col. 3:23,24**, **" And whatever you do, do it heartily as for the Lord, and not for men; Knowing that from the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ."** **WHATEVER means WHATEVER!** How much easier can He make it? Get dressed in the morning for Jesus, do your homework for Jesus, work at your place of employment for Jesus, and all the little things that come your way during the day. Do them faithfully and He will have the joy of giving you a reward. The thousand pieces of silver, plus gold and precious stones will be made into crowns for you (**I Cor. 3:11-14**).

There are five different crowns we, His redeemed ones, may receive from our King. It all has to do with being faithful in what He asks of us. All we want to hear from Him will be these words, **"...well done thou good and faithful**

servant..." (Matt. 25:21). The "thousand pieces of silver" are bound up in the word "**faithful**"! What He gives you to do, do it faithfully (Eph. 2:10). The crowns that may be received are for: Self Control – (I Cor. 9:25); Loving Jesus' appearing and keeping the faith (II Tim. 4:8); Persevering under trials (James 1:12); Keeping, care giving or shepherding other Christians (I Pet. 5:1-4); Faithful in suffering for Christ (Rev. 2:10). Will you have the infinite joy of casting crowns at Jesus' feet as the elders will do (Rev. 4:10)? Read Col. 3:24,25 again! Please don't rob Jesus of the joy of giving to you or rob yourself of the joy of giving to Him. Read Acts 20:35 again.

Now the question asked by the Holy Spirit in 1:6 can be answered, "*Will she ever be able to truly minister in the vineyard her Lord had chosen for her?*" Has this beautiful spiritual bride been made ready to be a "**keeper**" also? Yes! Reflect back to when she shared with us just what her Christian life was like before surrender – the constant burden of a multiplicity of activities in 1:6, "**...my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept**". The frustration is evident. "*I can't do what I am truly called to do!*" You can feel the desperation of her heart in 1:6 that she was burned out and crying for help. The Lord allows us to come to the end of Christian "busyness" and waits to hear us cry out for life-fulfilling spiritual intimacy with Him.

Then, the Holy Spirit sent a Marybeth into her life and asked, "*Have you ever surrendered all of this over to your Heavenly Bridegroom?*" A spiritual hunger came! This bride said, "*No! No one ever told me that I had a Heavenly Bridegroom who wants to be intimate with me!*" There are a great many believers, like this bride, who do not know anything about being His bride. So many know Bible doctrine but know nothing of intimacy with their beloved Lord.

Then one day in desperation her soul cried out, "**Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.**" (1:2). This was heavenly music to His ears! And oh, how He fulfilled it, as we have seen traveling with her through these wonderful eight chapters watching Him disciple His bride through intimacy.

Now she is seen as the keeper of her own vineyard. She proclaims it with joy in v.12. What has changed from 1:6, "**...but mine own vineyard have I not kept.**" to this precious moment in 8:12?

V.12 "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred."

How did her Bridegroom transform His bride from an ordinary believer, who had been filled with the extreme exhaustion in 1:6, to a blessed, joyful keeper of her own vineyard ready to bless her heavenly Bridegroom with a thousand pieces of silver from a great harvest? Her Abba Father was allowed to prune her branch freely (John 15:1)!

This journey began when a desperate seeking fell over her soul for an intimate relationship with the Beloved. Next came a revelation of His heart when He described in detail just how deeply special she was to His heart. She experienced the destructive *little foxes* and the emptiness they bring (2:15; 3:1). She learned the great need to protect this special intimacy with her Bridegroom. Next came the painful hesitation to go with Him and the suffering which resulted (5:2-7). His precious bride had learned that a truly surrendered heart does not hesitate to obey what she knows is His "**...good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**" (see Rom.12:1,2). This difficult lesson would cause her vineyard to be ready in producing much fruit!

In 6:11 He took her to see how productive His beautiful vineyards could be. She had learned to never tend her vineyard alone! After these vineyard lessons then came the beginning of fulfillment in 7:12. She said, "**Let us rise early and go to the vineyards; Let us see whether the vine has budded and its blossoms have opened, and whether the pomegranates have bloomed. There I will give you my love.**" This is really where we can give our Beloved Bridegroom our full love and see beautiful fruit produced for Him and by Him to bless many others.

Her heart garden from chapter 4 had grown into a full-fledged vineyard of her Beloved. It took time and patience but she did not give up! It was all part of His plan to see His greatly loved bride become a beautiful garden with which He and others would be blessed. In chapter 8 the bride leans upon her Beloved and seals her surrendered heart with His seal. She now is moved to minister to her younger sister. The work of her vineyard became personal one-on-one.

What does all this mean to you dear reader, dear bride? Your Beloved Bridegroom has given you your own special vineyard in which both of you can minister together. What is this spiritual vineyard? Let the Holy Spirit reveal it to you in Isa. 5:7, "**For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel...**" It is His people! Yes, your vineyard is made up of all the people who are in your life: family, friends, co-workers; all the daily issues and circumstances brought your way by the Holy Spirit. May those who are brought into this vineyard be able to pick His fruit from your branch in all your actions and attitudes.

The more we are obedient the more **Col. 3:11-17, 23,24; and James 3:17** will appear in her vineyard. Oh, my dear partner in the vineyard of the Beloved, it is by His fruit produced in us that others will truly see Him. And here it is, in **John 13:34-35**, **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

May you and I always realize that even though we call it *my vineyard* it is really *our vineyard!* He is actually ministering through us. As His bride never forget to learn the meaning of the vision given to her in **1:14**, **"My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi."** He is the center and purpose of the vineyard. The Beloved is the picture of life and resurrection that others may be drawn to Him.

Then comes the reward, the harvest (**Gal.6:9; Col.3:23,24**) as He blesses His keepers with a portion for them to enjoy – 200 pieces of silver. Now the bride has the great, great joy of offering to Him the 1000 pieces of silver. Oh the joy in rewarding our Bridegroom with the harvest of a surrendered, redeemed life. It will come when you stand before Him at the Judgment Seat (**Rom.14:10**). Oh the joy He will receive as He finds a great amount of silver appearing from the intimate, surrendered, obedient life you lived while on this earth! Oh just seeing the joy on His face and in His eyes will be worth it all (**I Cor.3:11-15**).

