

Love Song

Song of Songs

8:8-14

*Solomon's Song of Songs
and The Legacy of Love*

The Legacy of Love

Final Advice

Others

⁸ We have a little sister, and she has no breasts.
What shall we do for our sister on the day
when she is spoken for?

⁹ If she is a wall,
we will build on her a battlement of silver,
but if she is a door,
we will enclose her with boards of cedar.

She

¹⁰ I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers;
then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace.

¹¹ Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;
he let out the vineyard to keepers;
each one was to bring for its fruit a

thousand pieces of silver.

¹² My vineyard, my very own, is before me;
you, O Solomon, may have the thousand,
and the keepers of the fruit two hundred.

He

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

She

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

- Song of
Songs 8:8-14

Beautiful One

Notes on Song of Songs 8:8-14

Summary - With these verses the Song of Songs, the “best of songs,” comes to a close. It includes the song we are calling “The Virgin’s Education II” (paralleling “The Virgin’s Education I” - 1:5-6) and “The Farewell” (paralleling “The Entrance” - 1:2-3). The introduction of the “little sister” helps us do a few important things here at the end. First, we see the concerns of the community, sung by the Chorus, in the face of this powerful drama of real and powerful human love. Then we are invited to look back at the New Wife’s former situation and to replay the drama of her transformation from virgin to wife. The very thing that the Bride had complained of earlier--being guarded by her brothers and so unable to “tend her own vineyard”--is the very thing that is recommended for the little sister who has not yet come to physical maturity but who will one day be called to love and will respond to her beloved as our Heroine-Bride-Now-Wife has done. We are also led to acknowledge and appreciate the virtuous choices she has made. Even when she had come into physical maturity, she remained a “wall” (see below), not “awakening love” until the time was right. And finally we are reminded that she has moved from her “undesirable situation” (singleness/virginity) to the “desirable situation” of mutual love in the bond of marriage.

She has become the “domain of love” for her husband and herself. She has found her “peace” (see below) in his eyes.

So, she goes on to proclaim that

while she now is able to “tend her vineyard,” she enjoys a direct relationship--life and love!--with her one-and-only lover, which is something no less of a power figure than Solomon cannot do and does not enjoy. He has so many wives and concubines, she is pointing out with yet another agricultural analogy, that he has to hire and pay others to watch over them. She is saying, in no uncertain terms, that she would not trade places with him!

In the Farewell Song, once again it is significant that it is the woman who gets the last word. She calls her lover to speed his way to the “mountains of spices.” And this is how our story ends: We watch as the two fade off into the sunset leaping together across the mountains. And these mountains offer a powerful final symbol for this couple’s love, for love in general and for the Book called “Song of Songs” (below).

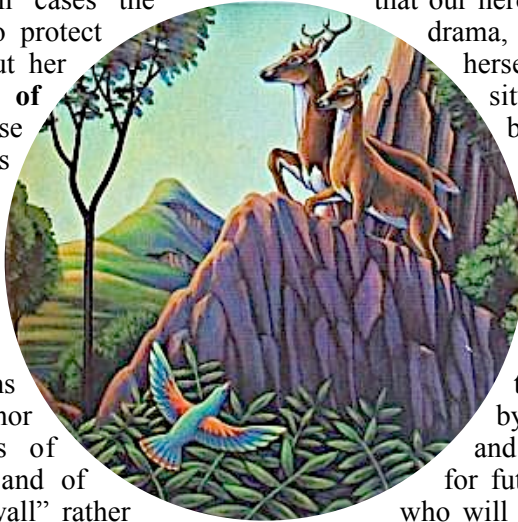
v.8:8 - **no breasts**... childhood or preadolescence (a more modern category) are usually defined in terms of mental capacity (ability to communicate with skill and/or to make moral choices). Here the little sister is quite atypically defined in terms of her sexual maturity, which is the focus of the

community chorus' concern... **the day when she is spoken for...** her anticipated wedding day when vows will be shared and witnessed by the community...

v.8:9 - **wall...** most commentators see this image indicating a proper tendency toward chastity. Such a girl proves to be inaccessible to male advances... The boy who would come to her with premature, illicit and/or selfish intentions, desiring physical gratification without vows of faithfulness (thus "awakening love before the time is right") will be rejected and sent away... **door...** the opposite tendency, one toward promiscuity, is suggested by this image. This girl would encourage unhealthy male attention and open herself to premarital sexual encounters... In both cases the community chorus states its intention to protect this little one's virginity, with or without her help... **battlement of silver... boards of cedar...** the decorative nature of these materials indicates that the little sister is held in high esteem by her community. As Dr. Garrett says (p.261): *Her status as virgin is to be honored and maintained in a way that enhances her dignity. She is not placed in a prison like a criminal; she is protected like a precious treasure...*

v.8:10 - Here the heroine-wife proclaims that she affirmed and defended her honor and dignity against the temptations of emotionally-intoxicating male attention and of her own flesh-pleasing impulses as a "wall" rather than a "door" even when she had reached sexual maturity, with "breasts like towers." And the result was that the right time for love came for her, and then she found in the eyes of her beloved the reflection of a woman at **peace...** And the word for "peace" here is "shalom," a loaded Hebrew word that means far more than merely the absence of conflict but the blissful condition of all things being right and good.

