

## **Song of Solomon 8:5-14**

### **Love Wins**

Every experience of love here below has its ups and downs, fluctuations that are eloquently depicted in the Song of Solomon. But as the Song comes to its conclusion, the failings and frustrations of the relationship begin to fade and love wins; it comes out of these trials triumphant and victorious, rather than disappointed and defeated. How does love win? How do we see love win in our own lives?

Well before we answer that question, we need to first ask, “What love?” What love, or whose love are we talking about.

On the face of it, the Song of Solomon explores and celebrates the love between a man and a woman, a husband and a wife. But, it’s found in the middle of a library of books, the Old Testament, that explores and celebrates the love between God and His people, Israel, a love that’s often pictured using the language and imagery of the love between a man and a woman, the covenant marital love between a husband and a wife.

That should lead us to conclude that while the Song teaches us much about the highest human love, the married love between a husband and a wife, it also teaches us much about the even higher love between God and His people. That’s confirmed in the New Testament by Christ, Paul, and John who all further develop this romantic or marital metaphor for the love between Christ and His Church.

We’re further helped towards that method of interpreting and understanding this book by the fact that its author was Solomon, David’s son and Israel’s King, who the Old Testament readers looked to as a type, as a prophetic picture of the coming Messiah. In other words, when they read the book or sang the Song they saw more than the best human king’s best human love. They entered into God’s gracious love expressed through His anointed King to His undeserving people. Again Jesus confirmed this typological view of Solomon when he said, “A greater than Solomon is here.”

Back then to our question, “How does love win.” Chapter 8 verses 5-14 describe five ways in which we can ensure that love wins in our lives – marital love and spiritual love.

### **1. Love wins by returning to its roots (v. 5)**

*Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I awakened you under the apple tree. There your mother brought you forth; there she who bore you brought you forth (v. 5)*

#### ***a. The Song***

The woman of the Song (let’s just call her the bride although she has been long married), is “coming up from the wilderness” leaning on her beloved (let’s call him the bridegroom). They’ve been in the wilderness, but they are coming out of the wilderness. Their relationship has gone through some dry and unfruitful days, but they are gradually putting these days behind them.

As she leans on him, we can hear him whispering in her ear: “I awakened you under the apple tree.”

“Under the apple tree.” There’s no particular significance to this tree apart from it being the location where he first began to woo and win her. He could have equally said “On that hill” or “in that house.” We can simply say that it’s the location where he initiated the relationship. “There’s where I stirred up and started your love.”

He continues to take her on a tour of old spots, old haunts; he approaches her parent’s house and says: “There your mother brought you forth.” He took her to the place of her second birth and now takes her back to her first birth.

***b. The Lesson for Marriage: Love wins by regularly returning to its roots.***

Sometimes love has to be taken back to its roots, to retrace it's earliest steps, its beginnings. It helps to remember these happy and exciting days when love began to be wooed and won. Every husband and wife should do this from time to time, and not just on anniversaries. Go back to where you first met; go back to your first dinner, your first date, and your first kiss. Even go back to where you were born, your childhood before you met, and consider how the Lord was working even then to prepare you for each other.

***c. The Illustration of Israel***

Through the historical books, the psalms, and the prophets, God frequently encouraged Israel to come out of the wilderness by going back to its roots, retracing God's steps in the nation's birth and beginnings.

***d. The Application to the New Testament believer***

And of course, this is something that the New Testament believer should also do. Maybe your relationship with the Lord is going through wilderness days. Perhaps it's characterized by dry, dusty, unfruitfulness. Here's how to come out of the wilderness. Return to your roots. Retrace the steps of God's dealings with you before you were a believer, but especially when you started believing, when God awakened you "under the apple tree" (i.e. in that church, under that sermon, through that book or providence). He woke you, wooed, you and won you. Remember it, reflect on it, and come out of the wilderness.

**2. Love reflects on its strengths (vv. 6-7)**

*Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love, all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised.*

***a. The Song***

We're not sure who is speaking here; it could be him or her, probably her. But what's important is to see how they are not dwelling on the negatives, on the downs, on the weak spots in their relationship. No, they are talking about how strong their love is, and they highlight five strengths

*It begins in private but is also seen in public.* "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm" (v. 6). A seal confirmed ownership of a valued possession. Here there is a desire for that sense of ownership and value to be felt in the heart and expressed unashamedly in public too, "as a seal upon your arm."