The blessings of having His specially selected vineyard for your life is an honor but very, very serious if you do not surrender each day and its circumstances to Him. Sowing obedient, intimate faith and trust in the promises of your Bridegroom keeps the vineyard beautiful and healthy. Then others will come, attracted to Jesus' fruit in you! They will taste His life-giving goodness and discover what you discovered in **2:3**, **"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."** (see **Psa. 34:8; 119:103**). Read **Heb. 2:9**. Jesus tasted death that others might taste His life through you! Intimacy with your Bridegroom through surrender to His Word will protect your vine from becoming a rancid curse:

"Many shepherds have ruined My vineyard, They have trampled down My field; They have made My pleasant field a desolate wilderness." (Jer. 12:10).

How many have been turned away from the Lord because their so-called Christian life portrays little difference than those who do not belong to Him? It is awful to look at joyless, uninterested, so-called believers, who disdain keeping His loving commandments found in the 66 love letters He wrote to His bride to follow as the true way to show Him how much she loves Him! **1 John 5:3 "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."** Read **Psa. 1; Psa. 19**.

PRAY WITH ME: *"Praise You dear Lord for giving me a vineyard so that I may have much fruit to give back to You! Thank You my Beloved that there is also a portion for me (200) that I may share with my fellow workers in order to bless them! Lord, I have no means in myself to care for the vineyard. Thank You for giving me spiritual gifts, talents from the Holy Spirit to accomplish Your plan for the vineyard in Your power! Thank You, dear Abba Father, my Vinedresser! Thank You so much for Your promise, 'Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it.' (I Thess.5:24). May much redeemed silver be sent to glory each day from my life. May Your heart receive great joy at the Judgment Seat. I will, in joy, cast any crowns given at Your feet! In the Name of my King, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen."*

V.13 "Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it."

God loves corporate worship and corporate fellowship. He began this Song with a group desirous of intimate fellowship with Him (**1:2-3**). And now, as the Spirit brings to a conclusion this beautiful Song He speaks of **"companions"**. Remember back in **chapter three** the bride was given a special vision. She saw men and women working together in communion with the King. The bride was being taught the importance of true fellowship with other believers. When people who love Jesus come together it brings to us His glorious presence as no other way can.

Each individual believer is a garden (already discussed at length in **chapter four**). Jesus loves to dwell in the garden of our heart. He loves to talk and share with us through His word. But He also loves to have us talk and share with

Him the desires, distresses and delights of our heart (**2:14**)! He wants so much to be wanted. Does your wonderful Lord look into the fullness of your heart and hear, **"Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee (Psa. 73:25; 42:1; 119:10)"**. What a joy it is to fellowship with other truly surrendered believers (**"companions"**) and spend time just talking about our favorite topic - our Bridegroom Jesus!

Will you **"companion"** with those who are in love with Jesus? Will you seek them out? A surrendered heart just

can't help it. It is a holy compelling in them to meet with other like-minded lilies! When they begin to share what is on their heart, you are hearing the voice of your Beloved Lord. Get with other surrendered lilies, spend time sharing with each other about Him and **Eph. 3:17-19** will be fulfilled in your hearing, "***That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.***"

"...thy voice: cause me to hear it."

Remember, something special happens when two or three gather together just to talk about Him and share His Word. These are the one's who hearken to His voice. They lovingly obey the voice of His word. These obedient ones love to come together and talk about Him, His Word and what He is doing in their lives. Something special happens at this time. He reveals Himself as never before, "***For where two or three are gathered together in my name (The Lord Jesus Christ) there am I in the midst of them.***" (**Matt. 18:20**). What does this mean? We know that He is omnipresent. However, when He becomes the topic of conversation and the focus of fellowship, He allows us to sense His presence as at no other time. What comes out of our sharing heart will flow over His nailed scarred feet, washing them with pure spiritual water springing up out of our innermost being (**John 7:38,39**). O the joy of "*companioning*" with those who love Him. As each shares from the Word and in testimony, each will begin to "*hear His voice*" in what is revealed. It will be spiritual thoughts and spiritual ideas you have never had before. They are a gift from Him to the companions who have come together.

PRAY WITH ME: "*Dear Lord, I love You with all of my heart! I love the deep things that You reveal to me. Thank You for exposing the beauty of Your loving heart to me and through others. You love to work through the two or three gathered together in Your name. You just love to give that little extra blessed thought or revelation through them as we talk together about You. In the most holy name in the universe, Jesus my Lord, amen.*"

V.14 "Make haste, my beloved and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

There is no hesitation in her voice as in **chapter 2**. She says, "*Hurry, come and be in the midst of us as we gather together in Your name. We will lift up our voices, full of love and praise to You. As we gather together let us feel Your holy presence. Come quickly and listen to us with Holy Spirit filled hearts, 'speaking to (ourselves) in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in (our) heart to (You); giving thanks for all things unto God and the Father in (Your name) the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'*" (**Eph. 5:19-20**).

The bride gathers together with other lilies to talk about the Beloved. They sit, praising Him and contemplating out loud all the wonderful things that make up His eternal character and attributes in great wonderment and revelation. The bride said, "*I didn't see it until now! He just becomes more wonderful all the time.*" One of the virgins excitedly asked, "*Well, don't keep it from us, what is it?*" The bride responded, "*Remember way back when we first went to the Beloved King and asked Him to kiss us spiritually (1:2)?*" Another answered, "*Who could ever forget that, we were all changed and especially you.*"

The bride, glowing with joy said, "*Not until this very moment did I realize how He has spiritually kissed me with precious revelation all through every phase of my surrendered life. At first He compared me with Pharaoh's choice horses and said that I had dove's eyes. What a kiss (1:9,15)! Then there was that special kiss when He allowed me to see Him skipping in victory over the troubled mountains and hills of life (2:8). And how could I ever forget the kiss He gave to me as I went to sleep and then dreamed about His wonderful power, it was so glorious (3:6-11). And there was the kiss of the three mountains, Amana, Senir and Hermon. I was never the same after that (4:8). Also, engraved on my heart is the flood of descriptions that came to me in my darkest moment, what a tender kiss it was (5:10-16). I still am amazed at His description of me, comparing me to Jerusalem and an army with banners (6:4).*"

"*The dear Holy Spirit kissed me with the magnificent vision of Him when I knew in my heart that His desire was for me totally and eternally, it caused me to be actively bold and truly have His mind (7:10-11). But Oh, no kiss was ever greater than taking His nail scarred hand in mine and placing it over my heart and arm (8:6). He really, really loves us with all of His heart!*" An unspeakable presence of glory begins to fill the room. For a long time there was a hushed holy silence, then at the same moment each whispered, "*He's here! I know He's here!*" In their spirit each heard His voice encouraging them, "***...I will never leave you, nor forsake you.***" O how they longed for Him to return in person.