v.8:11-12 - **Baal-hamon...** a place of unknown location... it can be translated "lord of uproar," "lord of wealth," or "husband of a mob," and thus may be a jab at King Solomon with his enormous wealth and large harem... A situation that neither this Wife nor her Husband would wish for instead of



what they have in each other. While Solomon owns more things and more people than anyone else, he is distant from them all and must hire and pay people to watch over them in his stead. This wife and husband have each other, know each other and share with each other at close range. With them, the "two have become one" according to God's good plan. Solomon's situation--the 1,000 have become 1,001--is comically inferior (see above).

8:13-14 - **you who dwell in the gardens...** "the garden" has been a metaphor of sexual pleasure, the woman's body and the place of love throughout the book. So, here at the end, this way of addressing the woman is a beautiful affirmation that our heroine, the protagonist of the Song of Songs drama, has indeed become the place of love for herself and for her husband. The "desirable situation" she longed to move into has become her reality... **with companions listening for your voice...** She now has become the object of others' attention and admiration... What she has to say, the testimony of her good life choices, her faith and her experience, is honored and valued by those around her especially her husband... Not only has she experienced the wonder of love as created and blessed by God, but also she has, by her faith, hope and love, contributed to the *Legacy of Love* left for future generations--for all the "little sisters"

who will come after her... **mountains...** Dr. Garrett finds great significance in this mountain imagery as he summarizes this last song in *The Song of Songs* by saying:

Mountains, apart from their obvious visual similarity to breasts, are not consumable or transient in nature (like other images for breasts--like a cluster of grapes or figs on a tree). To the contrary, they connote grandeur and permanence. As such, perhaps mountain is a preferred metaphor because it shows that sexual love transcends any one couple's experience. It is an abiding universal of the human experience. It has dignity, like the mountains, and Song of Songs itself is also, like the mountains, an abiding statement of its beauty and dignity.

Read & Reflect - 8:8-14

First Reading: In what ways do you see this last section serving as a fitting conclusion to the Song of Songs?

Search & Consider

8:8-9 - For whom does the community, through the voice of the chorus, express concern here? What do they say they are going to do for her? Why? What does the choice of protective materials suggest about their attitude toward this "little sister?"

What are some differences between a wall and a door? How might these images characterize the moral character and/or significant choices a "little sister" might make? Does the community goal change according to her character? Why not?

8:10 - What does this verse tell us about the character of our heroine-bride-now-wife? What does it mean that she finds now “in his eyes... peace?” Are these two things--her character and her peace--connected? How? Why?

8:11-12 - What does Solomon have as stated & suggested by these verses? What does our New Wife have? Which is better? Why?

8:13-14 - What does it mean that our heroine is called “you who dwell in the gardens?” What do “the gardens” represent?

Why do you suppose the husband and the “companions” want to hear her speak at this point in the story?

What is the last picture we are left with at the end of The Song? What does this picture suggest to you about love, sex and marriage according to God’s design and affirmed in His Word (especially in the Song of Songs!)?

Apply

How do you see a “Legacy of Love” being left here at the end of the Song of Songs? By whom? For whom?

Who has left a “Legacy of Love” for you?

How might you leave a “Legacy of Love” for those in your life and who will come after you?

The Energizer: A Wedding Homily on 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. ¹² Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

In this day and age a lot of people are surprised when I tell them that the first time I ever so much as kissed my wife was on our wedding day... Then I explain to them that before the wedding she wasn't my wife.

Denell and I were married, in a ceremony similar to this one, almost 37 years ago. And on that day she gave me a gift, a ring, similar to the rings you will be giving each other-- sort of flat and round with a hole for your finger to go through. And on the inside of that ring she had the jeweler inscribe these words: "Love fails not." She wanted to put "Love never fails", but my finger was about two letters too small. That ring has left its visible mark on my finger. It has become part of my hand. And that love

Marriage Builder's Corner

What are the most significant insights you have gained about love, sex, marriage, yourself and the Living God through your study and discussion of the Song of Songs? How does God's clear affirmation of all these things encourage and direct you regarding your marriage?

What insights would you most want to pass on to your children and grandchildren? How will you do that together?