*It can compete with death and the grave.* "For love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel (*lit.* 'hard') as the grave" (v. 6). What mighty forces we find in death and the grave. Who can stand or what can stand before these twin foes. They defeat youth, medicine, money and power. But this love is as strong as these strongest foes. If death overcomes all opposition, so does this love. If the grave is irresistible, so is this jealous love.

*It is passionately expressed.* "Its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame (v. 6). Its emotion and affection flames on and on. The fire may sometimes burn low but it's never extinguished.

*It cannot be dowsed.* Trouble, affliction, and sin can sometimes come in like a flood but, "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it" (v. 7).

*It's the most valuable possession on earth.* "If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised" (v. 7). It is unbuyable. "Offer me your highest price and I'm not selling."

***b. The Lesson for Marriage: Love wins by reflecting on its strengths.***

It's easy for a husband and wife to dwell on one another's faults and failings, or to only think about the weaknesses and disappointments of their relationship with one another, especially comparing themselves with others. However, for love to be strengthened, for love to win, sometimes you just have to stop pointing out or dwelling on the flaws and reflect upon the good things, the positives, the strengths.

***c. The Illustration of Israel***

Although there were undoubted weak spots in Israel's relationship with the Lord, and at times it was appropriate to point these out and fix them, there were also times when they just needed to dwell on the positives for their own strengthening and encouragement. At times, God sent prophets to remind them of the good things and the positive things.

***d. The Application to the New Testament believer***

Similarly, let me encourage every believer here to reflect on the strengths of his or her relationship with the Lord. Yes, there are times when we need to be convicted and brought to repentance, but there are also times when it is vital to remember the basic strengths of your relationship with the Lord.

- *It begins in private but is also seen in public.*
- *It can compete with death and the grave.*
- *It is passionately expressed.*
- *It cannot be dowsed.*
- *It's the most valuable possession you have*

Reflect on these strengths to strengthen your bond and don't let the devil weaken you by focusing on the weaknesses. Love wins by reflecting on strengths.

**3. Love relies on the protection and support of close friends (vv. 8-10)**

*We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she is spoken for? If she is a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver; and if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar. I am a wall, and my breasts like towers; then I became in his eyes as one who found peace.*

***a. The Song***

Here are the bride's brothers remembering her childhood. "We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she is spoken for?" They express deep and genuine concern for her welfare in her childish vulnerability. "She's so young, she's so fragile, she's so weak! What can we do for her?" Then they answer: "If she *is* a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver; and if she *is* a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar." Without understanding all the details of the structures they propose, it's pretty clear that they are focused on protecting and shielding her from unwelcome advances and unwanted proposals.

The end result is that she grows up to maturity and womanhood in a state of peaceful protection. "I *am* a wall, and my breasts like towers; then I became in his eyes as one who found peace" (v. 10)

***b. The Lesson for Marriage: Love relies on the protection and support of close friends.***

Love needs the help of others. That's partly why weddings are conducted in churches; it's partly an expression of need, of a desire for help from others wiser, older, stronger. That's why we encourage young couples to keep

coming to church; it expresses an awareness of vulnerability, that you need the prayers, support, and advice of others.

### ***c. The Illustration of Israel***

God sometimes portrayed Israel not just as a child but also as an infant of days, sometimes just born (Ezekiel), and other times just learning to walk (Hosea). That's why he gave her prophets, priests, and kings. He saw her weakness and vulnerability and called these officials to support and protect her.

### ***d. The Application to the New Testament believer***

The Song reminds us that those in a spiritual relationship with the Lord need a spiritual community to support and protect them in their vulnerability. This then may seem as another way, a poetic way, of describing the role of the church in nurturing and protecting our spiritual relationship with the Lord. We need the church, we need the community of the Lord's people, we need the counsel and encouragement of fellow believers, and we need their experience and wisdom.

Love wins by relying on God's appointed way of nurturing and shielding His love.