Then one of the lilies touched something - it was a box wrapped up as a gift. It was addressed: "*A gift for My*

bride." All of the lilies gathered round with great expectancy. As it was slowly being unwrapped a light shown from within, lo and behold it contained sixty-six love letters written for His bride. The note on the cover said, "Dear bride of My heart, you didn't think that during this time of My physical absence I would leave without giving something of great value to you, My precious bride? I have been writing all of these love letters just for you. As you hold them close to your heart, you are really holding Me. My words will guide you, change you, protect you!" He finished the note with these words, "I love you with all My heart, always Jesus. I'll be back soon!" With eyes filled with thankfulness she glanced at the final words in His last love letter, "**He who testifies this says, 'Yea, I am coming quickly.' Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!**" (Rev. 22:20)

PRAY WITH ME: "Make haste and continually fill me! Make haste and search me. Let me know if there is anything displeasing to You in my life (Psa. 139:23,24)! Make haste and continually revive and renew me! Make haste to sit with me in the very private and quiet times. Let me feel Your presence right away! Make haste and place Your left hand under my head and Your right arm around me. Make haste to receive my love and praise for You alone! Make haste, my Beloved, my Love, my Lord, my King, my Satisfaction! I desire nothing but You and You alone Lord Jesus! Sweep me up on wings of glory to the mountains of spices where nothing will ever interrupt our eternal love affair with each other. I long for those spices that come from You alone. I long to be with those who love You alone. How wonderful, my Love, will be the fragrance emanating from those mountains. Just like the anointing oil of the high priest with its four separate ingredients; each one of us coming and anointing Your feet with our particular fragrance. O the joy of combining our individual perfume and making heavenly incense for You our Beloved! One spiritual thought is combined with others. Is this what Rev. 5:8 is all about dear Lord? O to feel the breeze of Your blessed Holy Spirit on those mountains, lifting me up in holy ecstasy, with a heart bursting with pure holiness to be poured out on You, my Spouse! You lavished Your love on us fully (Rom. 5:5) but now, on the mountains of spices we will return it totally back to You as it floods Your Blessed soul! I love You, I love You, I love You with all of my Spirit-filled heart! Cause me to grow in a greater capacity to love You my Beloved!"

"...upon the Mountains of spices."

"Lord, Your spices are spiritual endowments which beautify and change me into Your blessed image through the power of the Holy Spirit! These are the spices emanating from the garden of my heart." For those who are sold out to Jesus there are mountains of spices waiting for you! The mountains are not barriers but blessings filled with His personal aroma of spiritual spices. Oh how joyful it is on these mountains. "This is where You planned to take me when You beckoned my heart so long ago to, '**...Rise up...and come away to mountains of new spiritual adventures with Him (2:10).**'" They will now leap and skip together over the mountains and hills (2:8) in His strength while holding her hand!

There's one last thing on her heart that needed to be done. Her mind went back to the beginning when the Holy Spirit came and filled her with that blessed longing for intimacy with Him. Looking wistfully in the distant past she said to herself, "I wonder how Marybeth is doing? I must write and thank her for leading me to ask to be kissed by My Beloved and share all the other kisses He has given me."

Taking out paper and pen she began to write a thank you note, "Dear Marybeth, so much has happened since you shared your heart with us. Thank you for obeying the Holy Spirit and showing me how to have our Bridegroom kiss me, and by it, spiritually igniting a flaming, panting desire for Him alone. The day after you left I..." She continued to write and write and write wanting Marybeth to know it all. She stopped for a moment and the Holy Spirit said, "Marybeth already knows but don't stop writing, she'll weep for joy hearing about all that has happened to you." A few pages later, she closed the letter, "With all of my love, filled up with our Beloved, your sister, Ruth."

P.S. If you haven't caught it yet, let me let you in on a little secret, I chose the name "Ruth" because the real Ruth of the Bible was a Gentile not deserving any consideration from the Lord. Our bride was a Gentile also (1:5). And the name "Marybeth" was a play on the term "Mary of Bethany" who truly understood our Beloved Bridegroom more than anyone else. And the Holy Spirit is still allowing her to teach us even in our day, twenty centuries later! We began so long ago, in this devotional commentary with the words of Jesus, "**Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel is preached throughout the whole world, this also that she has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.**" (Mark 14:9). We have obeyed His desire and passed it on to you! Be blessed by the Bridegroom and pass along the name and precious character of Mary of Bethany.

FROM MY HEART: "Thank You, dear Bridegroom of my heart that there are no mountains of Bether (division) between us anymore (2:17) but only mountains of spices. Thank You for this wonderfully, unsought journey through Your "first love" love in this Song! O how You sang it to me early, early in

the morning hours. Just You and I alone; sometimes sitting for quite a while thinking about the verse before us that day. Then You would reveal Your heart in that verse; tears flowed from my eyes in astonishment at the preciousness You were sharing! You sang it just for in those hours. You kept telling me just how much You loved me and at times I could not handle the streams of love flowing through every note sung to me in Your Song. I never dreamed that anything like this was ever possible! But O how my heart rejoiced in Your arms!"