Prayer: *As we come to the end of our exploration of Your Book called the Song of Songs, Heavenly Father, we thank You once again for the gift of life, of love, of sex, of marriage and of each other. Help us to share what we have learned with others who need to know what we know and, especially, Whom we know. Amen.*

Teaching the Word of God

A Back Page Thought -----
----- from Pastor Jay

Covenant marks our marriage. It has kept us together and drawn us closer through all the ups and downs of life. I have failed many, many times in my marriage, but love never has.

Presbyterian When I have begun to forget about my wife, focusing too tightly on my work or my hobbies and taking for granted how important she is to me, perseverant love has shaken and stirred me to turn again to her. When I have given in to selfishness, patient love has come, through my wife, and won the day. When I have been easily angered and said to myself "I just don't care any more," humble love has whispered gently in my ear "But I still care, and so do you, my friend."

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Love never fails. Love fails... NOT!

This same love will guard your marriage, if you want it to. This same love will keep you together & draw you closer. This same love is the foundation upon which every good marriage is built. This love is what a Christian marriage is all about, and this love never fails.

In a world full of disappointments and empty promises, this is a promise you can count on from God's word, from the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians, verse 8. Once again, here is the astounding promise: Love never fails!

In a world infatuated with power of all kinds, where the promise of power is often the most powerful promise of all, here is a little piece of power you can purchase for your very own [*Eveready Battery*]. It's called a battery, and the people who make this particular battery would like you to believe that it "keeps going and going..." They want you to say to yourself: "By golly, nothing outlasts the Energizer! Evereadys never fail!" But this is a lie. If it kept going and going, you wouldn't have to buy more of them. Batteries fail. And so do most other things in life... Light bulbs fail and preachers fail and friends fail and marriages fail... but love fails... NOT!

Let love have its way with you, and your marriage may be tested but it will not fail.

Why does love never fail? Let me share three insights out of I Corinthians 13.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." (vv.4-5)

We could summarize these phrases like this: Love is a winner because it never seeks to win. Love does not have to win so love fails... NOT! If you want to win in your relationship... If you must have the upper hand... If you insist on having your own way... you aren't loving and your marriage will suffer. True lovers want the best for their beloved and so they achieve the best for themselves. Thus, whether it's a win or a loss in the world's eyes, love fails... NOT!

"Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth." (v.6)

Another way of saying this is that love is realistic. Truth is what is, and love is not afraid to deal with it. If you want love to prevail in your marriage, you will need to be strong and brave and honest. The truth is we all make mistakes. When we do, the way of evil says "Hide it! Deny it! Lie about it! Pretend it away! Justify it! Rationalize it!" Don't follow evil's crooked path. There's a pit at the end of that road. Instead, when you do the wrong thing, when you speak an unkind word, when you sin against each other somehow (and you will, probably, before this day is over), face it. Admit it and seek forgiveness. Say you're sorry and mean it. Then you can move on. Then your marriage grows stronger. Then your love for each other grows deeper. Then love fails... NOT!

"Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." (v.7)

When I get very upset with my wife and she with me (which happens regularly but, thankfully, not often), one of the phrases which runs through my mind is "I just don't care anymore! I give up!" That's when my self-centered emotions have gotten the better of me. But love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. In short, love always cares, and it never gives up!

Once when I was feeling sorry for myself and saying "I just don't care any more," the thought struck me: To care is to love, so how would it sound if I said it this way to myself: "I just don't love any more." Love had whispered in my ear, and I could see how foolish my self-talk was. I did want to keep loving and so I knew that I really did care, and I wasn't going to give up. *Bride* and *Groom*, I pray that you two will always be wise and keep caring. Sometimes it hurts to care, and it seems the more you care the more you hurt. But don't be afraid to care and care deeply for each other. That's loving. Real love keeps caring no matter what the cost, and real love fails... NOT!

Paul the Apostle concludes his famous love chapter with remarks about how things in life fade away but that for the one who trusts in God life is going somewhere. Life is going toward face to face fellowship with and full knowledge of God. Finally, and most importantly, this is why true love never fails: It comes from the heart of the Living God and pulls us back to Him. Love never fails because it is God's and God never fails. If you truly want love to prevail and make yours a marriage of truth and beauty and strength and joy, turn to God. Let me say it again: Turn to God... and let Him shower His love upon you and show His love through you.

You see, *Groom* and *Bride*, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only real Energizer. The Holy One, who showed His love most dramatically through the coming and the teaching and the death and the resurrection of His beloved Son, God Himself, is the Only One who keeps going and going. And in the power of His love with you and in you, your marriage also will keep going and going to new adventures of faith, new seasons of hope and new plateaus of love.

The Apostle concludes his magnificent "Love Chapter" with these words:

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (v.13)

May that divine love keep going and going for the two of you throughout your life together. And through you may God prove once again His glorious promise to us all: Love fails... NOT! Amen.