## **4. Love reprioritizes relationships (vv. 11-12)**

*Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon; he leased the vineyard to keepers; everyone was to bring for its fruit a thousand silver coins. My own vineyard is before me. You, O Solomon, may have a thousand, and those who tend its fruit two hundred.*

### ***a. The Song***

In verse 11, Solomon leases his vineyard to others, to keepers, who each paid a thousand silver coins as rent. This speaks of Solomon's *abundance* (enough vineyards to rent out to many keepers), and it speaks of his *worth* (the keepers were willing to pay 1000 silver coins each to rent a part of the vineyard).

Again, we can see Solomon's poetic parallels with God who is also characterized as abundantly generous and immeasurably worthy and valuable. There is so much to give that he can give away to many, many vinedressers and each gets something valuable.

Verse 12 is perhaps the hardest verse to understand in this section. The bride speaks of her own vineyard, as "before me." I think she is saying "This is for Solomon alone and I'm renting it out to nobody else....Solomon you can rent out vineyards for 1000 silver pieces and those who rent it from you can rent portions out to others for 200 pieces of silver, but I'm renting mine to no one. You can keep your money in your pocket."

In the Song, "vineyard" is usually a metaphor for a person, especially the soul of a person (1:6). And that's a fitting metaphor, as the soul is a place that needs to be planted, watered, and tended, and also, of course it brings forth fruit for the benefit of others.

Basically she is looking at Solomon and saying, "You have enough for lots of people, but I have so little and I'm not going to divide myself up. Everything is for you, Solomon!" She's prioritizing Solomon.

### ***b. The Lesson for Marriage: Love wins by re-prioritizing relationships***

Marriages can get into big trouble through trying to please too many people and trying to do too many things. It can be good people and good things but they squeeze out the best person and the best things. There are times when the boundaries need to be re-drawn so that we can give ourselves to our wives or husbands.

### ***c. The Illustration of Israel***

This was something that Israel constantly had to learn. Time and again, God was squeezed out of the picture and the relationship grew cold. Time and again God called Israel to re-prioritize to put Him first before anyone or anything else.

### ***d. The Application to the New Testament believer.***

Love wins by keeping the most important person in our lives the most important person in our lives. Love wins by giving the Lord the primary place, by giving ourselves to Him for his service.

## **5. Love recognizes that it has not yet won (vv. 13-14)**

*You who dwell in the gardens, the companions listen for your voice – Let me hear it!  
Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.*

### ***a. The Song***

In verse 13, Solomon expresses the longing to hear the sound of her voice. In verse 14, she responds by expressing a longing for her beloved to come to her quickly, like a speedy gazelle on the mountains. In both instances there is some sense of separation, distance, obstacle. Incompleteness really sums it up. However much love has won, they recognize that it has not yet won fully, finally, and forever. Yearnings and longings remain and at times remain unmet and unsatisfied.

### ***b. Lesson for Marriage: Love wins by recognizing that it has not yet won.***

Married couples need to realize that marriage is the work of a lifetime. If love is to win in your life, you need to keep pursuing, calling, yearning, urging, etc. If you think love wins on your wedding day, then you're going to have a very unhappy marriage. Love must be continually kindled and encouraged.

### ***c. The Illustration of Israel***

One of Israel's great sins was her presumption on the love of God. God loves us and no one else, so we're fine. And though God sent prophets and others to stir up her love and call it out and on and up, there was often little response. Thinking they'd arrived, love lost, it faded and withered.

### ***d. The Application to the New Testament believer***

For the New Testament believer too, the healthiest and safest condition we can find ourselves in is in yearnings and longings for the Lord, and our awareness of the Lord's longing and yearnings for us. He cries out, "Lots of other people are hearing your voice, why can't I?" She cries out, why are you taking so long to come, come as quickly as the gazelle on the hills."

Love wins, by recognizing that it has not yet won. If you grow complacent, careless, over-confident and thoughtless, then you are putting yourself in a dangerous place; far better to feel the incompleteness and imperfection of your relationship with the Lord and yearn for more of it. Those who recognize that love has not yet won will use all the means at their disposal to inflame love and strengthen their relationship. For all such, love will eventually win.

## **Conclusion**

Whatever else you take away from the Song of Solomon, take away this: God desires to have a loving, passionate, personal relationship with sinners like you and me. This Song is, effectively, a divine proposal, inviting sinners to enjoy the most amazing marriage to the most wonderful bridegroom on this earth. It's a marriage that death does not part, but rather enhances. Jesus, Paul, and John underline the proposal in their later words and writing. Will you go with this man?