"What an amazing, tender Lord You are. My Beloved, You took me by the hand so many years ago and led me on this indescribable, intimate journey through Your eternal "phileo" heart in this Song. You chose me: the weak, the unworthy, the failure, the unskilled and began a new work in me. By taking such a person You would get all the glory! You desired a book to be written through me. It never dawned on me for five years after writing down the thoughts You gave me that it was to be a book given freely without cost so that others would experience Your intimacy of love. Each morning You filled me with a love that made it irresistible. Many times, as You flooded my soul, I could only fall at Your feet and weep uncontrollably."

Your exquisite, all consuming "first love" love gave daily life and joy to me! Lord, there is nothing like it! It is indescribable! What heights of joy; what depths of love; what breadths of peace; what lengths of fullness; what glorious experiences of Your grace and mercy You have shared with my innermost being! But it was never meant for me alone. To all who read this devotional with a surrendered heart You have given the same experience. Dear Bridegroom of my heart You are so amazing – You intend this love for all those who belong to You but You make it so private, so personal - a one on one intimacy with each one of Your bride! When those who have finished this journey through reading and listening to Your Song, when they have read the last verse and then closed the book, - they will say...

"And when I had lifted up my eyes, I saw no man, except Jesus only!"

(Matt.17:8 – It was changed to make it personal)

**In His love and for His praise,
*Esher Shoshannah***

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:14-19

"But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." I Corinthians 2:9

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

"Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ." 2Thesalonians. 3:5

HE'S MY ABBA FATHER

HE'S ALTOGETHER LOVELY

HE ALONE IS AUTHORITY

HE'S MY SOUL'S ANCHOR

HE'S ALL THAT I NEED

HE IS THE ANOINTED ONE

HE ADOPTED ME BY HIS SPIRIT

HE ABIDES IN ME

I ADORE HIM

HE'S THE ARM OF STRENGTH

HE IS THE AVENGER

HE'S MY ALL IN ALL

HE'S THE ALPHA OF MY DAY

HE'S MY ADVOCATE

HE'S THE AMEN TO TRUTH

HE'S THE ALMIGHTY ONE

HE'S THE AUTHOR OF FAITH

HE MADE ATONEMENT FOR SIN

HE'S ALWAYS THERE FOR ME
HE'S THE AWESOME ONE
HE'S THE ANSWER
HE IS THE ABUNDANT LIFE
HE GIVES ME ASSURANCE
HE BUILDS UP MY LIFE
BRIGHTNESS OF GOD'S GLORY
HIS BANNER OVER ME IS LOVE
HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS
I'M A BRANCH IN HIS VINE
HE BINDS ME TO HIS HEART
HE'S THE BONDAGE BREAKER
HE IS THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS
HE'S THE BELOVED
HE'S THE ONE WHO BLESSES
HE'S MY BRIDEGROOM
I'M THE BRIDE OF CHRIST
HE'S THE BREAD OF LIFE
HE'S MY BURDEN BEARER
HE'S THE BRIGHT & MORN. STAR
HE HEALS THE BROKEN HEART
HE BLOTS OUT MY SIN
HE'S MY BLOOD SACRIFICE
HE CHOSE ME IN HIM
HE'S THE ETERNAL COVENANT
HE'S THE CHIEF SHEPHERD
HE'S THE CHRIST
HE'S MY COUNSELOR
HE'S MY COMMANDER
HE'S CHOICE AND PRECIOUS
HE'S COMING FOR ME
HE'S MY CREATOR
HE'S THE COMFORTING ONE
HE'S COMPASSIONATE ONE
HE'S THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE
HE ALWAYS CARES FOR ME
HE CLEANSSES MY SIN
HE NEVER COMPROMISES
HE IS THE CONSIDERATE ONE
HE CONQUERS MY ENEMIES
HE COMMITTED NO SIN
HE COMMUNICATES TO ME
HE'S MY COMPANION
HE CONSTRAINS ME
HE CHEERS ME UP
IN HIM MY WORRIES TO CEASE
HE WAS CRUSHED FOR MY SIN
HE COMPLETES ME
HE'S MY CONFIDENCE
HE GIVES ME COURAGE
HE BECAME CURSE
HE'S A CONSUMING FIRE
HE DISCERNS OF MY WAYS

HE DISCLOSES MY SIN TO ME
HE DECLARES HIS POWER
HE ALONE GIVES DIGNITY
HE'S MY DELIVERER
HE'S THE DESTROYER OF EVIL
HE'S THE DELIGHT OF MY HEART
HE'S THE DOOR TO ALL GOOD
HE'S MY DEFENSE & DEFENDER
HE'S MY HEART DESIRE
HE'S THE DESIGNER
HE DECREASES MY SELFISHNESS
HE DELIVERED ME FROM DARKNESS
HE DREW ME
I'M DRESSED UP IN HIM
HE DRANK MY CUP OF WRATH
HE'S THE ETERNAL ONE
HE'S EMMANUEL
HE ENLIGHTENS ME
HE IS EVERLASTING LIFE
HE'S THE EXALTED ONE
HE ESTABLISHES MY LIFE
HE EMBRACES ME
HE EMPOWERS ME
HE ENDURED THE CROSS
HIS WORD ENDURES FOREVER
HE'S MY EXAMPLE FOR LIVING
HE'S ENTHRONED ON MY HEART
HE EQUIPS ME TO SERVE
HE EXECUTES JUDGMENT
HE'S EXCELLENT IN ALL HIS WAYS
HIS EYE WATCHES ME
I ESCAPED HELL
HE EXPOSES EVIL
HE IS EXQUISITE
HE'S MY ENCOURAGER
HE'S MY FRIEND
HE'S MY FORTRESS
HE'S HEAVEN'S FRAGRANCE
HE'S FAITHFUL TO ME
HE FORGIVES ME
HE'S FULL OF GLORY
HE'S THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE
HE FILLS ME WITH HIS LOVE
HE'S THE FINISHER OF FAITH
HE GIVES ME FAITH
HE FEEDS ME HIS WORD
I'M HIS FOREVER
HE FULFILLS ME
HE FAILS ME NEVER
HE NEVER FORSAKES ME
HE'S MY FORTRESS
HE'S MY FOUNDATION

HE'S THE GATE TO HEAVEN
HE IS GOOD IN ALL HE DOES
HE IS GENTLE WITH ME
HE GOES BEFORE ME
HE BORE MY GRIEF AT THE CROSS
HE GAVE ME SPIRITUAL GIFTS
HE IS GOD THE SON
HE'S THE GLADNESS OF MY HEART
HE'S MY GARMENT OF SALVATION
HE'S MY GREAT PHYSICIAN
HE'S GLORIOUS
HE GUIDES ME THROUGH EACH DAY
HE GAVE ME HIS GLORY
HE GATHERS ME IN HIS ARMS
HE GUARDS MY SOUL
HIS HANDS STILL REACH OUT
HE'S MY HIDING PLACE
HE HUMBLED HIMSELF
I'M AN HEIR OF ALL THINGS
HE'S MY HELPER
HE IS HOLY AND MAKES ME HOLY
HE'S MY HEALER
HEAD OF THE CHURCH
HE'S MY HIGH PRIEST
HE'S MY HIGH TOWER
HE'S THE FATHER'S HEART
HE'S MY HAPPINESS
HE'S THE GOD OF HOPE
HE HOLDS ME UP
HE ALONE IS TO BE HONORED
HE'S INFINITE
HE'S INSEPARABLE TO ME
HE'S THE IMMORTAL, WISE GOD
HE'S THE IMAGE OF GOD
HE'S MY INTERCEDES FOR ME
HE'S INCOMPARABLE
HE'S IMMANUEL-GOD WITH US
HE'S THE I AM
HE'S INDESCRIBABLE
HE INDWELLS ME
HE'S GOD INCARNATE
I'M GOD'S INHERITANCE
HE'S MY INHERITANCE
HE'S INTIMATE WITH MY SOUL
HE MUST INCREASE
HE'S INCORRUPTIBLE
HE ALONE IS JUST
HE'S MY JOY
HE'S JEALOUS OVER ME
HE IS JEHOVAH GOD
HE JUSTIFIES ME
HE'LL JUDGE ALL ONE DAY
HE IS THE KING OF KINGS

HE IS KIND TO ME
HE IS MY KEEPER
HE'S MY KINSMAN
HE IS TRUE KNOWLEDGE
HE IS LORD OF MY LIFE
HE'S GOD'S SPOTLESS LAMB
HE LAUGHS AT THE ENEMY
HIS WORD IS MY LAMP
HE'S THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD
HE'S THE FATHER OF LIGHTS
HE ALONE IS LIFE
HE'S THE LION OF JUDAH
HE'S MY LIBERATOR
HE MY LEADER
HE'S THE LOVER OF MY SOUL
HE LISTENS TO ME
HE'S LONGSUFFERING
HE'S THE LIFTER OF MY SOUL
HE'S LIMITLESS
HE'S THE MAN OF SORROWS
HE MANIFESTS THE FUTURE
HE'S MARVELOUS IN ALL THINGS
HE GIVES MEANING TO LIFE
HE'S THE MASTER
HE'S MY MEDIATOR
HE IS MAJESTIC
HE'S THE MESSIAH
HE'S THE MIGHTY GOD
HE IS MOST HIGH
HE'S MERCIFUL TO ME
HE'S MAGNIFICENT
HE'S MY HEART'S MELODY
HE'S MEASURELESS
HE GIVES ME HIS NAME
HE IS MERCIFUL
HE'S ALWAYS NEAR
JESUS - NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES
HE'LL NEVER LEAVE ME
HE IS THE NOBLE ONE
HE WAS NAILED TO THE CROSS
HE'S ALWAYS NEEDED
HE DISPELS MY NIGHT
HE SUPPLIES ALL MY NEEDS
HE MAKES EACH DAY NEW
HE BLESSES NOW
HE STILL HAS THE NAIL SCARS
WITH HIM NOTHING IMPOSSIBLE
HE NOURISHES ME WITH HIS WORD
HE'S THE NARROW WAY
HE'S MY OFFERING
HE GIVES ORDER TO MY LIFE
HE WAS TOTALLY OBEDIENT
HE OBSERVES ALL THAT I DO

HE OVERCAME THE DEVIL	HE'S MY REDEEMER	HE CARRIED MY SORROWS	HE VOLUNTARILY DIED FOR ME
HE IS THE ORACLE OF GOD	HE ROOTS ME IN HIS LOVE	HE IS SINLESS	HE WAS BORN OF A VIRGIN
HE'S THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON	HE'S MY ROCK	HE'S MY SOVEREIGN	HE'S THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE
HE COMPLETELY OWNS ME	HE'S MY RULER	HE'S SOVEREIGN OVER ALL	HE'S THE VOICE OF THE WORD
HE IS THE OMEGA	HE'S MY REFUGE	HE SEARCHES MY HEART	HE VITALIZES MY LIFE
HE IS OMNISCIENT	HE THE ROSE OF SHARON	HE'S MY SALVATION	HE'S GODS' VISIBLE IMAGE
HE IS OMNIPRESENT	HE IS THE REWARDER	HE SUSTAINS ME	I'M A VESSEL FOR HIS USE
HE IS OMNIPOTENT	HE REIGNS OVER THE UNIVERSE	HE KEEPS ME SAFE	HE VANQUISHES EVERY FOE
HIS LOVE OVERWHELMS ME	HE GIVES MY SOUL REST	I'M SEATED WITH CHRIST	HE'S GOD THE WORD
THERE IS ONLY ONE LORD	HE'S MY RESURRECTION & LIFE	HE'S THE SONG OF MY HEART	HE'S MY WISDOM
HE REMEMBERS NOT MY PAST	HE'S THE RISEN LORD	I'M SEALED BY HIS SPIRIT	HE'S THE ONLY WAY
HE IS OUR PASSOVER	HE RESCUES ME	HE BECAME SIN FOR ME	HE MAKES ME WELL
HIS PRESENCE IS GLORIOUS	HE RANSOMED ME	I'M SHELTERED IN HIM	HE'S WONDERFUL
HE'S THE POTTER OF MY LIFE	I REJOICE IN HIM	HIS SHADOW PROTECTS ME	HE'S WORTHY OF PRAISE
HE PLEDGES HIS SPIRIT	HE REVIVES MY LIFE	HE'S THE SECRET KEEPER	HE WATCHES OVER ME
HE PAID THE PENALTY FOR SIN	HE RESTORES MY SOUL & YOUTH	HE'S SLOW TO ANGER	HE WALKS WITH ME DAILY
HE PROTECTS ME	HE RENEWS ME	HE SOUGHT ME	HE WARNS ME OF DANGER
HE IS PURE	HE REFRESHES ME	HE BORE MY SHAME	HIS CARING HEART WEPT
HE BORE MY SIN'S PAIN	HE'S MY ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS	HE SPARED ME	HE MAKES ME WHOLE
HE IS PERSONAL	HE RELIEVES BURDENS	HE'S MY STABILITY	HE'S THE FAITHFUL WITNESS
HE'S MY PLEASURE	HE RELEASES ME	HE IS TRUE	I'M HIS WORKMANSHIP
HE'S MY PURPOSE	HE'S LIFE'S REASON	HE THRILLS MY HEART	HE GAVE ME WORTH
HE IS MY PROVIDER	HE RECONCILED ME TO GOD	HE TRANSFORMS MY LIFE	HE MADE ME WORTHY
HE'S THE PRINCE OF PEACE	HE REGENERATED ME	CALVARY'S TREE - TREE OF LIFE	HE WAS WOUNDED FOR MY SIN
HE'S MY GREAT PHYSICIAN	HE'LL RETURN FOR ME	HE HAS A TENDER HEART	I'M WRAPPED UP IN HIM
HE PURIFIES MY THOUGHTS	HE REVEALS HIS HEART TO ME	I'M THE HOLY SPIRIT'S TEMPLE	HE'S WARMHEARTED
HE PREPARES ME	HE'S THE REFINER'S FIRE	HE'S THE TRUTH OF HIS WORD	HE'S WATER OF LIFE
HE'S PREEMINENT	HE'S RICH IN GRACE	HE'S ALWAYS TRIUMPHANT	HE WASHED MY SINS AWAY
HE'S THE PORTION OF MY SOUL	HE'S RISEN FROM DEAD	HE'S MY GUIDING TEACHER	HE MAKES ME WELL
HE PARDONS MY SIN	HE'S THE ETERNAL SEED	HE'S THE TRUSTWORTHY ONE	HIS WILL IS ONLY GOOD
HE IS MY PROTECTOR	HIS WORD IS SPIRIT	HE'S THE TABLE OF BLESSING	HE MAKES ME WISE
HE IS PATIENT WITH ME	HE SECURES MY PATH	HE THIRSTS FOR MY HEART	WITHOUT HIM I'M LOST
HE IS PRECIOUS TO ME	HE BORE MY SUFFERING	HE TALKS TO ME IN HIS WORD	HE'S THE WORKER OF MIRACLES
HE POSSESSES ME	HE ALONE IS SUPREME	HE TAMES MY ATTITUDE	HE STOPS MY WORRY
HE PICKED ME	HE WAS THE SUFFERING SERVANT	HE TOUCHES MY LIFE	I WORSHIP HIM ALONE
I'LL NEVER PERISH	HE SETTLES MY QUARRELS	HE UNIFIES WITH BELIEVERS	HE'S THE WITNESS TO THE WORLD
HE HAS A PLACE FOR ME	HIS WORD IS SETTLED IN HEAVEN	HE UNVEILS HIS HEART TO ME	HE BECAME A WORM FOR ME
HE PROSPERS ME	HE'S MY SACRIFICE	HE'S UNDERSTANDING	HE WRITES THE STORY OF MY LIFE
HE HAS A PLAN FOR ME	HE'S MY SAVIOR	HE'S UNDERGIRDS ME	IN HIM IS NO WRONG
HE IS ALL POWERFUL	HE SANCTIFIED ME	HE'S ULTIMATE JOY	HE WAS YIELDED TO THE FATHER
HE IS THE PROMISE KEEPER	HE'S MY SHEPHERD	HE'S THE UPHOLDER OF ALL THINGS	HE YEARNs FOR ME
HE IS MY HIGH PRIEST	HE'S MY STRENGTH	HIS GREATNESS IS UNSEARCHABLE	HIS YOKE IS EASY
HE MADE ME A HOLY PRIEST	HE WAS MY DYING SUBSTITUTE	HE'S UNYIELDING TO EVIL	HIS PROMISES ARE YES
HE QUALIFIES ME FOR HEAVEN	HE SERVES US	HE IS THE VINE OF ETERNAL LIFE	ZION'S KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS
HE IS QUICK TO BLESS	HE SOWS GOOD SEED IN ME	HE'S THE TRUE VICTOR	HE'S ZEALOUS TO SAVE
HE QUIETS MY STORMS	HE IS STEADFAST AND SURE	HE GIVES VALUE TO MY LIFE	
HE QUENCHES MY THIRST	HE'S MY SHIELD OF FAITH	HE'S VALIANT IN BATTLE	
HE NEVER QUILTS ON ME	HE IS GOD THE SON	HE'S VAST IN HIS GRACE	
HE IS RIGHTEOUS	HE SATISFIES MY HEART	HE WAS THE VICTIM ON THE CROSS	

The Holy Spirit now desires to take your heart even deeper into how much His great love endured for you at the cross. He wants you to know just how low God would go to save your soul and make you His bride. The answer, dear bride of Christ, is overwhelming!

HE BECAME A WORM – HE SAID SO!!

"This is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." **1 John 4:10**

PRAY WITH ME: "Dear, dear Abba, Father, what an incomprehensible sacrifice You made by sending us Your heart, the Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son to go through infinite suffering for me. Cause my heart to know just a small portion of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of Jesus' love and suffering for me His bride, that I may become all that He desires in me, from me and for me! Amen!"

HOW COULD THE LORD SAY, HE BECAME A WORM?

He said in **Psalm 22:6**, "But I am a worm, and not a man, A reproach of men, and despised by the people." On the cross the Lord spoke verse 1 and what was on His heart continued.

JESUS SAID THAT HELL HAS WORMS THAT WILL NEVER DIE!

He said in **Mark 9:47,48**; "And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into HELL, where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED."

THE WORM IS RED! THE WORM IS SIN! THE WORM IS CRUSHED!

Isaiah 1:18 states, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD; though your sins be as scarlet (Hebrew shani), they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson (Hebrew tolaath – worm), they shall be as wool." The Hebrew word "tolaath" refers to the worm from which the color crimson or red is obtained. The other Hebrew word "shani" is the product (red dye) which comes forth from the crushed eggs of this worm-like creature. So the Hebrew word has two meanings: "scarlet" and "worm". Keep in mind that in **Isaiah 1:18** the color red represents "sin" and it also means "worm"!

THE JOY OF GOD WHO BECAME A WORM

"Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the JOY set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." **Hebrews 12:2**

Jesus had just gone into the Garden of Gethsemane, He fell on His face and cried out to the Father, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." What was in that cup? God's anger and all of our horrible, stinking sin worms! He would drink that cup of sin-worms and His pure soul would become full with our sin worms!

Yet, in **Hebrews 12:2** it says that "who for the joy set before Him endured the cross". What joy? Seeing you and me saved, changed and out of the clutches of Satan; seeing the devil defeated and knowing that in the future Satan would be locked up forever never to hurt anyone again; seeing that there would never again be any more death, sorrow, sickness, crying, pain, or curse (**Rev. 21:4; 22:3**)! HALLELUJAH!

Jesus hated the cross but the joy of what the future would hold for all of us sustained Him. All of our sin worms would disappear forever except for those who would reject Him. Those sin worms would live on forever crawling all over them (**Mark 9:44,46,48**). Can you imagine Jesus loving us this much that He would go to such depths to suffer for us? To help us understand this the Holy Spirit uses the illustration that Jesus became an ugly, sin-filled, meaningless, humiliating, powerless worm.

HOW HIGH AND AWESOME IS OUR GOD?

Never forget that our God created the universe! I can't understand that He is greater than that which He created. HE IS BIGGER THAN THE UNIVERSE ITSELF. Think about these words from the old hymn:

"O Lord my God, when I an awesome wonder, Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made, I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed. Then sings my soul my Savior God to Thee How Great Thou Art."

How low would God, the One who created the universe, go to save you and me? From the highest heights of His glorious throne in heaven to an excruciating death on a cross, He became a WORM! Yes, you heard right! Let's begin this amazing journey through the Word of God. After considering these scriptures, ask yourself this question, "Do I love Jesus more?"

THE WORM REPRESENTS OUR SINFUL, WEAK CONDITION

Here are some instances where the Hebrew word "crimson" is also translated in the Bible as "worm" in the following scriptures:

Job 25:6 – *"How much less man, that maggot, and the son of man that worm."*

Isa. 41:14 – *"Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel."*

Worms are lowly and have no power. There is no beauty in them. The worm is ugly. They live, crawling around in the darkness of the earth. Spiritually, God sees our soul in the same condition. Jesus became a human being so that He could have all of our filthy sin worms put in His soul on the cross.

That is what He sees in us! Who would ever want to touch even one of those sickening things? He decided to have all the world's worms placed in His pure holy soul for you and me.

WORMS ARE SEEN AS DESTROYERS OF LIFE

In **Deut.28** the Lord pronounces the curses which come upon God's disobedient children. **Verse 28** states, *"You shall plant and cultivate vineyards but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall devour them."* **Deut.28:39**

From the very beginning of life, the sin nature within us begins to eat away at our soul. Sin destroys relationships, joy, love, peace, unity, life, fullness and so much more! THE VERY THING WHICH DESTROYS US, JESUS HAD TO BECOME! Glory to God! In a few minutes you will see this from the Word of God itself. It says so!

THANK YOU LORD - YOU BECAME OUR SPIRITUAL SIN-WORMS FOR US IN ORDER TO DESTROY THE DEADLY, ETERNAL RESULT OF DYING WITH THEM ON OUR SOULS!

SATAN TRIES TO HIDE IT BUT WORMS ARE HIS TRUE IMAGE

Although Satan is able to transform himself to appear as an angel of light (**II Cor.11:14**), His downfall is revealed in **Isa.14:11-16**. In **v.11** he is described as being covered with "worms" (sin), *"Your pomp and the music of your harps have been brought down to Sheol; Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you, and worms are your covering."* So Satan is filled with sin (worms)!

Some Bibles in **Isa.14:12** used Satan's former name "*Lucifer*". Other Bibles say "*O star of the morning, son of the dawn!*" Why the difference? The first is his name the other is the definition of Lucifer's name. No matter how Satan tries to hide it or cover it up, underneath are horrible slimy worms that represent the ultimate filth of sin! Without Jesus' blood to cleanse us we look the very same way!

FRIGHTENING! OUR SIN-WORMS WILL NEVER DIE IN THE LAKE OF FIRE

The last verse in **Isa. 66:24** declares, *"And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."*

Remember this verse in **Mark 9:44** where Jesus spoke about the eternal place called "Hell" where souls will suffer for eternity and *"...where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."* The spiritual sin "worms" infesting their souls will never die. Jesus had to become the worm in order to defeat Satan and defeat every worm that crawls all over our souls and then give us His righteousness (**2 Cor.5:21**).

Keep in mind that Jesus said hell was made for the devil and His angels (**Mt. 25:41**). Those who die without having Jesus in their soul look just like Satan, and it will be for all eternity. Their bed and covering in the Lake of Fire will be crawling with the worms that will never die just like we found out about Satan in **Isa. 14:11**. Jesus said that those who do not belong to Him have the devil as their father! **John 8:44**.

LET'S REVISIT PSALM 22 - JESUS, GOD THE SON, BECAME A WORM!

Look again at **Psa. 22:1-6,16**. Hundreds of years before Jesus' crucifixion, it was prophesied in **v.16**. This is a Psalm about crucifixion. On the cross Jesus cried out in **Matt.27:46**, *"My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?"* The first six verses tell us about what was on Jesus' heart while dying on the cross.

From this Psalm, the precious Holy Spirit allows us to get a glimpse of what was going on in our Lord's heart while He was dying for our sins. Listen to His heart cry out for help but His Father will not respond! *"O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season (darkness on the cross), and am not silent."* Why? His Father had always heard His cries before (**Heb.5:7**). The answer is in the next verse. **Verse 3** tells us that the Father is holy. Jesus was now unholy because He had become all the putrefying sin-worms of the world.

Keep in mind that **2 Cor. 5:21** says that Jesus became sin for us. He didn't just take it but actually became it. *"e made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* So He became our sin-filled worms.

Gal. 3:13 tells that Jesus didn't just take the curse that was on us but actually became it. *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having BECOME a curse for us..."* He became the curse of our sin-filled infested soul.

He didn't just take the curse HE BECAME IT! Oh the awful stench of His soul! It was the trash heap of our sin! How utterly awful that the pure, holy, righteous Lamb of God became all of our spiritual and soul filth before the eyes His holy Father!

No wonder Jesus cried out in **Psa. 22:4,5**; *"Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted, and You delivered them. They cried to You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not ashamed."* Then comes the powerful, unimaginable cry of Jesus as the awful realization of what He had become pierced His holy spirit and soul. In utter despair He cries out, **Psa.22:6**, *"But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people!"*

He was saying, *"I have become a repulsive, helpless, naked and defenseless worm! I am not even a man whereby You may answer My cry to You, Father. I am all that You hate. I have become worthless! Father, You cannot answer my prayer."* The Worm was about to experience the most agonizing and tormenting pain that ever could be known. As you meditate upon the following paragraph, remember how the red dye was obtained - by crushing the worm!

NEVER FORGET THE CRUSHING OF JESUS, YOUR SAVIOUR AND LORD

Once again, remember that to obtain the redeeming scarlet, crimson dye (His blood) Jesus had to become the sin-worm, in order to be crushed! The Worm, Jesus, now was crushed by God, for it says in Isa. **53:5** *"...He was crushed for our iniquities..."* (heb. "daka" - means to "crush, beat or break into pieces, destroy, shatter, to be oppressed, to be smitten, to be made humble or contrite").

All of those words describe what was happening to Jesus, the Worm! And who crushed Him? It was His Father! *"But it pleased the Lord to crush Him!"* **Isa.53:10**.

It pleased the Father because Satan would be defeated once and for all. It pleased Him because there would be a new spiritual family that would love God forever! It pleased the Father to crush Him because Adam's race would now be restored to its rightful place of rule (see **Rev.5:9,10**).

FROM FILTHY WORMS TO GLORIOUS NEW GARMENTS

The original garment of our soul is seen as a "filthy rag" (**Isa.64:6**). Praise God, that as the Father crushed His Son, the cleansing, saving blood came forth for His people. It would be used in giving her a spotless spiritual garment.

The moment our souls cried out for salvation; the moment we realized just how rotten our sin nature was within us; the moment we turned to Jesus and confessed our sin and received Him, He came rushing in and ripped off the stinking, worm-infested rag which was enwrapping our soul and placed His own glorious, pure and righteous garment on us.

Hear the joyous cry of one who had received this glorious clothing from the hand of God. *"I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, My soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness."* (**Isa.61:10**; see **Rev.19:7-9**)!

"And when I think that God, His Son not sparing, sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in - That on the cross my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin! THEN SINGS MY SOUL - 'HOW GREAT THOU ART!' " Oh, dear redeemed one, bow down your heart and soul and simply worship the King who became a worm! As love pours out to Him, you will desire to keep (obey) His word. **John 14:23** *"Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word....' "*

PRAY WITH ME: "Dear, dear Lord, my heart is full of love for You. I am overwhelmed by Your love that would become so ugly for me who was unlovable. I ask only one thing of You, cause my heart to want to obey Your Word as never before. May that show just how much I do love You. Thank You, thank You, thank You with all of my heart, for Your name's sake, Amen!"

Let's close by meditating on the blessed words from the hymns of the past:

WHO IS HE?

Nailed upon Golgotha's tree, faint and bleeding who is He?
Hands and feet so rudely torn, wreathed with crown of twisted thorn.
Once He lived in heaven above, happy in His Father's love!
SON OF GOD, 'tis He, 'tis He on the cross at Calvary!

Nailed upon Golgotha's tree, mocked and taunted who is He?
Scorners tell Him to come down, claim His kingdom and His crown!
He it was who came to bless, full of love and tenderness!
SON OF MAN, 'tis He, 'tis He on the cross at Calvary!

Nailed upon Golgotha's tree, as a victim, who is He?
Bearing sin, but not His own, suffering agony unknown!
He the promised sacrifice, for our sins has paid the price!
LAMB OF GOD, 'tis He, 'tis He on the Cross at Calvary!

Throned in glorious majesty, Lord triumphant, who is He?
He's the One who came to die, now in heaven, exalted high!
With adoring hearts we now, At His blessed feet now bow!
LORD OF ALL, 'tis He, 'tis He throned in glorious majesty! *author unknown*

WAS IT FOR ME?

Was it for me, for me He wept and prayed, My load of sin before Him laid;
That night within Gethsemane, was it for me, that agony?
Was it for me He bowed His head, upon the cross and freely shed
His precious blood that crimson tide, was it for me the savior died?
It was for me, yes, all for me, O love of God, so great so free,
O wondrous love, I'll shout and sing! *J. M. Whyte*

WAS IT FOR ME?

Was it for me, the nails, the spear, the cruel thorns, the mocking jeer,
That rugged cross, 'twixt earth and sky—was it for me He came to die?
Was it for me, that opened tomb, dispelling fear and death and gloom?
So vast a truth proclaims to me that I through Him can victor be.
Yes, all for me—the cross, the grave, A risen Lord with power to save!
My joyful heart is filled with praise As songs of happiness I raise.
He loved me so! He loved me so! Dark Calvary He chose to know,
To vanquish sin and death and woe; 'Twas all because He loved me so. *Rose N. Coull*